

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

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

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man" (Prov. 14:12), and we often confidently follow that way and feel we are in control. When a situation arises which is out of our control, an inner struggle may arise. Our first impulse is to flee the storm. If that is not possible, we fortify ourselves for it. If the storm causes us inconvenience or loss, we tend to blame something or someone for it.

Storms, however, often bring good. They reveal to us how weak we are. We cannot stop or change the course of a hurricane. Neither can we stop Satan's attacks or change the impulses of unregenerate man. Our only recourse is to flee to our Master. Often it is a test to believe that Jesus can and will still the storm. When faith fails, there is utmost danger of shipwreck. Oh, that we would have the strength to remain calm and let Jesus take over in the storm. (Read Matthew 8:23-27, 14:22-33). Jesus will stop the attacks of the evil one and remove our doubts and fears. When fear is replaced with trust, quietness is the result. Faith recognizes our weakness and God's power, if not we remain frightened and troubled. Let us have a relationship with our Lord so that we will recognize His voice when He speaks. In a storm, if we mistake the help Christ tries to give us, we will fail. Storms, tests, and trials have a cleansing effect upon our lives. Times of stress will reveal what is in our heart.

Strength to withstand the crises of life depends upon our ability to draw nourishment and strength from God's Word. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom"(Colossians 3:16). Though Jesus is not with us in His physical body, we have His Word to speak to us. We also have the Holy Spirit whose work is to explain Christ's will to us. When we ask our Lord for help to cope with life's difficulties we will understand His will better.

We have chosen heaven as our destination and Christ as our Guide. Let us accept the way He shows us, whatever it entails, and trust Him to get us to our goal.

Editor's note: I am indebted to an anonymous brother for this encouraging word.

MINISTER'S CORNER.**Voluntary Concept of Church Membership**

Bro. Galen Weaver, Danville Mennonite Church, PA.

I trust you are here because you want to be. Voluntary Church membership means to be a part of and a willingness and a desire to be where the people of God are. We are glad to be there. Voluntary begins with *vol* that is a Latin root which means "the will." Of course, voluntary involves the will. It means to do something by one's own will or consent. God implanted within every human being the power to choose. What we are thinking about is the freedom that God allows. The Scriptures suggest that we can choose our church.

In studying for this topic, I looked through The Eastern Testimony looking for an article with this title, and in all seven volumes I did not find any article with exactly this title. I suppose there were articles that dealt with some of the issues that we will talk about. However, it was interesting then, when I turned to The Historical Journal that the very first article, in the very first issue was The Anabaptist Concept of Liberty of Conscience. This is a very closely related subject. It is where voluntary church membership is perhaps focusing on the view-point of the Church. The Anabaptist concept of liberty of conscience is basically the same idea. I will read from this article. "The term liberty of conscience embodies the basic principle of voluntarism as practiced by the Anabaptists in the face of religious tolerance from the established churches of the Sixteenth century. The Anabaptists rejected all persecution." That means that they did not practice persecution. They certainly could not reject persecution — they were severely persecuted. "And clearly held that any attempt to force the faith on others was unscriptural." This is the concept that we are thinking of. "Their concept of true liberty of conscience was that the State should not demand religious conformity from the populace, but rather that the Christian, while being a law abiding asset to the State, should be free to move as the Holy Spirit directs and have a conscience void of offence in the light of God's Word."

While maybe we do not think of this subject as much as a current issue, it was a very serious and current issue in the rise of the Anabaptist church many years ago in the Sixteenth century (in the 1500's). My outline is I) A

Bible basis for the concept of voluntary church membership. II) The historic record. III) Our present practice of voluntary church membership.

1) I was impressed and drawn to Acts 2:41 in thinking about voluntary church membership. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." There we have voluntary church membership. The church was for the people who wanted it. It was those who gladly received it. That is who it was for. A little later in chapter 5, after the experience of Ananias and Sapphira when sin was dealt with, there were some people who did not want it. "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.... And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them" (Acts 5:11, 13). They did not want to expose themselves to what the Church represented.

In Acts 2:41, I see two very basic doctrines or principles that are involved in this subject. When we think about the free will of man, we also need to consider the sovereign will of God. We have that in 2:41, "they that gladly received . . ." what? "His word." What is His Word? It is the revelation of the sovereign will and mind of God. Yes, voluntary church membership means that God allows man to make the Church whatever he wants to make it. Men have done that. They have made the Church whatever they want to make it. Nevertheless, as far as God's viewpoint in the matter, He has a sovereign mind and will about what the Church is. It is revealed in His Word and He has given us the freedom and opportunity to either choose His sovereign will for the Church and what it represents — surrender ourselves to that, or else we can serve ourselves. If we want to, we can serve the devil or make the Church what we want it to be.

However, the sovereign will of God has in mind something for the Church.

What is the Church according to Acts 2? What is the Word that these people received? In Acts 2:23, 24, Peter was preaching about Jesus. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: (24) whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." The blood sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ is a part of the foundation of the Church. It is also the resurrection; Jesus was loosed from death and raised again by the power of God and He

did not "see corruption" (verse 27). The power of the Holy Spirit came in verse 17, "in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh." All of this is involved in the New Covenant which God introduced, which includes the Church. When they received this message, what happened? It says that they were added to the Church. Verse 41 simply says "added unto them," but verse 47 says they were, "added to the church."

The message, the Gospel of salvation, "the whosoever will" message of John 3:16 forms a body. It forms the Church. Those who receive this message make a body and the eternal truth of God's Word forms a body. Recently there was a man who was reading Rod and Staff literature and was interested in the clear Gospel teaching that he was getting in these articles and booklets that he was reading. He sought out the bookstore in Wisconsin. (I think he lived in Chicago or somewhere). He said, "I came to find more about the people. The truth that I am reading in your literature, this kind of literature must form a body." How right he was. The truth of God's Word, His sovereign will, and all that includes forms a body. People are added to it. People are drawn to it because it is of God and it is the only way of salvation.

I would like to point out something quickly here. We usually think of the Church and the new covenant as the new free covenant of God and that the old covenant was more legalistic and all of that. I would like to point out to you that really God created man in the beginning with a free will. Adam and Eve had a very unique covenant relationship with God (if you want to call it that). Of course, they fell from that. They failed but it was an agreement between them and God where they had the freedom either to do what God said or to choose their own way. Adam and Eve had that and then we have the fall.

Nevertheless, right there in Genesis 3, the chapter of the fall, we have the promise of Jesus coming of the seed of the woman. From that point on there were various covenants and stages which God outlined through the Old Testament. In all of them, it was a covenant by the free choice of man and by blood sacrifice, all of which pointed forward to the sacrifice that Peter was talking about in Acts 2. All through the Old Testament, the true people of God were the people who voluntarily committed themselves to obey God and to take care of their sins by blood sacrifice, voluntarily. It was that way the whole way through the Old Testament.

In the Old Covenant, under the Sinai covenant especially, there was

more of a legalistic approach. That is true, but read Hebrews 11, all the way through it was the people of faith, the people who chose God by faith that were a part of the true remnant people of God. Not nearly all of them did. Paul says in Romans 9:6 about Israel, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." Not nearly all of the national descendants of Jacob were remnant people who voluntarily chose to be right with God by blood covenant. God was seeking.

He told them at the time of the Sinai covenant, in Exodus 19 what He was looking to make them through this covenant and through the sacrifices that He was instituting at this time. "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: (6) and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" (Exodus 19:5, 6). Then Peter quotes basically the same words in 1 Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." It is by choice, by faith, and by a voluntary choice. While the covenants did change, this principle that man was created as a free moral agent and that God had a sovereign will for man to be saved and to be holy did not. It followed the whole way down through all those covenants right into the new covenant, a choice of faith. Elimelech the Israelite chose Moab, Ruth the Moabitess chose Israel.

Voluntary church membership will allow us to make a church what we want it to be. However, the true sovereign will of God has in mind a holy people and a way that we can truly be saved. We hold in our hands (may I call it) a "terrible responsibility," whether or not we will take it or not. To think that God lets us make that choice. However, God is glorified when we voluntarily make that choice. This is in opposition to the idea that He makes robots out of us and we have a doctrine that would teach that God does do that for us and He decides who will be saved and who will be lost. Certainly, God knows that in His foreknowledge but He does not decide that for us. That is our choice.

Thus, the Early Church was a voluntary Church. Those who wanted it became a part of it. Those who did not want it did not need to become a part of it. They were very soon persecuted by the Jewish leaders and even the Romans because they wanted all people to come under their jurisdiction and their laws. These people refused to yield their consciences on

the principles of the Word of God. They endured persecution for the sake of the true Church and the cause of the truth.

II) The historical record. I will not spend a lot of time on this but we usually recognize the date 313 A.D. In the Fourth century the Church continued as a persecuted and voluntary Church more or less. There were certainly divisions in this church and there were differences of thinking and everything. Nevertheless, we mark the year 313 A.D., when Constantine was the Roman emperor. Rome was at that time the ruler of the world. This Emperor finally relaxed persecution and actually turned around and began to promote Christianity. He allowed, for a time at least, freedom of all religions. Later he declared that Christianity would be the religion of the civil government.

Then in 380 A.D. another important marker was the Emperor Theodosius who was also a Roman emperor. He went a step further and forced the Christian religion on all people. I think the reason he did this probably was more for political reasons, political expedience as a ruler, than it was that he favoured Christianity that much himself. He saw this as a way to create what we call a "monolithic" people — to unite a very diverse society into a people that were mostly a light in many ways. He united religion and government to pull the people together. We call that a monolithic society a united people. Of course, when the state enforces Christianity, and when he did that, a lot of things changed about the Church. Suddenly many people who had been pagans were a part of this church. It was not by their choice but it was because this would be the type of liturgy that was practiced in their local congregation — the "Christian" religion. Of course, many of the practices became paganized through this.

If you have a State church then we have what you call a "parish" church, where everyone in Lincoln Township (or whatever your township is) goes to the Lincoln Township church. Everybody between highway A and highway B and Route 1 and Route 2, in this block, they go to this church. That is a parish Church concept. That is what developed. Then, of course, came infant baptism. Instead of believers' baptism they baptized infants soon after they were born. They became a part of the Church not by their choice but by infant baptism. Through all this the office of the Pope was established. The bishop of Rome became the Pope. He was over all the bishops. As this thing became more political, after a while there were conflicts between the kings and the Popes.

We have all types of interesting stories recorded for us in history about the struggles between the kings and the Popes. One that I thought about as I was preparing is the Episcopalian (Anglican) church. They are having all kinds of struggles with these moral issues. The history of the Episcopalian church grows out of this struggle. Henry VIII of England wanted to marry another wife and so he wanted the Pope to give him an annulment that allowed for annulling a marriage and the Pope would not do it. Therefore, he decided that England would establish their own church hierarchy and they would do away with the Pope who did not want to give him an annulment of his marriage. He established what became the Anglican Church, and later in America the Episcopalian church that grew out of this struggle. It was kings and Popes struggling for power far from the true voluntary church concept. While all this was happening, you are probably well aware that there were faithful remnant churches, true voluntary churches. They were persecuted of course. There were varying degrees of soundness in their doctrine and some of the history on these groups is sketchy. Nevertheless, we believe there was a faithful remnant all through these years. This period, especially from about 500 A.D. until 1500 A.D. (At least 1200 A.D.) is sometimes referred to as the Dark Ages. It was because of the spiritual darkness that grew out of this mass deception in the State churches and all this wrong teaching. However, there was a small light; the torch of truth continued in the true voluntary church concept.

Then, we come to the reformers. Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin would be some of the ones that are more familiar to us. It seems like these men in the early 1500's began with high Scriptural ideals for establishing a Church back on the Biblical standard. They made reforms to the Church, but they came short of standing up against the authority of the State and exercising genuine Biblical Church authority. Probably you are familiar with this but I want to read from the book *The Swiss Anabaptists* the account of the disputation that these brethren were having with Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich on the abolition of the mass. Zwingli, at the end of this disputation insisted that the Council of Zurich will make final disposition of this matter. He knew that the Bible taught that mass was unscriptural. It was not sound according to the Scripture, but he finally said, "But the Council of Zurich will decide the matter." Simon Stumpf uttered his memorable reply, "Master Ulrich you have no right to leave the decision of this question to the Council. The matter is already decided. The Spirit of God decided." There we

have the willingness, and the spirit of the Anabaptists to break with the authority of State churches over the Word of God. They let the Word of God and the sovereign will of God create a Church, form a Church, based on the truth of the Scriptures like the New Testament outlines for us.

Then, we have the record of the Anabaptist brethren organizing, and breaking with Zwingli. Menno Simons, a Catholic priest in Holland also broke with the Catholic church and established a sound and true Biblical church. It was a voluntary church for believers only. Only adults were baptized on confession of faith, and an emphasis on obedience to the Scriptures and holy living. We trace our roots to these small beginnings in Zurich, especially in the brethren who broke with Zwingli in Zurich.

I would just like to read another quote from The Swiss Anabaptists in relation to the relationship to these small groups in the dark ages and these Swiss brethren who began this new voluntary church in Switzerland. "It is not true to say that after the reformers challenged the authority of the Pope and drew attention to the Word that suddenly the Anabaptists with stricter views appeared all over Europe, but rather before the rise of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, particularly Bohemia, Bavaria, Switzerland and Germany, many persons who followed the doctrine which the Waldensians and other remnant groups had maintained. Their vision was a separate, pure visible Church of true saints, not reforming or purifying the State church system. This is no attempt to prove a physical connection between the Waldensians and the Swiss Anabaptists. Rather, that the rich heritage and foundation of the doctrine of the Swiss Anabaptists was not dead in the dark ages and suddenly brought to life by the reformers, but rather had been embraced by faithful Waldensian peasants and that for many, many years."

God had His Church. We are glad for the rise of these faithful brethren who broke with this longstanding tradition of the authority of the State over the Church and let the Word of God dictate what the Church should be — that sovereign will of God that we saw there in Acts.

III) The practical side of this. 1) One thing that I would like to quickly point out. When we get to this subject of the Swiss Anabaptists and their break with the reformers in the time of the Reformation, we often refer to a work by Harold S. Bender, an eminent Mennonite historian of the middle Twentieth Century. He wrote what is entitled The Anabaptist Vision. First of all, he actually gave it as a speech. Bender was a Mennonite historian,

but he was a member of a national religious historian's group, and he was actually the president of that group. He gave this Anabaptist Vision in a speech in Columbia University in New York City in 1943, in the middle of World War II. The essence of what he said in the opening statements of this vision (speech) he quoted an eminent Quaker historian Rufus Jones who said that the Anabaptists were very much the forerunners of shaping: "... A new type of Christian society which the modern world, especially in American England has now been slowly realizing an absolutely free and religious society — a state in which every man counts as a man and has his share in shaping both Church and State." He goes on to say then, in his own words that, "There can be no question but the great principles of freedom of conscience, separation of Church and State and voluntarism in religion so basic in American Protestantism and so essential to democracy ultimately are derived from the Anabaptists of the Reformation period."

There is a danger I would like to point out. This is a work of a very capable Mennonite historian and I do not want to criticize his ability as an historian. I do think that he was playing a little bit into the hands of the society whom he was addressing that night to say some things that might have made his church a little more appealing as a nonresistant church in a middle of a war that these men were in favour of and they knew that this Mennonite man was not. I think it is a little bit of an overstatement to claim that the Mennonites somehow influenced this whole thing to get it started. James Lowry, another historian who is part of the Washington/Franklin County Conference, wrote a critique on the Anabaptist vision. He points this out that it is perhaps a bit of an overstatement that we can trace all this free church and democracy even to the Anabaptists. I think that is a bit of an overstatement. I am not saying all this to criticize the whole work of Harold S. Bender but I think we need to be careful on that point.

The reason I made that point, perhaps not as clearly as I should have, relates to our present practice of taking the freedoms of the US constitution to have churches the way we believe are right. We appreciate that the Constitution of the United States actually (and especially the Bill of Rights) allows for religious freedom. We do not take the position of demanding those rights. Sometimes we have this spirit in our day, even among us, where people become somewhat vocal about the Supreme Court making wrong interpretations of the US Constitution and it is not according to the Bill of Rights and the original intent of the framers of the Constitution and

all of this. We ought to be fairly quiet about that. Our forefathers did not demand these freedoms. We do not have these freedoms today because our forefathers were activists who paved the way for this. We have them because God made a way for people who were willing to shed their blood to do what they believed was right according to their consciences and according to the truth of God's Word. Let us do the same. That is one thing I wanted to read from James Lowry's critique on this.

"I believe that the Anabaptists aimed as something completely different from the reformers in their intent to sweep away the medieval debris collected in the Catholic church. I believe the Anabaptists did not attempt to sweep the Church. They attempted not a reformation but a restitution of the New Testament Church. The separation between the Anabaptists and the reformers was complete as it should be today between their descendants." I think that is right. We need to keep a clear line. We are not political activists trying to remake America according to its Constitution.

2) With voluntary church membership there is the danger and the need to safeguard against becoming a mere folk church. Our churches are made up largely of "ethnic" Mennonites (at least here in this country). Some of our mission churches have larger percentages of people who are not ethnic Mennonites or from our background. When we have this (and we want this) we want our children to embrace the church that we have. However, when we do that there is always the danger of simply baptizing all the youth that come to a certain age regardless of the fruit of the Spirit. In other words a folk church is a church where we simply baptize and include everybody that grows up here basically. That is what it is.

3) We need to maintain a strong emphasis on a personal new birth experience. It is the experience of Acts 2, of repenting and applying the blood of Jesus and looking for the fruits of the Spirit. We have counsel before receiving applicants and I think it is right that we are sensitive to the counsel concerns that come about applicants. I do not think it is right for an individual member to stand up against the class, against the rest of the body and withhold the class from baptism, but I think we should be sensitive to the concern. We do not want to become a mere folk church.

4) We need to have a strong emphasis on voluntary surrender to the body. Is it wrong for youth to do things that they do not understand or agree with? To surrender to the church? Is that not voluntary? Is that somehow violating these principles if we do things that we do not quite understand or

agree with? Did you know that in Acts 15, when the leaders of the church there faced the issue of what to do about the gentiles and the Jews and bring this whole thing together, the Church leaders did not all agree either. They discussed this issue and matter and they surrendered to one another and they agreed on something. It is noble if we are part of a Scriptural and sound church group that we would also be willing to surrender and voluntary yield to the voice of the church.

I like what William McGrath wrote in *The Anabaptists: Neither Catholic or Protestant in relation to voluntary church*. "The Anabaptists believed in the free establishment and protection of a disciplined church consisting only of born again disciples united in a voluntary, self-binding commitment to the standards and the discipline of the New Testament as interpreted and applied through the brotherhood." That is what we do when we yield to the church. We are willingly allowing ourselves to be bound by these things.

5) Another point in relation to our present practice is the danger of a wrong view of the church discipline. We must believe (and we did not look at a lot of these Scriptures) according to Acts 15; Matthew 16:19, the Church has been called by Jesus to extend the principles of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are not complete in applying everything in all areas of daily and practical living. God has intended, and Jesus said that the Church was responsible to bind and loose and extend the principles of Scripture in practical areas of life. We are called to voluntarily surrender ourselves to this so that we receive help that is broader than ourselves. If every man does what is right in his own eyes, in the church, then we are limited to ourselves and what we can understand. However, by surrendering ourselves to a church discipline, we expose ourselves to a counsel and a body of truth that is much larger than what we can come up with on our own.

There is always the danger in talking about this wrong view of discipline, to take a legalistic approach to it. Many times we think of legalism as too many rules, and loving rules. However, another definition of legalism that I am thinking of here is that we are very law conscious. If there is no rule against it then we will do it. If no one makes us do something then we will not do it. Our church has had the practice over the years of issuing bishop statements and statements from the church wide ministry addressing areas that were not necessarily a part of the discipline, but do represent the voice of concern and the voice of the church about current issues at this

time. When we take the attitude that because it is not a part of the church discipline then I can disregard that and it does not really matter, we are taking a legalistic approach. We should appreciate and welcome all the help that comes to us and voluntarily submit ourselves to it.

6) Another current issue that I thought about is a proper view of excommunication. At first thought excommunication may not seem to be a part of a voluntary church concept. It might seem that it does not fit. Excommunication is perhaps putting a person out of the church against his own will. Again, though the will of God has determined what the church is to be, when members step outside then according to 1 Corinthians 5, it is redemptive to help them to see that they have stepped outside of the sovereign will of God for their lives. It is redemptive to give them help by cutting off their church membership so that they can see their state and see where they are.

There is one area that I have appreciated over the years about our church that is different from some other churches that are similar to us. We do not use this excommunication against those who do not agree with us. Sometimes there are issues where people become disenchanted with the church and they do not agree with the way the church is handling something administratively. We have maintained voluntarism in this. We do not take the step and excommunicate them from the church for that. Of course, I am probably on a little delicate ground here with the little bit of time that I have to explain everything that I mean. Nevertheless, we do not take that final step and put them out of the church because they disagree. We have allowed people to establish other churches and had a certain amount of respect for them in doing that. We have not held ourselves up as the ultimate and only church and excommunicated everyone else. I think that is a right view of this idea of voluntary church membership.

7) We should also have a voluntary concept of service in the church. If we are asked to teach a Sunday School class, we should do it willingly even if we think others could do it better. I am concerned when a congregation cannot get adult teachers for more than a Sunday or two at a time. Also, we should be volunteering our time for day work projects among the brethren. Occasionally, we should volunteer for a week or more of relief work if we are able.

I grew up "two doors" from a small volunteer fire department. From my childhood impression, some of those men likely were on the fire team for the evening domino games and were not likely very avid fire fighters. Are

we volunteering as we should to serve in the Church of Jesus Christ, or are we merely along for the company?

In closing, we have either the choice of serving self and sin, or holiness by blood covenant in church where Christ's fullness dwells. "Which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23).

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SNAPSHOTS

Extract from "The Martyrs Mirror"

ANNEKEN HEYNDRICKS, A. D. 1571

In the year 1571, there was burnt alive, at Amsterdam in Holland, for the testimony of Jesus, a woman named Anneken Heyndricks, aged about fifty-three years. Having come from Friesland to Amsterdam, she was betrayed by her neighbor, the underbailiff, who entered her house, in order to apprehend her. She said to him with a meek spirit, "Neighbor Evert, what is your wish? If you seek me, you can easily find me; here I am at your service." This Judas the traitor said, "Surrender, in the name of the king." And he bound Anneken with a rope, and led her along with him, as Judas and the scribes had done with our predecessor, Jesus. When they had arrived on the Dam, Anneken said, that they should not hesitate to look at her, since she was neither a harlot nor a thief, but a prisoner for the name of Jesus.

After arriving in prison, she thanked and praised her Lord and Creator with an humble heart, for counting her worthy to suffer for His name's sake. And she boldly confessed her faith before Pieter the bailiff and the other lords. They greatly tormented her with Baal's priests, in order to cause her to apostatize; but through the grace of God she valiantly resisted it. This greatly astonished the bailiff, that she did not pay more regard to his spiritual lords, and he said to Anneken, "Sir Albert, our chaplain, is such a holy fellow, that he ought to be mounted in fine gold; and you will not hear him, but make sport of him; hence you must die in your sins, so far are you strayed from God."

Thus they suspended this God-fearing aged woman (who could neither read nor write) by her hands, even as Christ had been, and by severe torturing sought to extort from her the names of her fellow believers, for they thirsted for more innocent blood. But they obtained nothing from Anneken, so faithfully did God keep her lips. Hence the bailiff preferred against her

the charge of being infected with heresy, having forsaken the mother, the holy church, now about six years ago and having adopted the cursed doctrine of the Mennonists, by whom she had been baptized on her faith, and married a husband among them. Thereupon she was sentenced to be burnt alive. She thanked the lords, and said with humility, that if she had done amiss to any one, she asked them to forgive her. But the lords arose and made no reply. She was then tied on a ladder. Then she said to Evert the under-bailiff, her neighbor, "Thou Judas, I have not deserved it, that I should be thus murdered." And she asked him not to do this any more, or God should avenge it on him. Thereupon Evert angrily said, that he would bring all those that were of her mind into the same trouble. Then the other bailiff came once more with a priest, tormenting her, and saying that if she did not renounce, she should go from this fire into the eternal. Thereupon Anneken steadfastly said, "Though I am sentenced and condemned by you, yet what you say does not come from God; for I firmly trust in God, who shall help me out of my distress, and deliver me out of all my trouble." They did not let her speak any more but filled her mouth with gunpowder, and carried her thus from the city hall to the fire into which they cast her alive. This done, the traitor Evert, the underbailiff, was seen to laugh, as though he thought he had done God an acceptable service. But the merciful God, who is the comfort of the pious, shall give this faithful witness, for this brief and temporal tribulation, an everlasting reward, when her stopped mouth shall be opened in fullness of joy, and these sad tears (for the truth's sake) shall be wiped away, and she be crowned with eternal joy with God in heaven. Concerning this, see a hymn in some old hymn books.

NOTE.-We have obtained the sentence of death of this pious and valiant heroine of Jesus Christ, as the same was read to her in court; as also, the record of her torture, which, as it appears, took place two weeks before her death; which we shall place here one after the other, as they were copied by the secretary from the criminal records of the city.

**SENTENCE OF DEATH OF ANNEKEN HEYNDRICKS, SURNAMED:
DE VLASTER**

Whereas, Anna Heyndricks daughter, alias, Anna de Vlaster, formerly citizeness of this city, at present a prisoner here, unmindful of her soul's salvation, and the obedience which she owed to our mother, the holy

church, and to his royal majesty, as her natural lord and prince, rejecting the ordinances of the holy church, has neither been to confession, nor to the holy, worthy sacrament, for six or seven years since [but has dared], to go into the assembly of the reprobated sect of the Mennonists, or Anabaptists, and has also held conventicles or meetings at her house; and has further, about three years ago, forsaking and renouncing the baptism received in her infancy from the holy church, been rebaptized, and then received the breaking of bread according to the manner of the Mennonist sect, and was also married to her present husband in Mennonist manner, by night, in a country house; and though she, the prisoner, has, by my lords of the court, as well as by divers ecclesiastical persons, been urged and repeatedly admonished, to leave the afore-mentioned reprobated sect, she nevertheless refuses to do it, persisting in her obstinacy and stubbornness, so that she, the prisoner, according to what has been mentioned, has committed crime against divine and human majesty, as by said sect disturbing the common peace and welfare of the land, according to the import of the decrees of his majesty, existing in regard to this; which misdemeanors, for an example unto others, ought not to go unpunished; therefore, my lord of the court, having heard the demand of my lord the bailiff, seen the confession of the prisoner, and having had regard to her obstinacy and stubbornness, have condemned her, and condemn her by these presents, to be, according to the decrees of his royal majesty, executed with fire, and declare all her property confiscated for the benefit of his majesty aforesaid. Done in court, on the 10th of November, in the year 1571, in presence of the judges, by the advice of all the burgomasters, in my knowledge, as secretary, and as was subscribed:

W. PIETERSS.

Concerning the torturing of the afore-mentioned Anna Heyndricks, and when this occurred. She was tortured on the 27th of October, in the year 1571, according to the previous sentence of the judges, as appears from the record of the confession.

Thus extracted from the book of criminal sentences of the city of Amsterdam. Preserved in the archives there.

Gaining Inspiration From Old Testament Worship (Part 5)

Digging Out the Stones

Many aspects of Old Testament worship involved stones. God gave the Israelites many instructions regarding stones in relation to worship (Exodus 25:7; 31:5; Deuteronomy 27:4). Most predominately, stones were used to build altars. These altar-building stones were not to be hewn, for that would pollute them (Exodus 20:25). Also precious stones were used in the breastplate of the high priest and in the temple. Many of these needed to be dug out before they could be used.

Sometimes stones were used improperly in the Old Testament. Building altars for idol worship was one such misuse (Leviticus 26:1). Also Absalom built a pillar for himself so that his name would be remembered. Another wrong use of stones was hurling them in anger at a personal enemy (Numbers 35:17).

Focusing on digging out and using stones provides inspiration for New Testament saints. The kingdom of God is still built with God-provided stones of truth, and this requires digging into God's Word. The basis of our worship and kingdom building is still found in the Word of God.

"Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine,
And jewels rich and rare
Are hidden in its mighty depth
For every searcher there."

Every sincere Christian soon discovers the need to dig out the stones of spiritual truth to meet the demands of the day. However, this requires diligence, and once the stones are found, they need to be used properly.

The person who has not learned the joys of uncovering stones by reading the Word does not realize what he is missing. Youth, resolve to identify and use the stones whose value is so basic that God has placed them where they might easily be found. Then learn to dig deeper; far more lies beneath the surface than will be discovered with shallow digging.

The use of devotional helps, study guides, or memorized prayers all have their place. But these stones are, at best, pre-gathered; some might even be hewn by false teachers and, therefore, polluted in God's sight. All stones must be aligned with the foundation, which is Christ, the chief cornerstone.

Beware of the tendency to dig stones to simply hurl at others. While it is true that the Bible has the answers for all the problems of mankind, we will benefit most in our digging if we answer the question 'At what is the Bible driving?' with "The Bible is driving at me."

We also need to beware of using the stones we have gathered to raise a pillar for ourselves as did Absalom. When presenting a truth in a Sunday school class or a devotional meditation, we must avoid language that identifies us with the gem that we are presenting. This really amounts to self-exaltation—an inappropriate use for the stones of truth.

May our digging out of stones and our use of them be for the building of God's kingdom in the hearts of men today.

Jonathan Erb Used by permission from: "The Eastern Mennonite Testimony"

LIFT UP A STANDARD

"Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people" (Isa. 62:10).

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa. 59:19).

As in Isaiah's time, the Holy Spirit is calling us to lift up a righteous standard in our day. A flood of worldliness is rising against those who claim to be marching to Zion on the highway. So much is at stake. The salvation of souls and the keeping of the faith are dependent on an unmistakable banner of truth being held aloft to counter Satan's tide.

A standard is an ensign, the identifying flag of a company of soldiers, army, or nation. It usually stands for an ideal or purpose. Poignant feelings stir within soldiers when they see their ensign above the fray of battle; its power is not in the fabric alone. It evokes loyalty and fervor, serving to rally a group to a united effort.

Each of the twelve tribes of Israel had a standard, or flag, that identified their family group (see Num. 2 and 10). They marched with their standard going before (Num. 10), and they camped around it when not traveling (Num. 2:2). Each standard was a reference marker, pointing out a tribe's

position. Thus their standards helped avoid confusion and, also, aided cohesion of action among that vast multitude of God's people.

The standards of the tribes of Israel, most importantly, pointed forward to the true standard of righteousness in Christ Jesus. His followers have always carried that standard in the warfare of life. It identifies them, provides a reference point for lost and confused souls, and pinpoints the believers' position in relation to the world.

It was amazing to note the resurgence of patriotism in the United States following September 11, 2001. As the nation was stripped of its sense of security, suddenly the flag was displayed everywhere. The "Stars and Stripes" revived deep emotions and served to rally the nation.

Today, the church of God continues to be under attack from its avowed enemy, the world. The world is Satan's "al-Qaeda" organization, dedicated to the destruction of the church. Given this reality, surely the gospel standard, which speaks of things eternal, serves a nobler purpose than that of the earthly realm.

The Christians' righteousness, which is by faith in Christ Jesus, is not just in profession. It is in deed and in truth. The faith that justifies is a faith that engenders love for God and the church and produces gospel obedience. This is the true standard. It moves believers to reject the worldly realm and fear God, and to treasure holiness of life. As a result, a distinct separation from the world comes about. By common conviction and concern, the "things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15) are warned against and shunned. The spirits of the world that present themselves among the sons of God are identified and reproved. Thus the standard of holy living through the power of the blood of Christ is raised up for all to see. All this serves as a banner marking the position of the heavenly camp as being separate from the world.

Every generation of God's people has striven to raise up this standard. The Holy Ghost has moved the church in every age to lift up a standard against the floods of deception and spiritual opposition from Satan. How many souls have been saved from perdition because of that standard will only be revealed at the judgment. Likewise, how many souls will be lost should a right standard fail to be reared up is also untold.

Deep, heartfelt convictions regarding nonconformity and separation from the world are waning today. "What's wrong with that?" counters concerns about things that once were held to be "worldly." There is a certain

degree of ignorance, or apathy, in younger generations, relating to godly traditions, (2 Thess. 2:15) held dear by older ones. These attitudes march in tandem with lukewarm appreciation for our historical roots of faith. Oh, how the situation cries for the true standard to be raised up!

The standard of our Anabaptist forefathers is indelibly preserved on the pages of history. That record exhorts us from across the centuries. Those valiant soldiers of the cross carried the ensign of the faith bravely into a battle that cost many of them their lives. Is the position that their banner marked not the same one whereon we must raise God's standard today? The "spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23), calling from that "great ... cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1) urge us, "Hold the standard high; it's worth dying for!"

As godly fathers and mothers of more recent times left us one by one, the responsibility of carrying the standard was passed to our generation. Let us not neglect to grasp it firmly and hold it high, cost what it will. In Christ's stead, we entreat our youth and young couples to do the same. Should the Lord tarry longer, young grandchildren of today will need to be aided in their battle by a true standard also. Will they know the truth of the world being crucified unto them and they unto the world, as Paul said (Gal. 6:14)?

Much depends on the servants of the Lord called to shepherd the flock of God. As our fathers have written, we must be an example of loving the Lord with all our hearts. We must never be found tainted with things and ways that hint of a worldly spirit. The minister or deacon who has any affinity with the spirits of the world will never have the vision to warn his flock of danger. By giving heed to the doctrine of the Word (1 Tim. 4:16), by earnest fundamental teaching and preaching, by yearning exhortation or reproof, the standard must be held up. The ultimate test of our commitment to raising the standard is bearing the cross when discipline for worldliness is called for. The standard will not be raised without pain.

Comparing ourselves among ourselves (2 Cor. 10:12) never raises the standard. It only tends to pull it down. In time it will completely obliterate it, which is the devil's goal.

Once when Jesus entered the temple in Jerusalem, He saw the effects of a fallen, and perhaps even forgotten, standard. He was deeply moved. So much so that later "His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17).

We today, in the face of a persistent world, need to be consumed by a renewed zeal for Christ and the church. If we would see Him for who He really is and what He has done for us, it would put our battle with worldliness in proper perspective. We would see a purpose in separation, instead of only negatives. The purity of the church would be precious to us, helping us to sacrifice our fleshly cravings for her sake. Then the standard will be raised up.

A songwriter penned these fitting words, "Lift Him up, higher, higher! Let the world see the love in His eyes; He's the only hope of promise.. ." ("Lift Him Up" by Rosa Henry). One can't lift up Christ and be friendly with the world (James 4:4).

When Jesus comes to rescue the encircled faithful, He will find them by their standard. According to the Scriptures, they will be suffering opposition on every side, but their banner will pinpoint their location as not being of this world. Then, many will rejoice, saying, "If it wasn't for the standard, where would this soldier be?" *Reprinted by permission: The Messenger of Truth.*

Judgment Day Disappointments

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

`And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23).

We face a double dilemma. First of all, the Bible declares the way to life as a narrow way which comparatively few people will find. The broad way to destruction, after all, promises easy travel and lots of company. A recent issue of Time Magazine featured several "Christian" leaders who promote a health and wealth gospel. If the shiny Rolls Royce on the cover of the magazine is part of the package, then obviously the wealth promotion is not about the narrow way to life. And that exactly is the second dilemma. There will be many (according to Jesus' teachings) who profess to know God. They are merely deceived. They are not partakers of the Spirit of Christ. They do not know Jesus Christ, and Jesus does not know them.

We have had enough rich and powerful evangelical leaders who fell. What do we expect from their followers? After all, people who indulge in all that money can buy will not be satisfied with what money can buy.

Wrong moral choices will follow naturally enough.

Do you love God and keep His commandments? The valid answer to that question would determine your eternal destiny if you faced the judgment of God this very hour. Such a moment will indeed arrive. The burning question in that moment is not a profession of Christianity. It is not a claim to various good works. The only question is whether God knows you as one of His own.

The understanding of a valid assurance of salvation is further described in a quick survey of the Book of First John. Consider these verses: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1:6). 'And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (2:3).

In modern evangelism, too often the point of being "saved" or being "born again," focuses solely on a particular time or place of "trusting" Jesus Christ as Saviour. Too often there is little understanding of the holiness of God and the contrasting sinfulness of sin. Little is expected, and little happens out of such decisions. The evidence is already in. We see little contrast in the sinful lives of the "saved" versus the sinful lives of unbelievers. But along with this easy gospel, many church leaders then promote the false notion that such a decision unconditionally seals one's personal destiny in heaven forever.

I have discussed Christian faith at length with a number of people who live immoral and even criminal lives. These believe they are Christians because of a "decision" once made for Christ. This assumption apparently offers the forgiveness of sin without concern for deliverance and cleansing from sin.

While we rightly reject the false notion that we work our way into God's kingdom by doing good deeds, or by obedience to a list of rules, we are wrong if we assert that saving faith does not dictate surrender to God and a radical change of life.

Let me illustrate it this way. We have comfortable facilities for guests. But what would be your response if you came and ate from our table and yet received no nourishment? You came to us hungry. Yet what looked like good nutritious food would merely bring you to starvation over time.

Our guest quarters include a private bath. You came to us from a long journey. You need a shower, and you need it badly. But suppose you indulge in a luxurious shower only to find that our shampoo, soap, and water did nothing toward your cleansing. You are also travel-weary. The bed looks very inviting. Your only hesitation is in your concern for contaminating those clean sheets. But guess what? The comfortable-looking bed yields no rest whatsoever. You think the night will never end.

The next morning you face the world: hungry, dirty, and tired. Could you convince yourself that it really was a very positive experience?

Do we, in our churches talk about being fed with the Bread of life, yet find no nourishment in the Scriptures? Do we sing of being washed in the blood of the Lamb, yet remain in the filth of our sins? Do we claim that those who labour and are heavy-laden may come to Jesus for rest, while living in guilt, frustration, and bondage to evil habits?

Make no mistake. If people will eat at our table, they will be nourished. If they use our shampoo, soap and water, they will be cleansed. If they sleep in our guest bed, they will be refreshed.

Now they don't become our guests by bringing in groceries, or by digging a well in our backyard, or by placing their sleeping bags beside our guest bed. (This would be parallel to salvation by works.)

To take full advantage of our facilities is the only logical way for a guest to behave. In fact, we wouldn't give you a choice. You can't bring your own hospitality. It's on the house. If you don't want or need what we have, that is up to you. You can go elsewhere. We wouldn't want you misrepresenting our hospitality.

Why am I saying this? Because a lot of people who name the name of Christ are bringing reproach on the very One who could nourish them, cleanse them, and give them rest. They seem not to understand that in receiving the "hospitality" of Christ, the very character and work of Christ is manifest in them. No, you don't bring your own good works to Christ. What you do is abide in Him, and He produces His fruit through you.

This is the very basis of God's judgment. "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may, receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

When we claim that God is forever obligated to provide heaven for every "decision" for Christ, we have it backward. It is we who face the obligation of abiding in the fruit-bearing freedom of being His guests.

Editor's Note: This article has been in my files for sometime and I am indebted to the author and source which I regrettably failed to record. JvL.

Contentment

Heavenly Father, if I should suffer need, and go unclothed, and be in poverty, make my heart prize Thy love, know it, be constrained by it, though I be denied all blessings. It is Thy mercy to afflict and try me with wants, for by these trials I see my sins, and desire severance from them. Let me willingly accept misery, sorrows, temptations, if I can thereby feel sin as the greatest evil, and be delivered from it with gratitude to Thee, acknowledging this as the highest testimony of Thy love.

When thy Son, Jesus, came into my soul instead of sin He became more dear to me than sin had formerly been; His kindly rule replaced sin's tyranny. Teach me to believe that if ever I would have any sin subdued I must not only labour to overcome it, but must invite Christ to abide in the place of it, and He must become to me more than vile lust had been; that His sweetness, power, life may be there. Thus I must seek a grace from Him contrary to sin, but must not claim it apart from Himself.

When I am afraid of evils to come, comfort me by showing me that in myself I am a dying, condemned wretch, but in Christ I am reconciled and live; that in myself I find insufficiency and no rest, but in Christ there is satisfaction and peace; that in myself I am feeble and unable to do good, but in Christ I have ability to do all things. Though now I have His graces in part, I shall shortly have them perfectly in that state where Thou wilt show Thyself fully reconciled, and alone sufficient, efficient, loving me completely, with sin abolished. O Lord, hasten that day.

Taken from: "The Valley of Vision" A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions, edited by Arthur Bennett. Reformatted by Eternal Life Ministries.

Compiled & Edited by:
J van Loon.