

# 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

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

**From The Editor's Desk.**

In this present day and age there is an ever increasing rejecting of moral principles and indeed a hue and cry we might say to overturn any semblance of God's requirement for holiness and purity in the lives of man. Increasingly the moral restraints that one observed in speech, behaviour and visual portrayals in the pre 1970's have gradually eroded and as in any downward slide the closer one gets to the bottom the faster the speed of decline until finally one ends not being able to arrest the plunge into the abyss.

God directed Moses to utter these words: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil" Deuteronomy 30:15. Notice what is associated with good and evil, the choice is very clear!

It does not make one iota of difference to God whether we try to hide our actions or not because: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Proverbs 15:3.

Nor let us be deceived to change God's definition or standards of good and evil because: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil" Isaiah 5:20. In Ecclesiastes 12:14 we are reminded that God will bring every work (deed, behaviour etc.) into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or evil.

In case any might think that was only for the Old Testament period heed the words of Jesus Himself in John 5:27-29 speaking about the judgement He will deliver when He returns and how they that have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life (that is life in eternal bliss with Him) and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. That is eternity without Him because they are not written in the Lamb's book of life and are cast into the lake of fire, eternally barred from heaven Revelation 20:15 and 21:27.

The Psalmist also has much wisdom for us regarding this choice between good and evil, Psalm 37:27-28, Depart from evil and do good; and dwell for evermore, the Lord forsaketh not His saints, they are preserved forever.

And we can achieve or attain that eternal life with Christ as we follow the directions of Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:10-11, "For he that will love life (which is the reward of them that do good) and see good days let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile (or deceit) but let him eschew evil and do good.

To eschew evil means to avoid doing or using something on principle or as a matter of course, and the principle we ought to apply, the do good part, is the Bible one of the call to holiness by God Himself which we also find Peter reminding us of in 1 Peter 1:15-16.

It is our contention that from the very start of the Church there were those, even within the body of believers, who did not seek to depart from evil and do good as the Psalmist says and also that there were those who did not heed the words of the Apostle Peter as quoted above in 1 Peter 3:10-11.

Even the Apostle Paul was well aware of this fact of human nature to distort that which is good and pervert it to the ways of Satan. We have his words in Acts 20:29-31: For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.<sup>30</sup> Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.<sup>31</sup> Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

He was echoing the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:15, he repeated a similar warning to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:1-3.

These warnings apply to the church today with perhaps even more force.

We see that it is an enduring problem when we look at the history of the Christian church from the Apostles' time forward to this very day. There are bright spots however and one of them was the rise of a body of believers who sincerely and often at the cost of their very lives and earthly goods sought to follow Jesus in true discipleship in the early 1500's. We know them today by the name of Anabaptists given to them by their opponents who also professed to be followers of Christ.

Sadly however many who claim that "heritage" are no longer following the way of the cross in discipleship as their forefathers but have given in to the seducing spirits, allowed grievous wolves to remain in the flock of Christ and even in leadership positions speaking perverse things and drawing away disciples after them.

May the articles in this month's edition be an encouragement and a reminder to first of all examine our own life and ask the Lord in the words of David to have His way in our life so that we can better serve Him.

Psalm 139:23-24: Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:<sup>24</sup> And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

J.v.L.



## *Place of Humility in Anabaptist Teaching*

*Brother Harold Good  
Winter Bible School, 2008*

I bring you greetings this evening in the name of Jesus.  
I'm glad for this opportunity to be together and to look into the word of God and be instructed from and study the Scriptures together.

As we think of this title "The Place of Humility in Anabaptist Teaching," one response could be: Why focus on what the Anabaptists taught about humility?

Shouldn't we base our belief and practice on what the Bible teaches rather than on Anabaptist teaching?

Well it is true that the Scriptures are the foundation for our belief however it is also true that the Anabaptists lived in different circumstances than we do today and even though we believe that the Bible teaches humility it is possible because of the world in which we live today for us to shift our view or emphasis.

Such a shift in emphasis could result in the weakening of our understanding and the practice of this Bible teaching and so we believe that we can learn and benefit from those who have gone before us and as we see the emphasis that they had it can be a help to us and we want to be open to that challenge.

Among the Anabaptist there was a strong emphasis on the need for a total and unreserved resignation to God's will and also then consequently obedience to His will.

We also know that in Mennonite history there has been a strong emphasis on the evil of pride and on the virtue of humility, are these views warranted by Scripture?

Oh yes, we believe they are.

What do we mean when we talk about humility, what are we talking about?

I think that most of you know what that word humility means but maybe if you were asked to give a definition it would be a little more difficult to actually put into words what you understand this word to mean.

The English word humble means; marked by a meekness or modesty in behaviour, attitude or spirit, not arrogant or prideful.

As I tried to understand the definition for this word humble or humility I kept coming across the word meek so then I looked up that word and the English word meek means; showing patience and humility, gentle, easily imposed on, submissive.

Now of the place of humility in the teaching of Anabaptists we do want to firstly look at what the Bible says about humility and then to see how the Anabaptist emphasis fits with the Bible teaching on humility.

I'm not going to turn to all these scriptures, some of them I am simply going to refer to, but we have the teaching for example of Jesus in the New Testament.

In **Luke 14:11** Jesus said: For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased and he that humblest himself shall be exalted.

In **Matthew 11:28** we have these words of Jesus: Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

Jesus referred to Himself as one who is meek and lowly in heart.

Now going to **Philippians 2:3-8** <sup>3</sup> *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* <sup>4</sup> *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* <sup>5</sup> *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:* <sup>6</sup> *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:* <sup>7</sup> *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:* <sup>8</sup> *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

The apostle here is talking about and teaching that humility is an ingredient for unity, he is actually talking about unity and instructing them in unity and then teaches that humility is a basic requirement for unity and then refers to the supreme example of humility that we see in Jesus.

We see here that He made himself of no reputation. That literally means that He emptied Himself and He became a servant.

Now when we read the word servant in the Bible we tend to think "employee" but the word servant in the New Testament usually means slave and it is hard for us to relate to that, but Jesus became a servant.

And it also tells us that He humbled Himself and became obedient to the death of the cross.

We have teachings on humility also in James 4 verses 4 and 10 referring back to Proverbs 3:34, God resisteth the proud but He giveth grace unto the humble.

Another Scripture that you looked at in Thursday night's lesson on humility is in first Peter chapter 5 where we have these familiar words related to humility, **1 Peter 5:5-6** <sup>5</sup>Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. <sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

We see here the teaching that we need humility in our relationship with each other, to be clothed with humility. This Scripture teaches that true humility springs from a right attitude toward God and the surrender of the heart and will to Him.

Now I was impressed anew with this, these are familiar verses, but I was impressed again or in a new way with what he says here in verse six, humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God. Just think of God and all His greatness and all His glory, He is Sovereign, the Creator of the universe, the One who will be our Judge and we are called to humble ourselves, bring ourselves into subjection under His mighty hand.

I find it interesting to discover that the Greek word that is sometimes translated humble, mostly is translated meek or meekness. In the New Testament this word is used in **Ephesians 4:2** and **Colossians 3:12**, it is also used in the Septuagint in **Zephaniah 3:12** where it speaks of one who is meek and lowly. In its use in Scripture, where it has a full and deeper significance than in non-scriptural writings, it consists not in a person's outward behaviour only or in his relationship to his fellow men, it is not only

talking about his disposition, but rather it is talking about an inwrought grace of the soul and the exercise of it at first and chiefly toward God.

It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good and therefore without disputing or resisting.

Now this word is also translated gentleness and sometimes people associate gentleness with weakness and softness but that really is not what it means, and this writer in discussing this goes on to say: It must be clearly understood therefore that the meekness manifested by the Lord, and commended to the believers, that it is the fruit of power.

The common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself, but the Lord was meek because He had the infinite resources of God at His command.

Described negatively meekness is the opposite of self assertiveness and self interest, it is that spirit that is neither elated nor cast down simply because it is not occupied with self at all.

I find that a rather interesting definition of the word for meekness.

Now coming more directly to Anabaptist teaching on humility.

Christians have traditionally considered pride to be the most basic of human sins, not only Anabaptists and their descendants but both Luther and Calvin considered pride the very essence of fallen humanity's rebellion against God.

Now Anabaptists also emphasized the virtue of humility and the evil of pride. However it seems that they did not so much talk about humility as an abstract ideal or a virtue that one merely has in his heart but rather they clearly understood humility was something that needs to be expressed in life, to be lived out in life.

One writer says that for the Anabaptists the one attitude underlying all sin was disobedience. And it seems from what I could gather that their emphasis was more on obedience than on humility as such, they did not emphasize humility as much, as far as using that term humility, but it was more emphasis on obedience but with that, they most certainly believed that obedience included humility.

Now thinking about that; Obedience in humility and then thinking again about what we read in **Philippians 2:3-8** where it says about Jesus that He

humbled Himself and became obedient unto the death of the cross. He humbled Himself under God's mighty hand, He submitted to God's will and that humility caused Him to be obedient to the will of God. Humility and obedience go together.

Two terms which the Anabaptists referred to more than humility are the German words "gelassenheit" and "nachfolge"

This word gelassenheit is an interesting word, some of you who studied history have come across this term I'm sure, Robert Friedman in his book "Anabaptist Theology" calls "gelassenheit" yieldedness or resignation to the will of God and renunciation of any form of selfishness. This included obedience to the commandments of God.

Now Robert Friedman also has an article in the Mennonite Encyclopaedia under the heading "gelassenheit" and this is what he says about it; "self surrender, resignation in God's will, yieldedness to God's will, self abandonment, that passive opening to God's will including the readiness to suffer for the sake of God. It also speaks of peace and calmness of mind."

And then he refers to an article in the Mennonite Quarterly Review where it suggests 15 possible translations for this word gelassenheit, none perfectly fitting he says. Then he says only if man relinquishes his self will may he become an instrument of God.

Now I was impressed with looking at this definition of this German word that the Anabaptists emphasized in life, how closely it follows the definition of the Greek word that is translated meekness in our New Testament. Now the word "nachfolge" literally means following after and it refers to discipleship, to the imitation and the following of Christ which we know was a strong tenet of the faith of the Anabaptists.

This basic understanding and outlook moulded the thinking and conduct of the Anabaptists.

And just trying to summaries what that led them to believe; It is from these that they had the clear concept that there are two kingdoms which led them to separation from the world and a willingness to suffer and to endure ridicule and suffer persecution. They saw themselves needing to identify with the suffering Saviour and His cross.

This willingness to suffer for the will of God also related to nonresistance and not depending on the sword and the arm of flesh, but depending on God. Truly they saw themselves as sheep among wolves. And even after their descendants came to America they did not use the term nonresistance like we do today but they rather referred to themselves as defenceless Christians, sheep among wolves without defence, following the meek and lowly Jesus.

They saw that as that which separated them from the world.

Of course included in all of this willingness to suffer the sword and not resisting was related to love for one's fellow man.

These concepts that we are thinking about this evening and this understanding of obedience and yieldedness, resignation to the Lord also influenced their concept of the church and the submission of the individual to the order and discipline of the Fellowship of believers.

When suffering was understood and accepted as part of following Christ humility was seen as included in that even though they didn't really need to say a lot about the word humility because all these things we have been thinking about are related to humility.

Now I would like to share a few things from some of the writings, this article in the Mennonite Encyclopaedia goes on to talk about this idea of yieldedness and resignation to the Lord he says: A beautiful example of this idea may be found in Michael Sattler's well known letter to the brotherhood at Horb sent out of his prison in May 1527, this is what he wrote: "In this peril I completely surrendered myself unto the will of the Lord and prepared myself even for death for His testimony, yet I deemed it necessary to stir you up to follow after us in the divine warfare."

You see in this yieldedness, this resignation to God's will, in this peril he says: I completely surrendered myself unto the will of the Lord.

Another example of the working out of this the concept that the Anabaptists had; In this same article from the Mennonite Encyclopaedia there is a reference to an account in the Martyrs Mirror which describes a man by the name of Hans van Overdam and he also wrote from his prison to the authorities and he said: "We would rather through the grace of God suffer our temporal bodies to be burnt, drowned, racked or tortured as it may seem

good to you or be scourged, banished or driven away or robbed of our goods then show any obedience contrary to the word of God and we will be patient therein, committing vengeance to God for we know that He says; that vengeance belongs to me and I will recompense."

What is he saying? That we would rather suffer all these things then to disobey God.

Thinking of another example of this humility and yieldedness we have the testimony of Menno Simon's from "Mennonites in Europe" (John Horsch). When he (Menno) joined the Anabaptists I'm not sure how long it was until he was asked by the groups associated with them to become their leader and he says about consenting to his ordination: "I consecrated myself soul and body to the Lord and committed myself to His gracious leading."

At a later date in answer to the accusation of having united with a seditious sect and being ordained by them Menno Simon's wrote, "I have been hauled unworthily to this office by a people who are willing to obey Christ and His word, who in the fear of God lead devoted lives, serve their neighbours in love, bore the cross of persecution, sought the welfare and salvation of all men, loved for righteousness and truth and abhorred wickedness and unrighteousness."

That is the testimony of Menno Simons related to his identification with the Anabaptists and his having become a leader among them. (The name Mennonite evolved later.)

Johannes Kessler who kept records of some of the things that took place in Switzerland during the time of the Swiss brethren there says this in describing the Swiss brethren: "Their daily walk and deportment appears to be pious, holy and blameless. They shun costly clothing, expensive food and drink, they clothe themselves with coarse cloth and cover their heads with broad felt hats. Their entire manner of life is completely humble, they bear no weapons neither the sword nor dagger." And so on.

I'm not so much thinking about what they taught as the examples that they left and how they taught by that example.

Another one from the Martyrs Mirror yet that I think touches on this idea of being the offscouring of the earth and separate from the world, the king-

dom of God as opposed to the kingdom of this world, some of you may be familiar with this but there is an account in the Martyrs Mirror page 453 of one called Anna of Rotterdam who was put to death for her faith.

Before being martyred she wrote a letter that was to be preserved for her son, who was yet a child at that time, to give him some direction when he grows up and she says this: "My son, hear the instruction of your mother; open your ears to hear the words of my mouth. Proverbs 1:8. Behold, I go today in the way of the prophets, apostles and martyrs, and drink the cup of which they all have drank. Matthew 20:23."

And then she goes on to say, I'm just picking out a few things here, "Therefore go in through the Strait gate, receive the chastisement and instruction of the Lord, bow your shoulders under His yoke and cheerfully bear it from your youth. If you therefore desire to enter into the regions of the holy world and into the inheritance of the saints, gird your loins and follow after them. Search the scriptures and it shall show you the ways."

And then later on in the same letter she says: "Therefore my child do not regard their number nor walk in their ways, remove thy foot from their path for they go to hell. But where you hear of the poor, sinful cast-off little flock which is despised and rejected by the world join them, for where you hear of the cross there is Christ, from there do not depart. Flee the shadows of this world and become united with God, fear Him alone and keep His commandments.." And so on.

One could sense the burden that she had for her son.

Well these are some illustrations of the emphasis of the Anabaptists, we see humility, and while the term may not be used we see it shining through.

Another example of the emphasis on humility and obedience.

In 1568 at a conference held by the Swiss brethren they decreed among other things: "...that brethren and sisters shall stay by the present form of regulation concerning apparel and make nothing for pride's sake."

That concept was followed through and was carried on. I remember some statements that my mother made that reflected that, that concept that if something is worn for something other than utility it is of "hochmut"(high-mindedness) or pride.

Now coming closer to our time.

We know that the Anabaptists suffered persecution and they suffered greatly for their faith but in later years after the descendants of the Anabaptists were no longer facing persecution and some of the suffering was not quite as relevant there was a greater emphasis on humility as a mark of the true child of God.

One illustration of this is the writings of Bishop Christian Burkholder who wrote "Address to Youth on Repentance and Saving Faith in Jesus Christ" published in 1804.

In this writing he says this: "The fruit of true repentance grows in a change of heart for the heart of man by nature is proud and conceited but the heart of a penitent is humble and contrite."

And then we go to approximately 100 years later and I came across this article on humility that was printed in the Gospel Witness, which would have been in the early 1900s, I think the Gospel Witness was published only for a short time from 1905 through to 1908, an article written by P J Blosser from South English Iowa and he says this: "Humility is a subject which we should emphasize with much force that we may get the importance of the condition impressed upon our minds. It is a condition of the heart which God has designed that man should possess but the tendency towards the opposite is very marked in man."

He then goes on to say later on: "Whenever pride and self are indulged our work and influence is marred. The more of the spirit and the likeness of the humble Saviour we reveal, the more effective will be our efforts in behalf of lost souls and the upbuilding of the church. It behoves every Christian professor to seek for a more thorough transformation in the likeness of our blessed of Saviour, discard everything that is detrimental to the condition of humility and usefulness to God."

I thought it was interesting how he ties humility in with usefulness to God. Later on at the end of the article he says: "Real humility seeks to fulfil God's purposes, looking to Him and depending on Him for strength, seeking to be clothed with His precious adorning of the soul which is the gift of the Holy Ghost that God may work through us to stay the incoming flood of wickedness that His Church may be preserved pure and holy until the coming of the Son of God."

I think an article like this reflects the fact that the church was involved in more than aggressive evangelism and I think with the more aggressive methods of evangelism and with borrowing some methods from the Protestant groups around them they saw an emphasis on the importance of humility as the key in keeping the church from going away from God.

Now I would like to think yet about some challenges for us today.

It is good to think about the Anabaptists what they taught, what they emphasized and what their understanding of the scriptures was, but what about us? What are we doing today?

We do not face persecution as such but rather we live in a time of relative ease and prosperity. In fact our brethren in business are respected and some may even be looked up to by men of the world.

I think one thing we need to continue emphasizing is a proper view of the church and the individual's relation to the group. Church membership involves agreeing to enter into a covenant and to abide by the standards established by the group.

To illustrate and to emphasize this in a recent book about an Old Order group, the writer is at one place describing the "gemein" we would translate that word as church in English, it is Pennsylvania Dutch for the German term "gemeinde" and this is what he says about this: "In the modern religious world a religious affiliation maybe one of an individual's many communities."

So what he is saying is that the religious connection a person has in much of society today is just one of the many communities that he is associated with but then this writer goes on to say: But for this group (the Old Order) the gemein is the community and that is the social unit in which they move and it goes on to say, "That new members willingly surrender some personal freedom and agree to abide by the regulations of the church. He says that further such a posture diverges radically from the core American values of individualism and independence."

Here is where we live brethren and sisters, we live in a Western society that puts a lot of emphasis on the individual and the individual's rights and not nearly as much emphasis on the group.

We will need to resist the individualism of our Western society!

Now we have over the years faced the accusation that our church puts too much emphasis on tradition and that we put church regulations ahead of the scriptures.

What about that accusation?

Well we know it is possible to do that, to have too much emphasis on tradition and not follow the scriptures, we know that is possible, but we agree that the Scriptures have final authority rather than church dogma and tradition, however we need to remember that one person's interpretation of the Bible is not the final authority.

There are individuals who are ready to stand on what they understand the Scripture to teach and go against everybody and they are sure they are on the right track.

Well that can be very individualistic.

Submission to God and submission to a scriptural church are not in conflict.

Closely related to this we need to avoid an unbalanced view of personal freedom.

It is true that the Anabaptists refusal to bow to the state contributed to the freedom as we know it in America today, our secular historians will acknowledge the contribution that the Anabaptists made to the kind of freedom that we know today, there is a definite connection there.

But we need to keep in mind that an anti-church, anti-authority attitude is not in keeping with biblical humility nor is it Anabaptist and you know some of the strong anti-government sentiment that comes through sometimes that eventually it is going to foster a strong anti-church authority attitude also and I think we need to beware of that.

We need to maintain separation from the world, this would be a subject in itself, but we need to continue to be a plain church.

Now I was just thinking about this recently as I observed some of our brethren.

Why is it brethren that some are ready to depend on their wives for identification?

You know we are the leaders and I think sometimes that some of our brethren are just fitting too much in with the world in their appearance and are not as obviously separated as they could be and should be.

I think also related to separation and maintaining separation is that we may not be on the cutting edge of economics nor technology. Now that doesn't mean that we are not aggressive in any way in economics, it doesn't mean that we don't use modern technology but we can't be on the cutting edge.

And sometimes I hear that there is among us a sort of a disdain, especially among some of the younger people, I don't know whether this is true or not but we hear that sometimes that there is a sort of a disdain for manual labour especially agriculture, it is looked down on and a sort of an elitism that goes with that, and if that is true that will undermine what we have been talking about and what the church needs to maintain in remaining separate from the world.

In conclusion I would like to just read from the supplement on our discipline entitled "Christian Graces" and read the article on humility. I think this indicates the ideals, that the church holds, this supplement on the "Christian Graces" was added to the Lancaster Conference discipline in the 1954 review/revision, that is over 50 years ago, and this is what it says about humility, originally it was called pride and it was in our group that this was changed to humility;

"Inasmuch as the Bible condemns pride in such strong language referring to its disastrous results to nations, peoples and individuals and holds forth the blessings of humility, that church seeks by the grace of God to be free from personal or ministerial emulation and rivalry but rather to express humility in church life, in the building of meeting houses, in our equipage, in the building and equipping of our homes, in our dress and in our relationships one to another.

Historically the Mennonite church, being a minority group, has always considered the life of humility as a characteristic of its faith.

Because of its educational advancement and its increasing publicity and worldly contacts may we labour and pray that we will not lose the blessing of the Lord because of a sense of self sufficiency and social importance that would cause her to minimize the true spiritual values which have meant so much in the past."

May we somehow catch a glimpse of that ideal and the need to continue it.

## WHAT OF THE ANABAPTIST LIGHTHOUSES?

### A Friendly Entreaty to All Heirs of the Anabaptist Faith

Since there are various Anabaptist movements, it should be noted that this article addresses Mennonite, Amish, and other groups that claim a common Anabaptist heritage. The writer is unaware of any present-day group or organization known by the name "Anabaptists"; (In North America) therefore the title is used to remain denominationally generic in this article. While the name "Anabaptist" was an unflattering title ascribed by the adversary to those that "rebaptized," it is now accepted by descendents of the faith they held. It will be used in the latter sense in this article.

Seaside lighthouses are not strategically placed to warn sailors of danger spots. They do not dictate movement to sailors. They are accurate reference points. They are as high as needed for sightlines. The sailors would identify the individual lighthouse.

This allowed the captain to establish the position of his ship and sail in safe areas according to the chart and compass. If any of the three—lighthouse, chart, or compass—was missing, misconstrued or faulty, the ship was prone to become grounded or suffer shipwreck.

Most lighthouses have been well kept for long periods of time for numerous generations of sailors. Today electronic global positioning systems have rendered the lighthouses nonessential for navigation. One could say that GPS is the new lighthouse. Many lighthouses have been well preserved as icons of what they stood for in bygone days and are tourist attractions. The moving of a lighthouse would call for a changing of the charts.

The original lighthouse at Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, was rebuilt only a short distance from the original location so as not to necessitate a change of charts. But alas, impending erosion again threatened its foundation, and it was moved again, but this time further, since it was no longer essential for navigation. When the Cape Hatteras lighthouse was moved, the present generation experienced nostalgia for where the landmark used to be. The next generation will remember, the third will hear about it, and the fourth may not even know about it.

The allegorical lighthouses under consideration here are The Eighteen Articles of Faith, drawn up at Dortrecht, Netherlands, in 1632, and the Thirty-three Articles of Faith, compiled in 1600 and recorded in the *Martyrs Mirror*, pp.373-410, and other commonly held principles of faith of the Anabaptist faith. Anabaptists have embraced these down through many genera-

tions. In the last two centuries, the adherents of Anabaptism have suffered an astonishing fragmentation. Amazingly, most, if not all, of the factions profess a direct lineage to the Eighteen Articles of Faith. Please refer to these Eighteen Articles and the Thirty-three Articles and the Bible in your considerations of the context of this writing.

These confessions of faith, like the lighthouses, are not strategically placed to warn Christians of danger spots. They do not dictate the movement of Christians. They are accurate reference points. They are as high as needed for sightline. The Christian can identify the individual lighthouse. This allows the Christian to establish the position of his life-ship and sail in safe areas according to the chart and compass.

These articles of faith are lighthouses of truth, but they are not the truth in themselves. Without the Bible, they lack foundation. The chart is the Holy Bible. The Holy Spirit is the Christian's compass. If any of these three, lighthouse, chart, or compass, is missing, misconstrued, or not heeded, our ship is prone to become grounded or suffer spiritual shipwreck. Today, many of these lighthouses have been "moved" or ignored. They are moved or removed because the "new light" obsoletes the need of them. Some stand well preserved as tourist attractions and, in history books, as icons of bygone days. The moving of a literal lighthouse would have called for a changing of the charts.

Our chart is unchangeable. When these lighthouses are moved, the existing generation experiences nostalgia for where the landmark used to be. The next generation remembers it, the third hears about it, and the fourth may never be told. So it has been with the Anabaptist lighthouses. Some were moved only a short distance the first time, and then it was more acceptable to move them again. Since the chart could not be changed, it is merely read differently with "new" eyes. Thus, whole congregations have fizzled out of the Anabaptist faith profession in one man's life span. Bible teaching that once stood as solid background and reason enough to obey is now nullified by "theology," "antiquated cultural practice," and current circumstances.

Let us consider some of the Anabaptist lighthouses.

**The Creation.** Our forefathers' confessions of faith state nothing other than exactly what the Scriptures plainly say, that each day of the creation is marked with "the evening and the morning were the first day," and "the evening and the morning were the second day," etc. The Anabaptist forefathers wrote little or nothing concerning evolution since the theory was not

"invented" until the nineteenth century. Creeping into modern-day Anabaptist circles are subtle allowances that the modern evolution theories are perhaps partially credible. It is purported that one day with God is as a thousand years and who knows but what God "evolved" man.

**The New Birth.** The Eighteen Articles of Faith depict changed individuals who are "sanctified, justified, and made children of God ... born again of God" (Article 6). They speak of repentance and reformation of life. Today, within Anabaptism some say the new birth is paramount, to others it is kept in the shadows and not to be openly professed personally. Some claim to know they are saved by grace, others again say it is not possible to know. Some require the scriptural, deep, life-changing repentance experience to validate true conversion, while others say the new birth is a beginning that takes place upon baptism and requires little more than a commitment.

**Believer's Baptism.** Anabaptist belief holds that baptism is to be administered only to those who have been truly converted and whose life confirms a changed heart. The rejection of infant baptism is based on the absolute requirement of a personal experience of repentance and finding forgiveness and peace with God, which infants cannot do. Today many in which the evidence of a true conversion is obviously lacking are being baptized under the name of the Anabaptist faith. Eligibility is commonly established on lip profession and conforming to church standards. Others again are strong on the conversion aspect but are weak in requiring conformance to church standards.

**Unity of the Church.** Our forefathers confessed that they believed in one united, undivided, and visible church. They identified how she may be recognized (by the members' unfeigned love one for another and the keeping of all the commandments of the Word). They did not teach perfection of the saints nor exclusive or earned rights to such a title. They taught that it is Biblical to hold that God can transfer the sceptre should the church become unworthy of this blessing. They did not believe that only those people in the church would be saved, rather that people must be saved before they can enter the church.

This lighthouse is often extinguished as being too exclusive. Many of Anabaptist heritage spiritualize the unity of Christ's body to include all sincere believers known to God. Scriptural admonition, excommunication, and avoidance have been rendered nearly impossible by allowing for fragmentation of the church as being God's plan. Some are even giving recognition

to non-Christian religions.

**A Close Communion.** Our forefathers were not troubled about this point. They openly confessed to be the bride of Christ, and open communion would therefore be spiritual adultery. The church is called to judge only those within, not those outside. Other Christians are not ostracized but are committed to God for further leading. Jesus said He must call them also, that there would be one fold.

**The Call and Election to the Ministry.** One man pastoral leadership was not advocated in Anabaptist history. Today, have some desired "a pastor like the world about us" as, in similar like fashion the Israelites desired a king? Seminaries are not as much as mentioned in the apostles' instructions for the qualification of a minister. Ordinary men have been great preachers, including the very apostles. Anabaptists have traditionally called leaders from the common brotherhood by lot or majority vote. The Bible does not commission women to preach the Word.

**Feet Washing.** When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, it is quite obvious that it was not for literal cleaning of their feet nor a mere custom. He commanded the disciples to follow His example. Many have discontinued this ordinance, claiming it was merely a courtesy in those days when people walked the dusty roads.

**Matrimony.** Our Anabaptist fathers sanctioned marriage between two believing persons, one man to one woman, in the same household of faith. They held to the scriptural teaching that marriage was binding for life. For two members, having married, to divorce and yet remain in the church is a contradiction and unscriptural. Today some liberal Anabaptists have moved or removed this lighthouse, giving in to the pressure from the divorce-riddled world. Unscriptural marriages are allowed to stand by human reasoning. Others take a zero tolerance approach, having a closed mind to dealing redemptively with those who erred in ignorance.

**Nonresistance.** This lighthouse cannot expect the support of the flesh. Anabaptists have consistently submitted to suffering persecution, fled to other countries, and retreated from public life rather than serve in the armed forces in any form. Furthermore, many quietly suffered personal material loss, insult, and physical injury as a result of being obedient to Jesus' doctrine of turning the other cheek. The true Anabaptists were sometimes known as the "defenseless Christians."

**Nonconformity.** Anabaptists taught against finery in houses, possessions,

and wardrobes, as does the Holy Bible. Historical accounts establish that Anabaptists under persecution were not readily distinguishable from the common public at sight. Rather, their godly living and honest answers to questions revealed them to be of the Anabaptist persuasion. Alas, in our day much of the world has succumbed to the unchristian, immodest, fashion-driven lust of men, which forces our generation of Christians to appear readily "different" by default.

**Excommunication.** Anabaptist ancestors did not hesitate on this clear Bible teaching. Spiritually dead and gross sinners must be excommunicated to maintain the purity of the church and to recover the lost. Our forefathers' confession is clear that only those who are proven to be out of the grace of God should be excommunicated. It is the lack of spirituality that brings spiritual death. Such a work is then honoured throughout the congregations of the church.

**Avoidance of the Expelled.** Anabaptists have struggled with this doctrine for centuries, but it won't go away. It is uncomfortable for the one avoided and for the one avoiding, and is intended to be so. If not practiced in true love, it can be destructive. Therefore we tend to stick our heads in the sand to not see the light from this lighthouse. But practiced in a scriptural way out of sincere love, it has won many, by their own testimony, back to Christ.

Some generations ago some Anabaptists pulled this lighthouse down, and it is now forgotten by many current-day Anabaptists. Deemed uncharitable, no use was found for it on the shores of life. Not only are excommunicated members invited to eat at the same table, but they are taken into business partnerships, employment, and intimate conversation. Others follow a harsh adherence and near-vengeful observance that does not resemble the "treat-him-as-a-brother" avoidance taught in the Scriptures.

**Prayer Veiling.** That Anabaptist women have worn a literal prayer veil, although some have ceased to use it, is self-establishing. In fact, it is scarcely fifty years since women in general have ceased wearing some type of headgear for church attendance. Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 varies greatly. A literal covering allows this teaching to read without a glitch, needing no qualification. Some cite that it was merely a custom for that time, and Paul was saying they now had no such custom. Would he teach it and then dismiss it? Others claim that the hair is to be the covering. Careful reading of Paul's teaching disqualifies this explanation. If the hair

is the covering, how can a woman be shorn if she is not covered? And what then of the man's hair? In three generations or less, the once indispensable lighthouse of the head covering teaching has been moved to the side as outdated by many.

**The Great Commission.** Extensive outreach efforts at home and abroad are recorded through Christian histories, in time of persecution and times of religious freedom. To this end we have a direct commandment from Jesus, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). It is obvious in the Scriptures that the apostolic church carried on home and foreign mission efforts. The true Anabaptist faith has been known for its evangelistic outlook.

**Education.** Anabaptists have traditionally advocated that to be studious is scriptural, but education pursued with honour-seeking motives and humanistic views is an abomination to God. The Anabaptist faith holds that knowledge is not evil, but it can easily foster egotism. Historically, Anabaptists have made their way by being employed in the common crafts, trades, agriculture, and related fields. Lighthouses of faith have been razed to allow access to occupations that are inaccessible by those lacking the required degrees of education.

**The Second Coming of Christ.** Jesus spoke of His return only as a singular event, and that in one day. Article 18 does not mention anything other than a "twinkling of an eye" return of Christ and then the destruction of the earth. In His teaching concerning His return, Jesus did not mention a literal, earthly reign. The doctrine of a millennial reign and the so-called rapture are imported and did not shine from the old Anabaptist lighthouse.

In closing, this is a layman's appeal to all people who hold and embrace the Anabaptist faith as identification of personal faith. I am your fellow Anabaptist (Mennonite) with a burden for the keeping of the faith once delivered to the saints.

This writing is not intended to be a medium for study. It is intended to be an influence that will cause the readers to search "if these things be so." It is the author's position that there are sufficient writings readily available to the true seeker.

May the reader be inspired to personally search out the true patriarchal Anabaptist faith.

*Brother Adam*

## Mennonites and Patriotism

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A patriot serves his country. His deepest loyalties are to his fatherland. Across the centuries of time, earthly kingdoms have mostly been hostile to the heavenly kingdom.

The psalmist pondered. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed" (Psalm 2:1, 2) Peter and the other apostles replied, " We ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

The world's understanding is that to be patriotic, one must be willing to fight for his country and to give his life in its defense. Intensified lines of tension are drawn over what Mennonites believe the actions of a good citizen are and what patriots believe they should be. The patriot tends to view the Mennonite as a substandard citizen. That should be no surprise. The Mennonites' understanding of Christ's teachings is at odds with that of most other Christians and completely so with the more godless regimes.

How can Christians, while living on the earth, give their allegiance first to the eternal heavenly kingdom? In the sixteenth century Michael Sattler stated in his personal confession of faith, "The Devil is the prince of all the world" (article 10), "Christ's citizenship is in heaven" (article 16), "Christians are the family of God, and citizens of the saints, not of the world" (article 17), and "They are the true Christians who do the teachings of Christ with works" (article 18). For beliefs such as these Sattler endured cruel persecution and death.'

The seventeenth-century Anabaptists also suffered severely. Their refusal to fight or to identify with the state church occasioned many of the European governments to try to exterminate them. "The" described the scene thus: While congregated, studying the Sermon on the Mount, there rushed upon them as wolves upon sheep, some men with swords and ropes to take them to jail. Here learned men sought to lead them from their faith. Even though they had paid their taxes, tithes, tolls, and duties, they were reviled and exiled

In the New World, Mennonites faced new challenges. They had willingly given their promise of allegiance to the British government of Pennsylvania in return for the promise of religious freedom. By allowing them to

give their word rather than an oath, the government had recognized their higher allegiance to God's kingdom. Unfortunately, fifty years later, the new revolutionary Assembly of Pennsylvania required a new "Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance." This the Mennonites refused to do, not only because it was an oath, but because they had already given their word to the king of England. Some Mennonites felt so strongly about this that it eventually influenced their choice to relocate to Upper Canada in the early 1800s where they could still be under the British sovereign.

Franconia bishops Christian Funk and Andrew Ziegler were deeply dismayed at the prospect of war against their sovereign, the king of England. Relating to the conflicting demands of the two earthly Caesars, who demanded simultaneous loyalty, became such a contentious issue that the heavenly call to love one another was nearly drowned out.

Seventy-eight-year-old Benjamin Hershey, on behalf of the Mennonites and Brethren, wrote a "Short and Sincere Declaration" directed to the Pennsylvania Assembly. He expressed thanks for "the jewel of 'liberty of conscience' to those who cannot bear arms." He explained the Mennonite beliefs about war and the Christian's duty to feed the hungry and to give the thirsty drink. He expressed dedication "to serve all Men in every Thing that can be helpful to the Preservation of Men's Lives, but [could] find no Freedom in ... assisting in any Thing by which Men's Lives are destroyed or hurt" The reason for this was not rebellion against the revolutionary government, but loyalty to a higher government.

In 1862 seventy-two men headed for West Virginia to avoid serving in the Confederate army. They were captured by several men, marched back to Virginia, and taken to prison at Richmond. What to do with these men prompted discussion at the Confederate Congress. The article on nonresistance in the Dortrecht Confession of Faith was read in Congress, provoking the question: Does anyone here know such people? The answer was affirmative. The faithfulness of these men to a higher cause moved the earthly authorities to a little leniency, and exemption was granted.'

In the military camps during World War I, the young men who refused to neglect their heavenly citizenship experienced much verbal and physical abuse. They endured cursings, mockery, cold showers, beatings, broken bones, court martials, solitary confinement on bread and water, and dunking in latrines. Several died as a result of mistreatment.

Back home the families of conscientious objectors faced challenges too.

Neighbours whose sons were fighting on foreign soil ridiculed them as resisters, rebellious, cowards, and slackers. They also faced the issue of buying Liberty Bonds, a process by which one showed his patriotism by loaning money to the government to be used in the war effort. And what about conducting the funerals of those who died while in camp? The army insisted on a military burial. At times the community or local magistrates challenged the church's right to excommunicate members who had forsaken their higher loyalties by joining the army.

Not all Mennonites took identical positions when it came to acts of symbolic patriotism such as saluting the flag. In Lancaster County, most children from Mennonite homes did salute the flag and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. In Warwick County, Virginia, they recited the pledge but did not salute because they believed it savoured of militarism and because only persons should be saluted, not objects.

Even though conflicts have arisen because of the dual citizenship that Mennonites claim, we are grateful that they have been relatively few and that our government continues to be more lenient than most. For instance, the Oath of Citizenship required of naturalized citizens today can be modified in various ways so as not to be offensive to those who claim a higher citizenship. One is allowed to affirm rather than to swear, and one is allowed to promise to perform work of national importance under civilian direction as opposed to bearing arms or performing non-combatant service.

The greatest challenges arise when the activities of the state or a state church demands actions of its citizens that are contrary to our understanding and applications of the Scriptures. Which loyalty will take precedence—the earthly or the heavenly? The pages of history reveal multitudes of agonizing decisions. This difficulty will last until the end of time. As Mennonites, we aim to continue to be constructive in our relationships with fellow citizens, to be productive in our earthly labours, to love our enemies, and to be in submission to rulers and to pray for them. When the demands of earthly rulers contradict heavenly mandates, we will renounce our earthly citizenship in favour of the heavenly at the cost of friendships, possessions, family, house, home, and even life itself. May we all purpose anew to allow nothing to "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

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