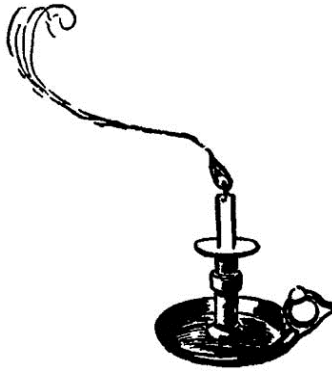


THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

THOUGHTS ON BEING FAITHFUL

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" Hebrews 11:6.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" 2 Peter 1:10.

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" Hebrews 2:1.

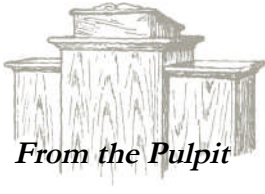
It is needful for us to often call our attention to scriptures like these. We must be watchful and prayerful in order to be alert to the dangers around us. We know that the evil one, the foe of our soul, is ever ready to offer us things that would cause us to become indifferent. He would like to bring us into unconcern and, possibly, a life of ease. Then other things want to come into our lives, too, such as selfishness and pride.

Satan has a very sly way of bringing these things to us so that sometimes we are not aware of them. We can go on for a time not realizing that something is wrong. Then we may become unwilling to admit that these things are present in our lives. Then comes the danger of leaving our first love to God, and we become lukewarm. May the Lord bless with spiritual vision that we may see the dangers that lie around us.

Satan has desired to have us, and he will make his attack upon us. Therefore we will need to "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" 1 Peter 5:8. Our faith may be tested. Then we will need to give the more earnest heed lest some of these things slip away from us. Rather, we should make our calling and election sure. We can have the victory over evil if we will follow the teachings of the Bible.

In Luke 9:23, Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." If we seek to serve Him with an honest and sincere heart, we are able to know His will and do it.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" 1 Corinthians 15:58



From the Pulpit

CROSS CULTURE EVANGELIZATION
Two Mules' Burden of Earth - 2 Kings 5:17
Brother Melvin Burkholder

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ this evening I invite you to [second Kings chapter 5](#) for the place where the title was taken from.

As you turn to that I will review the story of Naaman you find here.

Naaman was from Syria a Gentile nation north of Israel and the Scripture says that he was a mighty man of valour, a captain, probably a general; he was courageous and honoured probably next to the King. Naaman had a lot going for him but he had one serious problem and that problem was his leprosy which is a horrible disease, disfiguring, disabling and deadly a fitting type of disease which it is often used as type of sin and like sin leprosy was incurable except for the miracle working grace of God.

Naaman learnt about God and his power from a little Jewish girl captured and enslaved by the Syrians, this little girl pointed Naaman to the Prophet of God at Samaria in the land of Israel. Now I imagine it was pretty humiliating for the Naaman to take the advice of a little slave girl and go to the Prophet of an enemy nation seeking a cure but he had the desperation of the terminally ill and we see that those who are terminally ill have nothing to lose and will try almost anything and so he gathered together his entourage and headed south to Israel with 750 pounds of silver and 150 pounds of gold to buy his healing.

And I suppose he was a proud man, a dignified man, an important man used to honour and in his pride he went to the King first but the King had no cure for him and actually was offended off right and I suppose but the Elisha got wind of the matter and called for Naaman to come to him.

It is interesting to me that Naaman went, he could have stood upon his dignity and insisted that Elisha come to him, come to the palace, but he humbled himself and showed up at Elisha's doorstep with his chariots and servants and horses expecting Elisha to come out and display some great

miracle working power but instead Elisha didn't even come to the door he merely sent a servant telling Naaman to travel to the Jordan River and wash seven times to be healed.

That I think was the last straw for Naaman, it seemed like there was no respect down here in Israel, and no recognition, Why I thought he said, he will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper, instead he sent a messenger boy and tells me: Go down wash in the Jordan River, the Jordan River mind you!

If I'd wanted to bathe in the river I would have chosen a better river than the Jordan, we have better rivers at home than the Jordan. And they were I suppose, at least they were fed from the snow covered mountains not far from Damascus, so the Bible says he turned and went away in a rage.

But he was a decent man in some ways I think who could listen to common sense and when his servants tiptoed up to him and reminded him of his desperate need saying: After all Naaman you came all this way prepared for some great sacrifice in order to find healing and you really want to go home without even trying the cure just because it is too simple and too lowly and too common for you?

And so Naaman humbled himself still further, he went downhill 32 miles to the River Jordan, went down into the river plunged under the water seven times and came up the Bible says with flesh like that of a little child. Healed!

There is great symbolism in this, flesh like a child, like a baby in Christ cleansed and humbled.

Someone said first he lost his temper, then he lost his pride and then he lost his leprosy. And that is the order in which proud rebellious sinners are converted.

So Naaman returned to Elisha a new man, cleansed, healed, humbled, grateful with a testimony of faith he says: Now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel! And in his gratitude he offered a lordly gift which Elisha refused and then Naaman made his strange request from which our title is taken in verses 17:

And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD. ([2 Kings 5:17](#)).

Two mules' burden of the earth. Whatever for? Why take soil back to Syria? And there are many ideas about this.

Some said well maybe he wanted to rub himself with holy dust instead of water as some Orientals reportedly do. Sounds pretty questionable to me.

Some said well maybe he wanted to have a pillow full of holy earth for his pillow like some Jews and Muslims have reportedly done.

Some say maybe he wanted holy earth; I'm not sure where they got this, maybe he wanted the holy earth to cast into his grave as some modern Jews in the USA do with so called holy earth from Israel.

One Bible dictionary I checked said he wanted to worship Jehovah on Israelite soil even though he lived in a heathen land and the Jews reportedly had taken some holy ground to Babylon to build on it a place of worship in the past.

The explanation I like best is that Naaman had in mind to build an altar in Damascus to worship Jehovah and I think if you read the last part of verse 17 he said may I be given two mules burden of the earth for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods but unto the Lord.

And that is pretty common interpretation, I think this fits well with verse 17 and I think it also fits well with [Exodus 20:24](#) where it says:

An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

An altar of earth. Now what significance does that have for us today?

I think we want to look at it like this. The story of Naaman is not merely the story of the Syrian finding healing for his leprosy it is the story of the pagan Gentile finding spiritual healing through Jehovah God and taking his faith home to a foreign culture.

The question facing Naaman was how to trust in the worship of God in a foreign land and culture and this is of course a question that we face today on our foreign mission fields and it is a hard question.

Naaman found it so. We can picture his thoughts, in verse 17 he says never again will I offer worship to any God other than Jehovah and then in verse 18 he thinks what about when the King takes me into the house of Rimmon, what am I going to do then? And so he says to Elisha, in [2 Kings 5:17-18](#)" In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing."

You see that pinch? On the one side he had the demands of Jehovah and on the other side the demands of Syrian culture and duties to King Hadad the second I believe, I am his right-hand man and he's going to want me to go into the house of Rimmon and when he bows I have to bow what then? I said am not going to offer to any other God than Jehovah.

Naaman seems to hope that God will accept a compromise in which in order to preserve his position he bows before Rimmon with the King but he doesn't really worship, he appears to be worshipping Rimmon he is bowing in Rimmon's temple but actually he is thinking of Jehovah and many says that Elisha responds: Go in peace.

And people wonder was Elisha really approving that solution? And I'm not sure. Again there may be different opinions.

Some criticise Naaman as a compromiser who is unwilling to give up his position and suffer for the truth.

Some say that after all Naaman was a newly converted pagan he didn't understand Jehovah very well.

I think it is obvious that he understood Jehovah very well, well enough that Jehovah might not be very happy with him.

Some say that people in high governmental positions face many hard decisions and we shouldn't criticise them but pray for them.

Now I suppose maybe that there is some truth in that but one thing that is clear to me Naaman was troubled in conscience about this compromise he was promoting, he felt guilty, twice he says in this thing the Lord pardon thy servant. He felt he needed pardon for this and I'm not at all sure that Elisha was approving the compromise. Many have pointed out that the 'go in peace' does not necessarily mean more than a noncommittal have a safe journey or goodbye or something like that. We would think it means more than that but maybe not in those days.

You know we sing songs in honour of the three Hebrew heroes, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were also in a high position in a pagan government but refused just such a compromise, and were vindicated by God. Their courageous non-compromising stand brought Nebuchadnezzar who was a greater King than Ben Hadad to honour the Lord Jehovah.

You know nobody sings praises of the halfway committed, nobody sings songs about them. And that is not to condemn Naaman he was just taking his first steps of faith and may have yet reached a more honourable conclusion; we don't know that, we don't know that.

But again some practical applications.

The question facing Naaman was how to transplant the worship of Jehovah into a pagan culture. Whenever the Gospel crosses cultural lines it raises many questions, hard questions, for him and for us.

Now I would like to give some ideas, some observations, maybe I'll raise more questions than answers but I would like to just give a little bit about this idea of taking the Gospel to other cultures crossing cultural lines, maybe you will be tired of the word culture and I wouldn't blame you.

1] It is our duty and privilege to take the Gospel to all nations and cultures. That is what the great commission says. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, The Son and the Holy Ghost teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Amen. [Matthew 18:19-20](#).

So our Lord says teach all nations and the Apostles obeyed crossing cultural lines into India, Africa, Europe and there will be a response from all nations:

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” [Revelation 7:9](#)

The picture in Revelation is not of white, English-speaking North Americans of Swiss German stock but an innumerable multitude of all

nations, tribes, ethnic groupings, races, languages and cultures, in all lands, alters to pure worship erected, men standing on holy ground raising holy hands.

2] The Christian responsibility is to take the pure unadulterated Gospel to the entire world.

I think Naaman had the right idea in verse 17 those two mules burden of the earth to Syria and there he erected an altar for the worship of Jehovah, he was concerned with purity of his worship. Naaman did not go to Syria to superimpose the worship of Jehovah upon the worship of Rimmon. He did not intend to mixed Syrian worship with Israelite worship to build an Israelite altar of Syrian soil, his intention was to establish the pure worship of Jehovah and to do it; it took two mules burden of earth.

Now likewise we attempt to take the pure unadulterated Gospel into the entire world, the all things, not a watered down Gospel sweetened with worldly ideas to make it more palatable. There is a lot of mixture out there.

There is the Gospel mixed with pagan religion, you see that in some of the Catholic practices.

There is the Gospel mixed with politics, the State churches.

The Gospel mixed with psychology, positive thinking.

The Gospel mixed with entertainment, contemporary music and theatre.

The Gospel mixed with social betterment, the social gospel.

The Gospel mixed with materialism, the health and wealth, name it and claim it gospel.

The Gospel mixed with patriotism, the God and country emphasis.

There is a lot of mixture out there but we are called to take the Gospel alone, the pure unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world.

What about the Gospel plus North American culture or the Gospel plus Mennonite culture?

Some have said that while Naaman took two loads of soil to Syria we take two dump truckloads of Lancaster County dirt to the field for every convert we make. And I'm not sure who says that kind of thing, it doesn't sound very sympathetic, sounds a little arrogant.

But I think it is a fair question to say: What are we doing, how do we approach culture? And I would like to look at that matter of Gospel and culture and just continue with my numbering.

We are talking about culture now and the Gospel and how it affects us and what we do about transplanting the Gospel in other cultures and so forth.

3] All of us are products of our culture.

Our culture affects how we see reality, how we communicate, what we like or dislike, some places they like hot foods, some places they like bland, some are calm and passive in their communication, northern European Dutch and German, us for instance. Some part emotional and expressive, southern European Italian and Spanish they say you can tell where they come from in Europe by how close they sit and how often they touch as they visit - it is cultural.

Culture teaches us proper behaviour.

In North America it is proper to shake hands, eat with forks, drive on the right hand side of the road. In Japan it is proper to bow, take off your shoes at the door, sit on mats and eat with chopsticks.

Culture!

In America you walk up to the door and knock for entrance, in Paraguay you stand back a respectful distance and clap your hands and call out "Good Morning" until somebody shows up.

You see what is proper behaviour in America may be offensive or insulting in Japan or Paraguay

In America we spread butter on bread, some Africans spread butter on their bodies to make their skin smooth and shiny.

Everybody is a product of culture to some degree or another. Everybody looks at the world through the coloured lenses of his own culture and this in itself is not necessarily evil it is unavoidable.

Moreover everybody tends to think his culture is right, it is comfortable and it is secure, we have always done it that way, it is the right thing to do, if it wouldn't be right we wouldn't do it that way and we resent and ostracise those who question the rightness of our practice but our smug complacency can cause us to be blind where our culture is blind and inconsistently judgemental of others.

For example: North Americans look at African polygamy and they are disgusted. Imagine having three or four wives! It is not even Christian! But even while they exclaim that they are living with their second or third wife and they think nothing of it. Blind. Blind because of cultural practice. The Gospel rebukes alike both the simultaneous polygamy of the African and the successive polygamy of the Western.

Or if you want to take a more innocent example: An educated man from India was visiting with Americans and the Americans said they knew little what it was like in India and they said: You are an educated man and all, do you actually eat with your fingers in India? Eat with your fingers! I mean the implication that his fingers were dirty and the Indian gentleman said: Well before I eat in India I wash my hands so my fingers are clean and only my own fingers go into my mouth! Here in America I keep wondering how many mouths these forks have been in?

Well it seems right. And everybody thinks his way seems right.

4] Culture and Gospel must be kept distinct in mission work.

[Acts 15:28](#) For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things. Not a burden of Jewish cultural practices or religious practices.

The Gospel is absolute and essential, culture is changing and relative.

If we confuse culture with the Gospel, and this is a touchy subject I know and I'm open to correction, if we confuse culture with Gospel we think we are preaching the Gospel when we may be actually preaching culture, this is not appreciated by people of other lands.

It is one thing for God to say that your ways are evil and need to be repented off but it is another thing for mere men to say their ways are better than your ways. That's different.

When missionaries confuse culture and Gospel then it makes the Gospel something foreign, say American or British, to their hearers.

It seems something like this happened in Africa during the nineteenth century Protestant missionary movements. European missionaries opened up Africa, were shortly followed by colonial rulers and soldiers with whom they cooperated in dividing up Africa into European colonies.

David Livingstone said: I go back to Africa to try and make an open path for commerce and Christianity.

But because of that confusion of culture and Gospel Christianity, the Christian Gospel came to be equated with European imperialism and militarism and that is far from the Gospel, the true Gospel.

I believe that we as conservative Mennonites may find it easier to separate Gospel and culture because we have the advantage of being more separated from our native culture and therefore have less tendency to mix North American culture with the Gospel in our mission efforts.

5] The Gospel addresses, challenges and rebukes every culture.

[Acts 17:6](#) ".....These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also."

Now this was said about the greatest Christian missionary that ever lived the Apostle Paul. Was Paul challenging and rebuking the prevailing culture? Indeed he was. They said he was turning it upside down, he would have said he was turning it right side up.

Or you take Jonah who crossed cultural lines over into Assyria or Nineveh and he said yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be destroyed. [Jonah 3:4](#). A message of sin, of judgement, of salvation repentance.

It rebukes and challenges every culture. The Gospel is universal and cuts across all cultures.

It is true that sometimes people don't like that and say: Now wait a minute, our culture is Christian isn't it? No, it isn't. It is true that some cultures are more formed or informed by Christian principles that. We like to think that Western culture is more influenced by Bible principles than say the pygmy culture of the Congo. I suppose maybe, but it is not the Christian culture.

Where scholars make much of various cultures and subcultures God loves them all together with one word - the world, the world.

Human depravity produces depraved culture every time whether among the black tribes of Central Africa, the Eskimos of the Arctic or sophisticated white Northern Europeans and God calls us all - love not the world neither the things that are in the world, if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him, for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world

and the world passes away and the lust thereof but he that doeth The will of God abides forever. [1 John 2:15-17](#).

The Gospel rebukes all cultures, it is above all cultures, all cultures need the Gospel, all cultures are depraved. The Gospel calls all peoples to repentance and amendment of life.

Somebody said it like this: "Christianity never becomes fully at home in any culture, always it creates a tension." That was a church historian. "Christianity never becomes fully at home in any culture, always it creates a tension." and it does, it does.

6] Wherever in the world the Gospel goes it always produces its own subculture.

[Romans 12:2](#) follows up on 5]. "Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,"

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord Almighty" [2 Corinthians 6:17](#).

The Gospel supersedes and transcends all cultures. The Gospel is not adapted to culture, a nip here and a tuck there, culture is adapted to the Gospel and it always means major alterations, a whole new suit.

The people who yield to the call and the pressure of the Gospel will find themselves being changed, adopting new distinctively Christian practices, standards of morality and viewpoints, they take seriously the command: Be not conformed to the world culture but be ye transformed.

Now this point of the Gospel producing its own subculture has been debated in Mennonite circles. Some that are more on the Liberal side tend to think in adapting Gospel to the surrounding culture, acculturation. Conservatives think in terms of separation from the world and fully forming a holy subculture, the ecclesia, the called out ones, around Gospel principles.

The one side sees the Gospel as a thermometer adapting to the surrounding temperature the other sees the Gospel as a thermostat that regulates its surroundings.

7] To effectively carry the Gospel across cultural lines we must study and respect other cultures where possible.

And I take that from [1 Corinthians 9:20-22](#). "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; ²¹To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,)." The Gospel has not changed "...that I might gain them that are without law. ²²To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

Or like Peter says it: Honour all men, all men.

And there are many, many ways that we can show respect.

I believe this means learning their language thoroughly. Is it fair to say that one lesson at Pentecost is that God wants all men to hear the Gospel in their native tongue, is that fair?

Some native people said English speaks to our heads, they knew English, but our own language speaks to our hearts. And that is the way it is.

Respect means eating their foods in their own way, in their way and you say: Such odd foods, look at the things they eat! Well that's not odd, you are the odd one here. That's normal here.

And we have to understand that. It means avoiding a patronising condescending superior attitude.

And such funny customs! Their customs aren't funny here, yours are! It's the way it is.

It means positioning yourself as a learner which you are. They could teach you about their culture. It means sometimes giving them the driver's seat literally, and I say that because of the Bahamas, other people in the Bahamas that have worked on the farms for years and maybe 30 or 35 or 40 years old and here a 19-year-old boy voluntary service from America who has been in the Bahamas all of one month and they are going away on the truck together and who gets to driver's seat? The voluntary service boy. That does not seem very respectful.

We show disrespect by interrupting when they are talking, laughing at their serious remarks, laughing at them with our friends. You know private behaviour always counts more than public. Questioning their facts unnecessarily, comparing their culture unfavourably with ours unnecessarily, forgetting their names or laughing at their names, avoiding them, not trusting them etc. That's the way we show our own sense of superiority.

You know Paul says he adapted himself in his approach, he didn't adapt the Gospel but he adapted himself and his approach to the culture of the hearers and if you want to see him doing it turn to Acts 22. We will just notice a couple of things here.

In Acts 22 there is a Jewish audience and he starts out in verse one he says: "Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,"

That's their mother tongue and he is respecting them by speaking Hebrew to them. Notice how he is identifying with them, establishing common ground, men, brethren, and fathers, and he speaks in their language in the Hebrew tongue and he says: "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, (which is pretty far away) yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, (I studied here) and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day."

[Acts 22:1-3.](#)

So he is emphasising his Jewishness, I speak your language, I grew up there, I was taught here I was taught by Gamaliel a man you know, he is establishing common ground. That is respectful. He is adapting his approach.

Now go to chapter 17 verse 22, these are not Jews he is talking to now, he is not speaking Hebrew he is speaking Greek, it doesn't say that but he is they would not have understood him if he was speaking Hebrew.

Verse 22, a Gentile intellectual audience Paul starts out he says: Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. [Acts 17:22.](#) And if you check out other translations it says something like you are very

religious. Superstitious is negative I don't think this is negative, you're a very religious people the same. So he starts out with a commendation.

Verse 23: "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." [Acts 17:23](#)

He gets a point of contact there. You are actually worshipping my God and you don't know it.

Verse 24 and 25, look at this, he is addressing intellectuals notice the intellectual or philosophical approach in verses 24 and 25:

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; ²⁵Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; [Acts 17:24-25](#).

And then verse 26 he establishes common ground: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men" [Acts 17:26](#), that you, that's me, that Paul, that's his audience.

And then notice what he does in verse 28: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." [Acts 17:28](#).

So now he is quoting their own poets favourably, he has read, he has studied, he knows something about them. There was a reason why God chose Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles, he grew up in a Gentile city and he knew their language and their learning at least to some extent. He did not choose a Jewish fisherman to do it.

Adapting our approach and ourselves to the people.

We show respect and acceptance by adapting to their customs when possible and it is not possible many, many times but sometimes it is.

Take time for instance. When you go into Latin America you find that they don't look at time like we do. You say when can we have an appointment?

They say Mañana. What does mañana mean?

Not necessarily what you find in the dictionaries.

But it is not just Latin America. You know to us on time means not more than five minutes late and if you are 15 minutes past you apologise and if it is 30 minutes you owe an explanation not just an apology, you'd better say what's going on what happened, we need to know, we deserve to know because you are rude unless you have a good reason. That's American.

For Egyptians on time means that the servants are there then. If it's 10 minutes after and the servants aren't there yet they are late, but the master doesn't get there till an hour afterwards and if it is hour and a half it is late and he should apologise.

Now to the Egyptians time is a way to show rank or subservience and when an American and an Egyptian make an appointment and the American shows up at nine o'clock sharp and the Egyptian shows up at 10 the American is surprised at how rude the Egyptian is and the Egyptian is surprised at how subservient the American is.

It is culture. We adapt ourselves to that kind of thing.

Social zones. North America - 10 feet. If you're walking behind somebody and they are 10 feet away you don't have to pay attention to them. If they are closer than that you have to recognise them and, maybe say a few casual remarks. 1 to 3 feet is personal and if it is less than a foot it is intimate, you only do that when you are whispering in somebody's ear or something.

I met an old man at one of our services a little while ago and he parked his face about this is far from mine so I could hardly focus on him and he talked to me like that and I just had to force myself not to back up, he was too close I wasn't intimate with him.

In Latin America the distances are closer than in North America.

We stand five feet away from them to talk to them and they say you are being distant and they move up to 2 feet and we say you're being pushy. You know that kind of thing. Well that's differences and we adapt ourselves. They aren't right or wrong.

Who's right? Well in North America we are right and in Latin America they are. That's the way it is.

I'm afraid that there tends to be a good deal of cultural snobbery in our thinking, if I may say that.

You know we can go with this attitude: We are from the richest most advanced sophisticated society in the world we have come to bring the truth to you benighted heathen people in - wherever it is. You know that isn't very persuasive. We won't say it but if we think it, it tends to bleed through and it is offensive.

When we say advanced we mostly mean technologically advanced and what gives us more difficulty in our church life than technology? You know if men think about what makes a country or a culture advanced or backward, you know if it is backward they raise and make their own food and they work when it's light and sleep when it is dark and make their own clothes from available materials and when they talk they talk face-to-face and they use their muscles to work and to go places - that's backward. An advanced society people light up the night so they can work and play longer and sleep less and need a machine to wake them up and they use machines rather than muscles to move from place to place and do their work and so they invent other machines to exercise and arrest obesity – hopefully. And they use machines to listen to music instead of singing and machines to talk to each other while relationships deteriorate, and they use machines to create artificial climates and they use machines to watch grown men play instead of playing with their children.

It sounds like people in advanced societies are eager to insulate themselves from reality to experience life in the distance. A people out of touch. While the backward people experience life first-hand, in touch with reality.

Maybe there is some truth in that, I don't know it is probably not fully accurate. Anyway certainly Western culture is less receptive to the Gospel. As Third World countries become more westernised and technological they also become more closed to the Gospel.

8] Beware of the dangers of crossing cultural boundaries with the Gospel. It can be dangerous. The facts are that in taking the Gospel we may lose the Gospel. Because it is Gospel versus Gospel out there, it is the title of a Mennonite history book. The influence runs two directions.

While we are trying to persuade men of the truth of our Gospel others are trying to convince us that our Gospel is flawed and theirs is the real thing and it can become very confusing.

The historic Mennonite church has mostly lost its way I think in the labyrinth of questions and issues raised by mission work because they took their cues from the Protestants instead of from their own biblical heritage and ended moving up toward the mainstream both culturally and theologically.

In another if I may mention one area, and maybe I'm wrong in this I stand for correction if I am, one area that I think maybe the Protestant ideas have affected us is the concept of salvation.

The Protestant concept of salvation tends to emphasise theology over practice and the individual over the body. It tends to neglect practical obedience to the Scripture and the place of the church in the life of the believer.

A clear idea of salvation is critical to mission work.

If we take the Protestant view of salvation we will tend to accept and preach just accept Christ as your personal saviour, believe in Him and you will be saved. And that's true partly. But if this is the total essence of salvation then why enter into the sterner less pleasant doctrines of discipleship, cross bearing, ordinances, church life, Nonresistance, dress, why even talk about them then? They are already saved!

They believed and confessed Christ they are now saved let's go on and save some more and let's not spend time working on all those nonessentials like Nonresistance and Nonconformity.

And so confusion sets in. Is Nonresistance essential to salvation, is Bible obedience necessary, is separated dress necessary? These things are all right for the Mennonite subculture at home but must we carry them to other cultures? Is that just Lancaster County dirt?

And there was uncertainty in the minds of many in past Mennonite missions.

The Mennonite missions in Argentina allowed Argentina members to take military service. It was different in Argentina because they hadn't fought a war for a long time there. And then the missionaries were surprised when

one of their own boys had no conviction on Nonresistance and planned to serve in the Argentina military and when his father objected the son went back to the USA and served in the military there instead. They lost something. They lost part of the Gospel.

There was similar confusion on dress.

Daniel Kauffman (author of *Doctrines of the bible and other books*) once asked jokingly: Is it true that the missionary women throw their bonnets (coverings) overboard when they pass the Statue of Liberty? And he was a Conservative.

Even in the earliest days of the Argentina mission the Mennonite missionary Joseph Shank took off his plain coat, and wore a suit and tie while he was in Argentina and it was protested. Daniel Kauffman said we should take our Mennonite standards to the field 100 percent, same Lord, same Gospel and we ought to recognise the same standards.

And that's the way I believe it but it didn't get done. Plainclothes did not get transferred, veiling practices were different, the mantilla in Argentina, the sari in India, Nonresistance didn't get transferred very well and of course the chickens that went loose from the cage on foreign fields came home to roost in North America too

Now why the uncertainty?

I think because of the Protestant concept of salvation that all that is really essential to salvation is to believe in Jesus and except Him as saviour, these are the details are not really necessary. Let's think about salvation a bit, all we need is Jesus, yes, but Jesus did not teach a Protestant style Roman road to salvation, repent, believe and confessed and you are instantly and eternally saved.

Jesus taught a sterner more searching, more demanding way of salvation. If any man will come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. [Luke 9:23](#).

I think it is more scriptural to think of salvation as a process and when we reach the end of the process then we are finally saved.

He that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved. [Matthew 24:13](#).

He that believeth and his baptised shall be saved. [Mark 16:16](#).

I am the door and if any entering he shall be saved. [John 10:9](#).

For we are saved by hope. [Romans 8:24](#).

Now it sometimes says that unto us which are saved, instead of shall be, but I think we can look at it like this: Upon believing we enter the salvation process, we are justified, we are in right relation to God and we know it to be so and we are saved in a sense but not in the final sense, not in the final sense.

We are really truly finally saved only when our salvation is complete. I think it makes a little more sense of [Romans 8:22-25](#):

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. ²³And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. ²⁴For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

Salvation has three tenses.

a) The past tense is justification, we are justified by faith, this is how we enter the salvation process.

b) Present tense is sanctification, this is how we continue in salvation presently and sanctification includes obedience and Nonresistance and scriptural dress and church life and ordinances and kindness and love and the whole works.

c) The future tense is glorification, the redemption of the body it was speaking about there in Romans eight.

And together these three justification, sanctification and glorification comprise salvation. That is salvation. Miss any of the above and you miss salvation.

No justification - No salvation.

No sanctification - No salvation.

No glorification - No salvation.

Some people have a two track concept of Christianity and this we find in "Gospel versus Gospel" I think it makes some sense. On the salvation track

our faith, repentance and confession, what they see as the essentials of salvation, that's the Protestant concept.

But then in the Mennonite idea mind there is a second track with things like Nonresistance, modesty, proper dress, obedience, membership in a Scriptural church, ordinances and they are not sure what to call them, that's not salvation.

I would like to propose a single line for salvation: It starts with justification, it moves on to sanctification including obedience, discipleship, keeping ordinances, church brotherhood and concludes with final glorification at which point and not before we are finally and totally saved.

To wilfully arrest the process at any point is to lose our salvation and I think that concept of salvation fits better with the words of Jesus and He said to them all, if any man will come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. [Luke 9:23](#).

And when in the first instance you say God I will come, I will deny it myself you are eternally saved. No you aren't. You have begun the process, you have entered.

This is the full Gospel. These are the all things that Jesus warned us to be sure to teach, [Mathew 28:20](#), this is the Gospel of salvation the whole world needs and if we teach the all things we will certainly teach separation, obedience, cross bearing and to discipleship, not as an additional extra that is not quite essential, but as a part of salvation.

In conclusion the lesson of the two mules' burden of earth to me at least is that when we cross cultural lines with the Gospel we should be sure to take the full Gospel along.

Pure worship, cross bearing, obedience in practical areas such as ordinances, nonresistance, nonconformity including dress, these are not additions tacked on, they are part of the Gospel, they are part of pure worship and a Scriptural emphasis upon the Church as the visible disciplined holy body of Christ and not a superfluous extra.

May the Lord bless our reaching out.

HOW GREAT THOU ART AND HOW FRAIL I AM

The hymn, "How Great Thou Art," is one of the most powerful hymns to appear in recent times, with good probabilities of enduring. This song extols the Creator and exclaims about "all the worlds thine hands have made" with a few references to the grandeur of some of its details. It then goes to the wonder of God sending His Son to die for us and that He will return again.

No doubt, some of the attraction of the song is in its basic, simple testimony to God's greatness, "How great Thou art!"

In Revelation, chapter 4, the four and twenty elders in heaven are quoted as saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." How great is our Creator? How great is His creation?

We are told that our sun is about ninety-three million miles away from the earth. Astronomers tell us that the sun is a star of only average size among a hundred billion stars in the galaxy that we are in, the Milky Way. Then they say that there are as many galaxies as there are stars in the Milky Way. They think that they have photographed star-like objects six thousand million light years away. One certain star is calculated to measure two billion four hundred million miles across.

As big as this universe may be, it is not as big as God is. Solomon testified, "The heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ... " 1 Kings 8:27.

The marvels of creation go on and on. Scientists say that a million kinds of animals, 335 thousand kinds of plants, and 800 thousand kinds of insects have been classified. Everyone has a complex existence that could only have been planned. Natural marvels abound without number.

How well the Psalmist said it when he said, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" Psalm 14:1. The apostle Paul wrote, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" Romans 1:20.

This applies equally to Jesus Christ, for "God ... created all things by Jesus Christ" Ephesians 3:9.

It is with this Godhead that we all have to do. The apostle Paul wrote, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being ... For we are also his offspring" Acts 17:28. There is offered to us a relationship with Him.

Holy men of old times have given us a view of our status with God. Moses began a psalm with a testimony: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." From that he turned to the other side—our side—and stated one of our severe limitations: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" Psalm 90:2,10. Seventy or eighty years compared to the One who is from eternity! In comparison, our time isn't a dot in the ocean.

The psalmist David said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work ... His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof" Psalm 19:1, 6. David also said, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" Psalm 24:1. He said, "The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth" Psalm 33:13-14. These observations made David cry out, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am" Psalm 39:4.

Many people do not realize how frail they are. It seems as though some, because of riches, feel themselves strong. Some feel that they are strong because of political power. Some feel strong because of social status. But the apostle Peter wrote, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away" 1 Peter 1:24.

Isaiah gave us this word of the Lord: I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish" Isaiah 44:24-25.

We can safely say that no man has one-billionth the power that God has. Do we know how frail we are? Do we too often try to fortify ourselves with the power of money, and then trust in it? How often do we trust in our own resources?

Of ourselves we are frail. We are frail physically. In the Scripture, this brief life is referred to as a vapour, a shadow, a wind, and as a handbreadth. We are soon cut off, and we fly away. We are frail in our knowledge. "And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" 1 Corinthians 8:2. By nature, we are frail in character. The Apostle Paul exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am!" David said, "I am a worm." Asaph, in the seventy-third Psalm, said, "I was as a beast before thee."

Now the good part is that it is to frail man that the Almighty God offers a relationship, a relationship that is eternal. This life, as short and frail as it is, is enough, if we use it rightly.

The mighty God loves frail man. He has offered us to be His sons. "But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" John 1:12. In Him this short life opens into endless life, John 11:26. In receiving the Holy Spirit, we are given access to power, Acts 1:8.

In our walk with God, we are expected to keep these two facts in mind: the greatness and power of God and our frailty. Jeremiah said, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm ... Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" Jeremiah 17:5-7.

It seems to be necessary that we be admonished continually not to put our trust in ourselves, or in man, "but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" 1 Timothy 6:17.

Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon

E-mail: shimara2@iprimus.com.au

Web: www.anabaptistmennonites.org