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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)  
BIDEFORD**

# REDEMPTION

In these articles which are dealing with Biblical terminology, the subjects of RECONCILIATION, PROPITIATION, and REMISSION have been examined. The word now to be analysed is REDEMPTION.

Many regard Redemption as being synonymous with Atonement, but in the strict sense of the word this is not so. It is true that the work of Christ is indivisible. No person can ever know Reconciliation without Remission, neither can Remission be effected without Propitiation; nevertheless each of these terms are of great importance, for they convey to us a special aspect of truth, not isolated, rather, unique or specific, yet all consequent and dependant upon Atonement - the satisfaction made by Christ. Atonement is the cause; it is because Christ has made absolute satisfaction to God and to Divine justice that Reconciliation, Remission and Redemption is brought about.

Through the grace of God, sins are forgiven by virtue of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work as Surety and Mediator. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

The word 'REDEEM' is found in both the Old and New Testament and it means 'to re-purchase', 'to recover by ransom', 'the liberation of property under mortgage or debt', 'to deliver from bondage or prison'. The term is in common use in the legal profession today and whenever or wherever used, it conveys one or more of these definitions.

To rightly understand the spiritual meaning of the term, one must first be brought to realize that all men and women are sinners, "All have sinned " (cf Romans -5:12); in this "there is no difference" (Romans 3:22). Every child of Adam is bom in sin. As such, all are under the condemnation of the inflexible Law of God and to His uncompromising justice. Such are held in custody awaiting the execution of the sentence, for they are totally incapable of discharging their responsibilities and thus meeting the requirement of the Divine standard; to the Holy Law of God all are debtors and to His justice everyone is a prisoner.

The salvation of which the Bible speaks is not just a free pardon through the kindness and grace of God, neither is it a release from bondage by Divine intervention: it is this, but much more is involved. Remission and release from the penalty of the law are entirely dependant upon the work of Atonement. A Ransom had to be paid which in every respect would satisfy the Redemption necessary. In order that sin might be forgiven, every sin must be atoned for. This is the work of Propitiation which Christ undertook as He vicariously endured the wrath of God in the sinners stead, the Ransom being His own blood, and REDEMPTION is the result of that payment. Redemption as set forth in the Word of God is a deliverance and setting free in consequence of a full ransom having been paid.

In human affairs it is possible to conceive of a price being paid and then through some miscarriage of justice, the prisoner is not released; this would be a ransom without a redemption. We can also imagine judicial authorities moved by some misguided compassion, freeing a person held in custody without the penalty being imposed; this would be a deliverance without a ransom or payment, it certainly would not be REDEMPTION. By this we see how vital is the terminology of Holy Scripture and how it must be thoroughly examined and expounded. These words must never be thrown together as if they mean one and the same.

True Redemption demands two things; the payment of the full ransom price, then the setting free of the person for whom the ransom was paid. These two matters, though intimately related, are clearly distinguished in the Word of God. "For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he" (Jeremiah 31:11). "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death" (Hosea 13:14). Redemption is the outcome of a ransom, securing the release of the ransomed. All who are ransomed will be redeemed, and all the redeemed will be released, so we see that REDEMPTION, like REMISSION and RECONCILIATION is limited to those elected and chosen of God.

In no sense are the reprobate redeemed. Election and Redemption relate to the same individuals. To infer that vast numbers whom Christ died to redeem are now in hell, constitutes an absolute contradiction, to say nothing of holding an unsound view of the work of Christ. Hell is a prison, inescapable, eternal imprisonment. How could any REDEEMED soul be there? True Redemption is effected by the payment of the full ransom price and when this is paid, Divine justice DEMANDS the release of the captive. All for whom Christ died and gave His life a ransom will be saved and know that redemption which is in Christ Jesus; not one will be lost; these are of the election of grace. This immediately opens up another aspect of this subject.

Redemption necessarily supposes previous possession. The Pawn Shop is not nearly as common as it used to be, but in days of great poverty men would go to the Pawn Broker and deposit goods, maybe a watch, against which the Pawn Broker would advance money. Having deposited the watch and collected the money, that man lost possession of that property and he could only regain possession by paying back the money in full, thus redeeming that which he previously owned. A human illustration although very inadequate, nevertheless it does throw some light upon our subject.

In the Scriptures the Israelites stand out as a wonderful example of this truth as they were the Lord's people. These people were the Lord's by sovereign choice. "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you" (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). This same people whom God had chosen for Himself are then seen in Egypt in bondage, serving a taskmaster. Later do we see them recovered and restored, having been REDEEMED by blood and DELIVERED by power. In drawing the spiritual lessons from these Old Testament people, many Christians only see part of the truth. They see illustrated a people who were once the Devil's captives, "sold under sin" (Romans 7:14) and that Christ has purchased them and set them free. This is true, but it is an inadequate view; it falls short of that which Scripture teaches in that it fails to take into account PREVIOUS POSSESSION. One cannot redeem that which was not previously owned. A straight purchase and redemption are two entirely different things. To buy a new watch is not the same as redeeming one previously owned.

The Word of God is clear in its teaching that a great number of Adam's race had been chosen, elected and given to Christ long before He shed His precious blood to ransom them. Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (cf Ephesians 1:4). Saved and called according to God's own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (cf 2 Timothy 1:9). "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2). These were given to Christ "out of the world" (John 17:6). "I pray for them which Thou hast given Me" (John 17:9). "Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost" (John 17:12). These are referred to in Scripture as "God's elect" (Titus 1:1); Christ's sheep,

for whom He, the Good Shepherd laid down His life; these sheep He knew beforehand (cf John 10:14,15).

This great number whom the Father chose, He gave to Christ as His bride; it was a love gift of the Father to His Son. "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me" (John 17:6). This company therefore must always be seen as Christ's by virtue of the Father's election and gift to Him, which was made before the world was brought into existence. The elect were Christ's POSSESSION.

From other Scriptures we learn that in Adam, the legal head and representative of the human race, all died (cf 1 Corinthians 15:22). This included those chosen and given to Christ as well as the reprobate. They were "the children of wrath even as others" (Ephesians 2:3), "dead in sins" (Ephesians 2:5), "alienated from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:18). Nevertheless those people were Christ's by sovereign election, but because they were "sold under sin" (Romans 7:14), they must therefore be REDEEMED. So is a Saviour, a Deliverer promised, One whose name was to be called "JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). This blessed One was not to save an unknown, indefinite company, or make the salvation of all men possible; such doctrine cuts right across the doctrine of Holy Scripture. Christ came to save HIS people; this is why He is called 'THE REDEEMER', because His work results in the REDEMPTION of those people given to Him, but who now are sinners and in consequent bondage. He is to pay the ransom price and buy back that company - His sheep, His bride, "the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Redemption is the recovery by ransom of that previously owned.

Through the fall of Adam, the federal head and legal representative of the human race, all are sinners, consequently in bondage. By nature we are all as the Israelites in Egypt - SLAVES to sin and to Satan as the Lord Himself said "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John

8:34). Until a person is regenerated by God's Holy Spirit that person is described as "serving divers lusts and pleasures" (Titus 3:3).

Slavery and bondage always go together, but the amazing thing in the realm of things spiritual is, that the slaves of Satan always consider themselves to be free. The natural man thinks that he has freedom and that it is the Christian who is restricted. This is a great delusion of the Devil and can only be described as the bondage of man's ignorance (cf Ephesians 4:18, 2 Peter 2:19). Unregenerate men are in "the snare of the Devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:26). Man is a captive of Satan, fettered in captivity, yet he is so blinded (cf 2 Corinthians 4:4), his foolish heart so darkened (cf Romans 1:21) that he does not see it, indeed he argues that he is free. He is the one who can act as he thinks; but fallen man is no more free than he is sinless. If this be not so then the words of Christ to the Jews are quite meaningless, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). His hearers would not accept the fact that they needed to be made free; they said, "We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man" (John 8:33). Oh the bondage of ignorance! To talk of man's freewill when it comes to spiritual matters is a nonsense. Men who are in such bondage as this will never of themselves break from it, firstly because they have no desire to do so and secondly they are in the snare of Satan, held captive by him at HIS will. Apart from the sovereign intervention of God by His Spirit, man will ever remain in the captivity of spiritual darkness, and all the time he is there he will imagine that he is free, for men love darkness rather than light (cf John 3:19).

It might be thought very strange that a people given to Christ by God in His eternal purposes should be in captivity to Satan, and we might tritely say that it is sin which has brought about their condition. This of course is correct, but there is more to it, or another angle from which to view it, especially within the context

of the subject of REDEMPTION, which is 'recovery by ransom'.

Sin is a debt, man is the debtor, God is the Creditor. The pattern prayer given us by the Lord Jesus makes this point clear, "Forgive us our debts" (Matthew 6:12). All men are debtors, in debt to God. Unpaid debts render a man liable to imprisonment. The debt of sin has caused God to shut men up in unbelief (cf Romans 11:32, marg). This is a most sobering thought, heightened when we recall Christ's words "Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing" (Matthew 5:26). This is a truth rarely explained.

As a consequence of man's guilt in Adam and personal rebellion, the eternal, thrice holy God, as supreme Judge and Governor delivered mankind unto Satan; such are under the power of sin and death. Satan as jailor holds them; he makes full use of sin, the world and the flesh to occupy, to entrench and to bind them. All by nature are in this state, both the elect and the reprobate. "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:2,3). From this dreadful state and position none can escape and none can deliver, apart from Christ. All are imprisoned on account of debt and none can pay, other than the Saviour. How we bless His holy name that He accepted the office of surety and became guarantor for His people, coming into this world to discharge their debt, "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). To redeem and to "save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

TO BE CONTINUED

W.H.MOLLAND



# CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

In these days when nationalistic feelings seem to be running so high throughout the world, it surely becomes the Christian to remember that, first and foremost, our "citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). When we have expressed those feelings, and exercised those duties that belong to us as members of our own particular society etc, our lives must still be governed by the realisation that "here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come". The apostle Paul drew a vivid picture for the Philippian believers when he reminded them of this fact from their own situation in the verse mentioned above. In the preceding verses, he has been saying some very strong things about those who were the "enemies of the cross of Christ"; and one of the features of these enemies of the cross is that they "mind earthly things". They are all taken up with the things of this life, and they have no eye whatsoever for spiritual and heavenly business. But, says Paul in verse 20 - "Our citizenship (our conversation) is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ".

How this must have struck a familiar note in the hearts and minds of those believers, who were also inhabitants of the city of Philippi. Although situated in the region of Macedonia, Philippi was a Roman colony, and the Philippian people in general gloried in the honour of Roman citizenship, and all that it entailed in those days of the Empire's national grandeur. Although born in Philippi, they were, nevertheless, citizens of Rome. Their names appeared on the imperial register; they were governed by the laws and legislation of Rome, and enjoyed its many privileges. Above all, Rome was where their lord and saviour dwelt - for so the Emperor of Rome was considered by many - and at a moment's notice, he would muster the Imperial Legions, and dispatch them should any danger threaten the well-being of those under his care.

We can imagine, then, how Paul's words would have left a mark on the Philippian believers. They were citizens of the world by nature; BUT, by grace they had been born from above, so that they were now "heavenly" citizens whose citizenship was "in heaven". Their names were registered in glory - in the lamb's book of life; they were now under the rule and regulations of heaven. Was the Emperor of Rome a "saviour" to the worldly-minded man and woman in the streets of Philippi? Their Jesus was the Saviour of saviours, and the King of all the kings of the earth, who would hear the cry of His people before they cried, and would answer from heaven, where His throne is, while they were yet speaking!

Heaven was the real "capital city" of the elect of God in Philippi; the Church at Philippi was an "heavenly" colony, and the implications of Paul's words were clear to see. The enemies of the cross of Christ "minded earthly things", the citizens of heaven must live in accordance with their citizenship in every way.

How vital the lesson for us today, as in every day. Is it not true that, in so many ways, we can lose the sight of heaven from the eye of faith? Our spiritual ears are not as attuned as they ought to be to the "voice of our Beloved", who beckons us to "rise up and come away". Perhaps if we dwelt more on our heavenly citizenship we would less often resort to the town of Carnal Policy and more often to the throne-room of Glory. Is it because we enter less and less into the warfare with the world, the flesh and the devil that we have less and less desire for "the rest that remaineth unto the people of God"? Do we really have a heart-longing to visit the place of our true nationhood, to see the "King there in His beauty"? So much of today's "gospel" has been aimed at men and women's present state that the goal of eternity - that for which Christ died - has been lost.

W. J. SEATON

**ESPECIALLY FOR THE YOUNGER FOLK**

## ***WITCHES, DRUIDS***

## ***AND HALLOWEEN***

Long ago when Christianity was very young, heathen people practised witchcraft and idol worship. These worshipped "the host of heaven". The Prophet Jeremiah wrote that God hated the idolatry of those who made cakes to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to other gods (cf Jeremiah 7:18) and those kings and priests and prophets who worshipped the sun and moon and the host of heaven (8:2). Even today missionaries tell of heathen tribes who offer sacrifices to demons and spirit gods to protect themselves and their families and sometimes to call down curses on their enemies. We chuckle at such activities and think they are only superstition; but the people who do these things believe them to be very real, and they live in constant fear. They believe if they fail to please their gods, they will be punished.

When the Roman emperor, Julius Caesar, marched north into Western Europe, he encountered the Celtic people, who practised a religion that had powerful control over the people. The religion was Druidism. In some ways their religion resembled that of the Old Testament priests. Druid priests taught the people religion and acted as judges to decide matters of right and wrong. These Druids practised witchcraft and worshipped false gods. It is believed their religious beliefs came from India, because they believe that the soul of a dead person passes to another creature, similar to the Hindu belief in sacred cows.

When He created man, God made Adam in His own image. Man can think and reason and communicate by talking - something animals cannot do. After Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they became aware of their own wickedness.

All people have a consciousness of the difference between right and wrong, and all people have some way to soothe this consciousness. Most people try to live up to a code of ethics - a rule of laws defining right and wrong. Some people today call themselves atheists; in bygone days they would have been known as "infidels". These have convinced themselves there is no God and there will be no Divine judgment day when God will punish the wicked for their sins. These people try to live as though their actions make no difference. They sin against God every day and don't care that they do. They boast that they do not believe God exists.

The Bible speaks of such people. Indeed, the Bible, which is God's Word, speaks of everything that is in the heart of man (and woman and child). The Bible says about those who say there is no God: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). God looks upon those who say He does not exist as being fools. These claim that since they cannot see God, then God must not exist. But a blind man cannot see the sunlight or his hand; does that mean sunlight and his hand do not exist? Of course not, that is foolish! God's handiwork is all about us. We know God exists because we see His creation - the sun, moon, stars, seasons of the year, and creatures such as animals of all different species. Dogs and cats and horses are not capable of reasoning and talking. Even apes - chimpanzees, orangutans, gorillas and monkeys are dumb brutes. Some scientists try to prove that mankind evolved from the apes, but they have not been able to prove it. It takes much imagination in something without any scientific basis to believe in evolution.

God created man in His own image. Men and women and children have a soul that will live for eternity, either in heaven with God or in the torments of hell with the devil. Animals have life which ceases to exist when it dies. Man has an eternal soul and his body will be resurrected from the dead and become a new, spiritual body for eternity.

Doesn't it seem foolish then, that people could worship an animal, or the sun, or the moon and stars? The Druid priests taught that when a person died, his soul passed into another person. Druids worshipped the same gods as the Greeks and Romans had worshipped, though they were known by different names until the coming of Christianity after the emperor Constantine made Christianity the official Roman religion in the fourth century. Rome's religion, however, became very corrupt and brought along a lot of the heathen customs, such as worshipping the "queen of heaven", whom the Roman Catholics worship today. They call her "Mary, mother of God". Even the present pope loves to worship Mary. Worshipping anything other than God the Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ is idolatry. True Christians must not worship Mary or any saint or any other of the "host of heaven". Much of what has come to us today in the name of Christianity is really heathen in origin and a form of Druidism.

One of the rites of the Druids has survived and is still observed today, though most people don't realize it is of the Druids and a form of witchcraft. If they would only look at what is being represented, they should recognize it; for it glorifies death and the prince of darkness.

On October 31, the Celts believed that the souls of all those who had died the past year were released by Samhain, the lord of the dead. People would build huge bonfires to ward off evil spirits, which had been confined to the bodies of animals to atone for their sins. They thought the evil spirits would return to their homes to partake of the feast of the harvest goddess, which was celebrated that month. People would build large bonfires and wear masks so that the spirits would not recognize them. They also carved ugly faces on hollowed-out pumpkins and burned candles inside to tell the evil spirits that there was already an evil spirit at this house. On "All Souls Day", November 1, souls of the dead were free to go to Druid heaven. The Roman Catholic Church accepted some of the Druid form of worship in order to make it easier for the

Celts to be converted to the Roman Catholic religion. "All Souls Day" came to be called "All Saints Day", and the evening before it is called the "Eve of All Hallows", or "Hallowed Evening", which shortens to "Hallowe'en". Druids would bum horses and humans as sacrifices to their gods. After the first century, their Roman conquerors forbade the human sacrifices, and they substituted black cats, which they thought were the familiars of witches.

Today on Hallowe'en, nearly all of society laughs and makes it a night of fun, putting out carved pumpkins, having parties, setting out replicas of black cats, ghosts, skeletons, witches and so forth. It is all looked on today as great fun. The ones who get the greatest enjoyment out of it are those who make and sell the costumes and candy - they make lots of money! But it had its beginnings in human sacrifices and worship of idols and real witchcraft. In our country today, witches are once again practising their black arts. Animals and even humans have been sacrificed in recent years, and the most popular time for these events is Hallowe'en! One can even see advertisements in newspapers and magazines to learn witchcraft. The less-than-serious attitude of people toward the practices of the Druid religion has caused the nation to let down its guard. Today, many are running after the religion of the Druids and don't even realize it. Christian people - God fearing people - should have nothing at all to do with Hallowe'en for it is of the devil, and alien to Christianity.

Taken from 'The Pilgrim Pathway', Vol.8 No.5

HALLOWE'EN (in medieval times 'All Hallows'), kept on October 31, the eve of All Saints Day, was a Celtic festival....Halloween was thought to be the most favourable opportunity for divinations concerning marriage, luck, health and death, differing in manner in various parts of Britain. It was the only day in which the help of the devil was invoked for such purposes.

Taken from 'Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.2, p.15)

# ***MENNO SIMONS* on INFANT BAPTISM**

From THE COMPLETE WRITINGS OF MENNO SIMONS, translated from the Dutch by Reformed minister Leonard Verduin, we discover the Mennonite view of baptism, which is thoroughly against infant baptism. Menno Simons was the founder of the Dutch Mennonites and is looked to by Mennonites as the leader who amalgamated the European Anabaptists of the sixteenth century into a Church. This was only done through much hardship and suffering at the hands of the incumbent religious leaders of the day.

In his arguments against the paedobaptists, Menno Simons points out how in reality they did not depart from the works-salvation of the Roman Catholics. (Menno himself was a Roman Catholic priest until his conversion in 1535. He continued preaching in the Roman Catholic church until 30 January 1536, when he renounced Romanism). He saw the error of infant baptism and made strong statements about it. Only after hearing that a God-fearing man had been beheaded for being rebaptized in 1531 did he begin studying the writings of men to find out the truth of the matter. He discussed the matter with his own Catholic pastor, who had to admit there was no basis for infant baptism in the Scriptures. He consulted several ancient authors who taught him that by baptism, children are supposedly cleansed from their original sin. In comparing this idea with the Scriptures, he "found that it did violence to the blood of Christ". Menno then checked several contemporary theologians to find their explanation for the basis of infant baptism. Luther taught him "that children were to be baptized on account of their own faith". He rejected this as not in accordance with the Word of God. Bucer's explanation was "that infants are to be baptized so that they might be the more carefully nurtured in the way of the Lord". He rejected this doctrine as without foundation. He saw that Bullinger, who

replaced Zwingli in Zurich, pointed to the covenant and to circumcision, which he found likewise to be incapable of Scriptural proof. Menno says "When I noticed from all these that writers varied so greatly among themselves, each following his own wisdom, then I realized that we were deceived in regard to infant baptism" (The Complete Writings of Menno Simons, p.671).

Did Menno Simons experience an evangelical conversion? Judge for yourself. He describes his own conversion as follows: "My heart trembled within me. I prayed to God with sighs and tears that He would give to me, a sorrowing sinner, the gift of His grace, create within me a clean heart, and graciously through the merits of the blood of Christ forgive my unclean walk and frivolous easy life and bestow upon me wisdom, Spirit, courage and a manly spirit so that I might preach His exalted and adorable name and Holy Word in purity, and make known His truth to His glory... Then I, without constraint, of a sudden, renounced all my worldly reputation, name and fame, my unchristian abominations, my masses, infant baptism, and my easy life, and I willingly submitted to distress and poverty under the heavy cross of Christ... So you see, my dear reader, in this way the merciful Lord through the liberal goodness of His abounding grace took notice of me, a poor sinner, stirred in my heart at the outset, produced in me a new mind, humbled me in His fear, taught me to know myself in part, turned me from the way of death and graciously called me into the narrow pathway of life and the communion of His saints. To Him be praise for evermore. Amen", (p.671)

Menno did not believe in "sinless perfectionism" as taught by the Wesleyan Methodists, who came along much later. He saw himself as a sinner saved by grace, daily fighting the spiritual battle.

"As to my poor, weak and imperfect life, I freely confess that I am a poor, miserable sinner, conceived in sin, of sinful seed, and sinfully brought forth. I can say with



David that my sins are ever before me. My thoughts, words, and actions convict me. With the holy Paul I observe that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing (Romans 7:18). I thank my God who made me willing with the holy Paul to hate the evil and to follow the good", (p.673)

Did Menno believe in sovereign election unto salvation? Let his own words testify what he believed, remembering he was writing to refute the error of paedobaptism (infant baptism) which was practised by both the Roman Catholic and the Reformed churches, showing that infant baptism is a form of works. In his "Foundation of Christian Doctrine" (1539-40; revised 1558), he writes: "In the second place, they teach that the children of Israel under the Old Testament were incorporated into God's covenant and church through circumcision; but that our children are incorporated through baptism. To this, with Scripture we say no. Whoever reads the Scriptures understanding^ will perceive clearly that Abraham was in the covenant before that. For it is evident that we do not become the children of God through any outward rites, but through the fatherly election of grace through Jesus Christ. But an outward sign was required of Abraham as a matter of obedience and a seal of faith. Likewise of his seed, that they should circumcise the male children on the eighth day, no sooner, no later, and not the female children. If now the covenant depended on the sign and not on the assurance of grace, what would become of the female children and the males that died uncircumcised in the seven days? Beloved reader, give heed to the Word of God. Although the women and female children were not circumcised, they had the promise in common in the promised seed, the promised land, the kingdom and glory. They were no less the seed of Abraham and subjects to the covenant of God and under the things signified by the sign thereof than were the uncircumcised men and male children. From which it is plain that the children of Israel were not in the Lord's covenant on account of circumcision as Paedobaptists assert, but through the election of grace.

Since Christ has ordained and commanded to baptize believers and did not utter a syllable about infant baptism, we therefore believe and teach that believer's baptism is of God and His Word. Since Christ has commanded that believers should be baptized and not infants, and the holy apostles have taught and used it thus in accordance with the instructions of Christ, as may be seen in many places in the New Testament, therefore all reasonable minded men must admit that infant baptism, although alas practised by nearly the whole world and maintained by tyranny, is nothing but a ceremony of Antichrist and open blasphemy". (pl32-133)

Menno accuses the paedobaptists of following their own inclinations when they gave their reasons for infant baptism. He points out that even Bucer, Rhenanus and Zwingli admitted that the ancients baptized few children; that Cyprian, who lived in the latter part of the third century, left infant baptism optional; and that certain others who were his contemporaries with Reformed views acknowledged that there is no express command for infant baptism, while Gellius Faber claimed that infant baptism came from the apostles. Menno makes use of the expression "the learned ones", referring to those who have been trained in human reasoning to sustain their arguments, rather than simply trusting in the Bible as their guide. This refers to both Roman Catholic scholars and the Reformed who had been corrupted with Catholic logic in their views of infant baptism. Menno responds thus:

"If we consider the confession and the doctrine of the learned ones touching infant baptism, we find it to be such a confused Babel that we must acknowledge that it cannot be of God. For some of the ancients (not the apostles), as it seems, baptized some children but not many. Some say they have received it from the apostles, others deny this. Some have formerly baptized, and still baptize, to wash away original sin; others because they are children of the covenant. Some baptized them upon the faith of the church; others upon the faith of their

parents. Some upon the faith of their godparents; others upon their own faith. And still others, in order that they may be more piously reared in the Word of God. Behold, thus are the advocates of infant baptism divided among themselves. Inasmuch then as they do not agree and are not of one mind as to upon what and to what end we shall baptize, therefore it is manifest that they baptize without the Word of God. For if their cause were rooted in Scripture, then they would baptize to the same end, according to the same ordinance, rule and doctrine". (p696)

Calvin despised Menno Simons. He said concerning Menno, "Nothing can be more conceited than this donkey, nor more impudent than this dog" (p.405). Menno did not stoop to such name-calling, but reserved the derogatory remarks to the system practised by Paedobaptist Reformers. Menno has much to say in refuting infant baptism. In his day that was the issue of controversy. He successfully proved that infant baptism was not a Scriptural ordinance but an invention of man. Menno lays a foundational principle for all who would be Christians: Do not follow the teachings of men ('the learned ones') but follow the Bible alone. To this we give hearty assent. He writes in his "Foundation of Christian Doctrine": "You see, dear reader, I admonish and advise you if you seek God with all your heart, and do not want to be deceived, do not depend upon men and the doctrine of men, no matter how venerable, holy and excellent they may be esteemed. For the experts, ancient as well as modern, are opposed to each other. Put your trust in Christ alone and in His Word, and in the sure instruction and practice of His holy apostles, and by the grace of God you will be safe from all false doctrine and the power of the devil, and will walk with a free and pious mind before God. (P.138)

Taken from an article in The Pilgrim Pathway, March/April 1993 by Charles H Shofstahl, abbreviated by his permission.

# EDITORIAL

Because of the biased manner in which so much history has been written in favour of the Reformers, coverage has been given in this magazine over recent months to these independent bodies of Christians who would not identify with a State Church or infant sprinkling; both of which were dogmas held by those of the Reformed position. These faithful believers were mercilessly persecuted through many generations, first by the Romanists, later during and after the Protestant Reformation, by the Reformers themselves. The attitude of the Reformers to the trials and atrocities carried out against these defenceless saints of God can be described in no other way than deplorable. It is only in recent years that much of this historical information has become more readily available to the public and it ill becomes any Christian to ignore these shameful facts.

In 1536, an important document entitled 'OPINION OF THE WITTENBERG THEOLOGIANs' was given to the Landgrave Philip of Hesse signed by Luther, Melancthon, Bugenhagen and Creutzinger, declaring what the magistrate was responsible for, which amongst other things included the punishment of the obstinate and rebellious. "Where someone has articles on spiritual matters alone, such as infant baptism, original sin and unnecessary division, because these articles are important, we conclude that in these cases also the obstinate may be put to death". Melancthon drafted this 'OPINION' but Luther with his own hand added, "Seeing that our gracious Landgrave reports that certain leaders and teachers of the Anabaptist are in prison, who are to be banished (that is, banished from the land)... your Princely grace may, on the ground that they have become disobedient .... with a good conscience have them punished with the sword. In the newly founded Protestant State Churches there was as little liberty of religious practice and recognised freedom of faith and conscience as in the Romanist lands. The Reformers themselves soon

forgot the principle they themselves had declared of universal religious freedom". (BAPTISM pl82-184, JOHANNES WARNS).

William R Estep, in the introduction to his book THE ANABAPTIST STORY (available from our bookroom) writes, "The history of Anabaptism belongs to the category of 'now it can be told' stories. Perhaps there is no group within Christian history that has been judged as unfairly as the Anabaptist of the sixteenth century. Theirs has been the lot of the widely misunderstood, deliberately misrepresented, or completely ignored. With the exception of the present generation, all but a handful of competent historians have joined in a 'thumbs-down treatment' of four centuries duration.

There are several factors which explain this otherwise baffling and inexcusable situation. The first of these is hostile polemics. Scholars of preceding generations have leaned heavily upon the highly partisan and quite unreliable accounts of sixteenth century Anabaptism in the writings of Ulrich Zwingli, Justus Menius, Heinrich Bullinger and Christoph Fischer, to say nothing of the milder but just as erroneous accounts of Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon. Other problems have been unavailability of source materials, lack of interest by European scholars and unwillingness by American historians (with notable exceptions) to deal with materials which were available.

In 1534 a group of fanatics at Munster attempted to set up the kingdom of God by force. Before they were overthrown, many atrocities were committed in the name of religion. This fiasco, the most serious aberration of sixteenth century Anabaptism, has long been exaggerated out of all proportion to its true importance. It strengthened the position of those who persecuted the Anabaptist and left the name 'Anabaptist' in odious repute".

Is it not right that a more true perspective of history be given?

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION**

**VISITING PREACHERS D.V.**

Lord's Day	3 October 1993	Mr G Thrussell	Truro
Lord's Day	17 October 1993	Mr J Hooper	Saltash

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**Further recommended reading on the subject of the Anabaptists and the Reformers:-**

THE ANABAPTIST STORY

by William R. Estep

Price £8.20 postage paid

The following booklets are available free of charge; postage 18p stamp each.

THE ANABAPTIST AND THE SWORD by Charles H. Shofstahl  
this booklet graphically and authentically tells the story of the treatment meted out by the Reformers to the faithful believers who would not conform to all the tenets of Reformed Theology.

THE TRAIL OF BLOOD by Dr J. M. Carroll  
a most concise account of independent companies of Christians who have stood for believer's baptism throughout twenty centuries and what it has cost in human blood.

All the above are obtainable from our bookroom.