

Be ye doers of
the Word and
not hearers
only...

James 1:22

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

IN THIS ISSUE:

"CRUSADE TRAGEDY" - LYNDON OVERHOLT

"THE OLD COVENANT" - MENNO KNIGHT

"PYRAMIDS IN PERU!" - LUKE MARTIN

"MY HEAD COVERING TESTIMONY" - KINUKO FUKAMI

"AV INTERVIEW WITH MYRON SHOWALTER"

Letter from the Editor

“For without me ye can do nothing” (*John 15:5*)

Absolutely nothing of eternal value!

Hurricane Irma brushed by our house and took out our electric service for 24 hours. Without “power” the lights wouldn’t light, the computer wouldn’t compute, the telephone wouldn’t tell, the freezer wouldn’t freeze, the fridge wouldn’t fridge, and the AC wouldn’t condition the air.

Without a source of power outside of themselves, all these machines were helpless. The same is true if we depend only on ourselves to propel us through life into eternity. We need the power of Jesus within us to make our service fruitful.

And so it is with *Anabaptist Voice*. If it is not powered by God it will come to nothing, absolutely nothing. But, as Gamaliel said in Acts 5:39, “If it is of God, then no man can overthrow it.”

We believe God’s power is manifest in the Anabaptist churches of today. We are not reclusive Bible huggers gathered in protected enclaves. Instead, we are holding forth the Word of Life with outstretched hands rather than hugging it to our breasts. In seven issues of AV we have seen stories of Anabaptists in Australia, Canada, Greece, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, USA, and Singapore. There are many more countries where Anabaptist churches are present—Columbia, Ecuador, Ghana, India, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Romania, Ukraine, Uruguay. Time would fail me should I try to list them all.

In our own lifetime numerous Anabaptist churches have been planted throughout the United States. Imperfect churches to be sure, made up of imperfect people, but God’s people—baptizing, being, doing, giving, serving, sowing, working, and proclaiming the Lord’s death in the corner where they are.

We pray that God’s power may be evident in *Anabaptist Voice* and His name glorified through this work.

Peace,

James G. Landis



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About Anabaptist Voice

Our Mission Statement:

We want *Anabaptist Voice* to be a servant to the churches of Jesus Christ. We choose the name “Anabaptist” as a fitting term to describe an obedient “people of God” in our generation. We follow the example of the historic Anabaptists who sought to obey the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, but we do not idolize Anabaptists nor historic Anabaptism. We follow Christ.

Our Purpose:

To interpret Scripture in a simple, childlike way, and to apply Bible teaching to the lives of living saints in a practical manner.

Our Tone:

The tone of the magazine shall be positive in that:

- it presents the right way when it decries the wrong way.
- it presents the truth when it warns of the untruth.

Our motto shall be words from Isaiah 30:21.

Whenever you turn to the right hand
Or whenever you turn to the left,
You shall hear a voice behind you, saying,
“This is the way, walk in it.”

Our Bible Translation Policy:

All Scriptures quoted will be in either the KJV or the NKJV translations unless otherwise specified.

We respect the specific preference of a writer who wishes to use other translations for his article.

Our Finances:

There is no set subscription price for *Anabaptist Voice*. We appreciate donations from those who wish to support the work.

To assure an informed supporter base, each issue will contain a statement giving the number of copies printed and distributed, the total costs for the previous issue, and the amount of donations received.

Our Organization:

The AV Editor is responsible for assuring that *Anabaptist Voice* adheres to the stated purpose, securing writers, and proper copy editing. The AV Production Team is responsible for design, layout, printing, subscriptions, and all financial matters.

At present, *Anabaptist Voice* is choosing to be free of government regulations and control as much as possible. We are not registered with any federal or state government body. We are not a 501(c)3 organization; individual contributions are not tax deductible. Those who give to *Anabaptist Voice* through the local church or through Shalom Ministries may obtain a tax deduction(see page 43 for details).

Our Audience:

Our primary target audience is anyone associated with an Anabaptist church. We define an Anabaptist church as one that practices a follower-of-Jesus baptism, maintains actual applications of Bible truths, and where a close-knit, disciplined brotherhood exists among the believers.

Our secondary target audience is those not familiar with Anabaptist churches but are searching the Scriptures for truth.



Some Historic Tenets of Anabaptism:

In order to provide clarity about who we are, *Anabaptist Voice* lists historic Anabaptist beliefs and practices we believe are still valid today.

1. God accepted Jesus’ death on the cross as an atonement for the sins of the whole world. Thus the blood of Jesus enables each person to be acceptable to God when he repents of his sin and surrenders himself to King Jesus. This initial commitment is followed by obedience to the commands of Christ which gives the disciple assurance of his right standing before God. “Salvation” is not just a one-time event but a life-long experience.
2. Adult believer’s baptism signifies a commitment to follow Christ as His disciple in His kingdom.
3. The teachings of Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament are to be interpreted and put into practice. The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain are the heart of Christ’s kingdom teaching for his disciples.
4. Anabaptists recognize the church as Christ’s kingdom on the earth.
5. Faithful obedience to the commands of Christ often brings persecution upon us.
6. The world (*all who do not obey God*) is evil and under the sway of Satan.
7. Our earthly conduct determines our eternal destiny. True faith must result in obedience that will be rewarded in heaven. Evil works prove a lack of faith in God and will result in eternal punishment.
8. Kingdom disciples do not participate in the civil government or “serve” in the military.



Our Readers Write

Policy Note: *Email letters to Anabaptist Voice are encouraged. All letters must be accompanied by the writer's full name and physical address (not a PO Box). If the letter is printed in the magazine, only the writer's initials and state will be attached to the comments. If you send AV a letter, we assume the right to use any part of the letter we deem of interest to our readers. AV will try to be courteous in acknowledging all letters. - AV Ed.*

AV Children's Section?

Thank you for all the hard word you put into this magazine. I was wondering if you might be open to the idea of adding a "Children's Section" as a recurring feature which would include character-building stories that have Anabaptist values and support Anabaptist theology.

The idea of this would be to provide content for younger ones so that it might help shape their beliefs and grow their faith early in life, and also spark an interest for AV.

D.H. | Ohio

Anabaptist Voice: We are making great effort to keep our writing clear and understandable as well as to design an attractive layout with color and pictures. This quarter we begin another unique feature, "Proverbs Illustrated," which should be attractive to children of all ages right up to ninety and nine.

We have received several reports where children of 7-10 years old read AV from cover to cover. Children do not need all candy, but should have vegetables and meat in their reading diet. We believe AV can furnish a good opportunity for parents to discuss important issues with their children.

We also realize there are a great wealth of good Anabaptist-value stories available in graded readers from Christian Light, Pathway, and Rod and Staff Publishers.



Drawn To The Anabaptist Way

Currently I am a member of a local mosque, but find that I am drawn to the Anabaptist Christian faith and way of life. I want to learn more.

May I please have a subscription to *Anabaptist Voice*? Thank you.

M.A. | Pennsylvania

Blessed By Anabaptist Voice

Greetings in Jesus' precious name from Queensland, Australia. I am the mother of twelve children.

Recently I received my first copy of *Anabaptist Voice*, Issue 6. Several copies were left at church for interested people. Then our visiting minister from America, Brother Gary Kauffman, came to preach at our annual Anabaptist conference at Gympie and also distributed your magazine, which I found to be excellent. I would love to subscribe to AV if this is possible, Lord willing.

C.B. | Australia



Knowing What We Believe

We are a very small congregation in a large city. Through some very difficult situations everyone from Anabaptist background, including our minister, left the city about fifteen years ago. I sensed the Lord asking me to stay and live my life for Him among these people.

Many who had been a part of the church were influenced by those who left. They thought separation in dress, wearing the veil, keeping of marriage vows, and other Anabaptist practices were no longer important. However, there are two Sisters and one Brother in the church who stood their grounds with me on these issues. There are also three others from non-Anabaptist background that are worshiping with us.

I found *Anabaptist Voice* online and have really enjoyed every issue. I feel like AV could help our little group to a better understanding of what we really believe and stand for. However, I don't think our people will read AV online.

There are many of my acquaintances here who are in Protestant churches with whom I would love to share this magazine. But I will start with those who are attending our church. Also I was wondering if I could get any of the back issues? Thank you.

G.T. | Washington DC

Open Dialogue Appreciated

My wife and I were recently given your periodical by a dear Amish-Mennonite friend of ours. As we come from a non-Anabaptist/plain background, we have been encouraged and edified by your labors at AV.

We enjoy reading the varying viewpoints expressed and the followup of those thoughts by others adding their two cents. The open dialogue, so freely shared, allows for much grace to be shown between the saints. Also, it is educational as even our children read it cover to cover. And good discussions ensue from it.

As we subscribe to the Anabaptist view, we would like to also subscribe to the *Anabaptist Voice* magazine. Enclosed is a check/donation to help with the work you do at AV.

May God bless your work as you contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

J.L. | Virginia



Two Gospels

We believe that a fundamental error in interpretation has led many to faulty conclusions about salvation, grace, and the Kingdom, which makes the “gospel of the Kingdom” that was preached at the onset of Jesus’ ministry, and the “gospel of the grace of God” the same thing. They are not.

The gospel Paul preached was revealed to him (Galatians 1 & 2; Ephesians 3) and is defined in I Corinthians 15:1-4 as Christ dying for our sins and rising again so that men could be saved by grace through faith and be joined into one body, the church.

The gospel of the Kingdom was the good news that the time of God’s Kingdom on earth had drawn nigh. Nothing about dying for anyone’s sins. Of course the Jews rejected their king and His Kingdom offer, only to postpone its coming to earth for a future time (Romans 11; Revelation 20). Paul said salvation is a gift, not something we earn by behavior or the works of righteousness (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6).

C.L. | Louisiana

Anabaptist Voice: The gospel the Lord Jesus proclaimed and the gospel Paul preached are one and the same gospel. And in the teachings of both, good works, not evil works or the works of the Mosaic law, are essential to a right standing before God.

We want to be careful not to get tangled up in the meaning of words when we all advocate holy living.

“Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (*Hebrews 12:14*).

Don’t Give Life To An Ancient Rumor

See “*Marks of a Disciplined Church*,” AV04, page 11.

Good article overall, but the author has inadvertently resurrected an ancient rumor!

The author writes: “Paul wrote to Titus in Titus 1:13 to consider the Cretans, to rebuke them sharply ‘that they may be sound in the faith.’ ” The verse was misquoted and taken out of context. Consider:

“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.

One of themselves, even a prophet of their own said, ‘The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.’

This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (*Titus 1:10-13*).

It was the unruly, vain talkers and deceivers, especially of the circumcision (*not the Cretans*) who were to be sharply rebuked for slandering the Cretans. Let us not inadvertently do the same (*falsely accuse*)!

S.M. | Virginia



Putting Words Into Shoe Leather

We just attended the 40th Annual Fellowship Meetings near Dillsburg, Pa. What an inspiration! On a table in the back of the tabernacle was a stack of *Anabaptist Voice* (Issues 1-4) to take. Another blessing! This is a great asset to our home library.

We have four teenagers who are avid readers. We are carefully tracking the questions and answers in the “Practical Side” where we get help putting our words into shoe leather.

This magazine is greatly needed in our day! So many folks get fed up with the Anabaptist mentality (over paltry skirmishes) and end up in Protestant churches or completely forsake God! Why? Because they never understood how to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

After reading page 42 in AV04, I would like to ask for a bulk mailing of thirty copies to distribute to our church families and to use as witnessing tools.

May God continually bless your efforts in advancing His Kingdom! May we be faithful in carrying His torch into a darkening world. To God be the glory!

M.N. | New York

New Testament Power In “Grace”

I appreciated Brother David Bercot’s article on “grace” in AV06. He did a good job of walking us through what grace actually means from Scripture. However, he missed a very important part of the New Testament meaning of “grace” that I feel is so important for the New Testament Christian.

In the OT, the Hebrew word translated “grace” only included the meanings of favor, grace, pleasantness, and precious. God was showing favor to the Old Testament people.

In the New Testament the word also means favor. God has graciously bestowed His favor on mankind. But it is much more than that. In the New Testament the Greek word translated “grace” has an added spiritual meaning: *the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life.*

Yes, God’s grace, for the New Testament Christian, also gives power—power to overcome sin, power to live a life of victory that God desires in His people, power to be the saints that show forth the praise of Him who delivered us from darkness and brought us into the light of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That is why Romans 8 tells us we now have the power, through Jesus Christ, to live the righteous life the Old Testament saints were unable to live.

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (**Romans 8:3**).

American Christianity has been disgraceful to Scripture in many areas including the word “grace.” Sadly, their teaching has even affected Anabaptist believers. But Titus 2 makes it very clear; grace is never an excuse to sin. Rather, grace teaches the Christian not to sin. Again, we see the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (**Titus 2:11-12**).

I appreciate your publication very much.

N.H. | Virginia



Solid Teaching

I really like your good solid gospel teaching. God bless!

E.K. | Pennsylvania

Challenging

Thank you for your challenging, yet inspiring magazine. I thought you had some very thought-provoking articles. I especially like “The Practical Side” with its questions and, of course, the debate that follows. As we debate the questions of the Kingdom, let’s keep in mind that unless something is explicitly spelled out in the Bible, our conclusion is still just our opinion. However, as Balthasar Hubmaier frequently wrote, “I may be wrong; I am human. But a heretic I cannot be. I ask to be instructed.” I admire the effort you are making to instruct.

I also appreciated Brother Dean Taylor’s sharing about the bountiful harvest they are taking part in [Greece]. Also, I really liked how you put the contact information below the article for those of us who wish to help. Please continue to do so.

Issue #5 was my first issue, so some of the discussion did not make sense. I would love to receive the four back issues, if that would still be possible. Also, I was wondering if it would be possible to receive six copies of AV at a time for distribution at church, as well.

J.A.M. | Kentucky

Anabaptist Voice: All issues of *Anabaptist Voice* may be downloaded from www.anabaptistvoice.com.



Worth the Effort

The *Anabaptist Voice* has so much good reading in it and truly it is worth the effort. We both look forward to the next copy and I know the people that we send the spare copies to also appreciate them. It’s certainly the best Christian magazine that we know.

C. L. | Australia



Be careful of the words you say

And keep them soft and sweet.

For you never know from day to day

Which ones you’ll have to eat.

– unknown



Our Councilors Speak

Policy Note: This section is dedicated to the input of our Councilors. They provide direction to this project as well as correction and suggestions on the content. This is their platform. - AV Ed.

Does God Speak Our Language?

Written in response to “The Use of Thee and Thou in Prayer” (AV06, Pg 21).

I speak 21st century American English. I often read a modern English Bible, sometimes an Elizabethan English Bible (the KJV), and sometimes a Spanish Bible. Most of my ancestors, at one time, spoke a German dialect and read the German Bible. Farther back, my ancestors were, I suppose, part of the Roman Catholic church which taught that the Bible should be read only in Latin, even though most people could not read or understand Latin.

Does it matter to God what language we speak? Is any one language God’s language, or are all languages His?

John described what he saw in heaven: “**After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands**” (**Revelation 7:9**).

God speaks our language! And every person on earth can say that!

Does it make any difference to God if we use “thee” and “thou” when we address Him, or if we say “you”? I doubt if it does. God speaks every language.

Do our motives and the attitude of our heart matter when we address God in prayer? Absolutely! Jesus tells us what matters in His little parable of the Pharisee and the Publican who went up to the temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14).

Whether we use thee/thou or you in our prayers, it is important that we understand the significance of the two different choices. In 1611, when the King James Bible was translated into English, there were two different forms for you: a familiar form (thee/thou) and a formal form (you).

In the centuries since the KJV was written, English has dropped the familiar form from current usage. In one of the twists of history, today many of us think thee and thou is the respectful (formal) way to address our King—just the opposite of what people would have thought when the KJV was published.

In contrast to English, Spanish has retained both the familiar form (*tú*) and the formal form (*usted*) right up to the present day.

The way Spanish speakers use these pronouns varies considerably from country to country but in general, Spanish speakers use the formal *usted* to say you if the speaker is addressing someone he wants to honor. In most countries, they use the familiar *tú* to address peers, someone younger than themselves, or in some countries, only someone they are very close to.

So how do our Spanish-speaking brothers address God? They use *tú*, the familiar singular pronoun. (As far as I know, this is universal among Spanish speakers.)

“Why the familiar form of address?” you may ask. “Why don’t they use *usted* to address God to show Him the respect and honor He deserves?” Well, perhaps they use the familiar form *tú* (you) simply because that’s the way it’s done in the Bible they read.

When we pray to God in English or in Spanish, there is another reason why we should consider using the familiar pronouns when addressing Him. When Jesus came into the world, He introduced a new way of thinking about God. The temple veil that separated a holy God from His people was torn. God Himself opened up access to His holy presence. Now He invites us all, “Come boldly to the throne of grace.” Should we come with reverent respect? Of course!

But Jesus called the God of the Jews, the Creator God—our God—by a special title that implies intimacy—“Father!” In Matthew 6:9 Jesus taught us to pray using this same familiar, intimate name:

- “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (KJV).
- “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name” (NKJV).

There’s another word in Scripture that instructs us. In the Garden, Jesus prayed, “***Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will***” (**Mark 14:36**). Paul used the same “*Abba, Father*” expression in Romans 8:15 where he writes that we “have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father.*” What does “*Abba*” mean? Why did Jesus and Paul say that? In His commentary Adam Clarke explains it this way: “This Syriac word, which intimates filial affection and respect, and parental tenderness, seems to have been used by our blessed Lord ... to show his complete submission to His Father’s will and the tender affection which He

was conscious His Father had for Him.” Now that’s just a commentator’s comment but it’s beautiful. Respect and tenderness combined. Tender affection! The nearest English equivalent to “*Abba, Father*” might be “*Daddy, Father*” but that, no doubt, sounds quite strange to us.

Jesus’ instruction to address God as our Father was new and radically different from the Jewish way of looking at God. Does that intimate form of address teach us something?

Some AV readers choose to use the “*thee*” and “*thou*” forms in prayer. I suppose that many of you feel that these old pronouns are a more respectful way to address a holy God. Spanish taught me another viewpoint that I have come to appreciate. I address God as “*you*”, my “*Abba, Father*,” my intimate friend—and when I speak Spanish as “*tú*.”

When I pray, I choose to use commonly understood English—or commonly understood Spanish. I’m so glad God speaks my language!

Ernest Strubhar | *Perkins, Oklahoma*



Some Truths About Humanism

Written in response to “The Great Big ‘I’” (AV06, Pg 7).

Anabaptism is a descriptive term for a system of beliefs based and centered on Jesus Christ alone.

Humanism is a descriptive term for a system of beliefs based and centered on the human person alone.

Humanism can be described as a belief system where adherents see themselves as little gods; those who follow this religion are known as humanists. Humanism first came to prominence in the 1930’s when believers in this religion produced the first Humanist Manifesto.

After a very informative preamble, the manifesto states 15 points. Here are the first two key points:

1. Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.
2. Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as a result of a continuous process.

Two subsequent Humanist Manifestos in 1973 and 1993 reinforced their doctrinal system. The 1973 Manifesto was clearly against God. It states:

“As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to live and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproven and outmoded faith. ... Reasonable minds look to other means for survival.”



For further Bible study:

Read through Matthew and Mark. Color code all the times Jesus refers to God as “His Father” and “our Father.” Compare this with Old Testament references to God as the Father. What does this tell us about the nature of the New Covenant?

The 1993 Manifesto states in part:

“Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.”

In other words, humanists claim their beliefs to be religious and believe in evolution. They are totally opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We hope that this very small glimpse of humanism will be sufficient for any follower of Jesus to realize that the humanist agenda is contrary and hostile to Christianity. A more comprehensive view of humanist ideology can be gleaned from the following free resources:

Copies of the Humanist Manifestos 1933, 1973 and 1993 available on request through the “contact us” tab at <www.anabaptistmennonites.net>.

The following Scripture based messages on humanism are available at:

<http://www.anabaptistmennonites.net/index_html_files/HUMANISM.pdf>

<http://www.anabaptistmennonites.net/index_html_files/GS401.mp3>

<http://www.anabaptistmennonites.net/index_html_files/GS2121.mp3>

Joseph Van Loon | *Tasmania, Australia*

“Grace” in Romans

by David Bercot

In the last issue of *Anabaptist Voice* (AV06), we looked at the historic meaning of the Greek word *charis*, which is translated in our English Bibles as “grace.” From the Jewish and Christian works written around the time of the New Testament, we learned this about *charis*:

- *Charis* was not a special theological term, but an ordinary Greek word used frequently in everyday life.
- The primary meaning of *charis* was “favor” or “goodwill.” It could also mean a “gift.” In fact, it could even mean a “reward” or “thanks.”
- However, *charis* never meant “wages” or “debt owed.”
- Jesus used the word *charis* only a few times—and always in the sense of “reward” or “thanks.”
- *Charis* carried with it no inherent meaning of “unmerited favor.” It could be either merited or unmerited.
- In the Scriptures, God’s *charis* or “favor” always comes with conditions.

The Gift of Salvation

Although *charis* or “grace” does not, in itself, mean “unmerited favor,” we must always remember that God’s offer of salvation to mankind is unmerited. It is a gift that none of us deserve. Furthermore, we cannot possibly earn our salvation.

Nevertheless, just because salvation is a gift does not mean it is an unconditional gift. The Bible speaks of salvation in three tenses: past, present, and future—and all three stages of the gift of salvation come with conditions. The first stage—our initial salvation—is conditioned on (1) our faith in Jesus Christ, (2) our conversion or change of heart, and (3) our genuine repentance of our past sins (John 8:24; Acts 2:38; 15:3).

After we have become saved, we become a branch on the Vine of Christ, with His life and power flowing through us (John 15:1-5). However, to remain a branch on the Vine, we have to maintain an obedient, love-faith relationship with Christ. The present and future aspects of salvation are conditioned on this. Jesus warns us:

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. . . . As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered;

and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. . . . If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:2-10).

So God’s continuing grace or favor is not unconditional. Our initial salvation (past salvation) was conditioned on our genuine faith and repentance. Our continuing salvation is conditioned on bearing godly fruit, which we can only do through Christ.

Does Paul Contradict Christ?

However, some would have us believe that Paul contradicts Christ and tells us that God’s favor and His salvation—past, present and future—are totally independent of our conduct. One of the favorite proof-texts many professing Christians like to quote is Romans 4:2-5:

“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness” (Romans 4:2-5).

At first glance, it does indeed seem that Paul is contradicting Jesus. However, we should instinctively know that a faithful disciple like Paul would never contradict his Master. So to clear up this apparent contradiction, we need to ask three pertinent questions:

- What is the context of this passage?
- What does Paul mean by works?
- What stage of salvation is Paul discussing: past, present, or future?

As far as the context, Acts 15 and Galatians 2 demonstrate that the big issue that was the context for nearly all of Paul’s letters was whether or not Gentiles had to be circumcised and live by the Mosaic Law in order to be saved. All throughout Romans, Paul makes it clear that this is his context. For example, he writes, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith *apart from the works of the Law*. Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith” (Rom. 3:28-30).

So what does Paul mean by *works* in this passage? Let’s let Paul tell us. He states that the unbelieving Jews did not find righteousness, “Because they did not seek it by

faith, but as it were, by the works of the Law” (Rom. 9:32). So Paul is talking about works of the Mosaic Law. In the parallel book of Galatians, Paul makes this even more clear: “A man is not justified by the works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ.” That’s why Paul asks at the end of the subject passage: “Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also?” (Rom. 4:9).

In contrast, in chapter 2 of Romans, Paul uses *works* in the sense of bearing godly fruit or walking obediently to Christ. When he uses *works* in that sense, Paul says exactly the same thing Jesus says, “[God] will render to each one according to his works: eternal life to those who by patient *continuance in doing good* seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God” (Rom. 2:5-11).

There are other proof-texts that some professing Christians often quote in support of the gospel of “easy-believism.” But when we look at the context of those passages, we see that Paul is invariably talking about works of the [Mosaic] Law. Even when Paul isn’t clear as to which types of works he is referring to, he is always clear as to the *stage of salvation* he is talking about. It is always the *past* stage of salvation. Works—whether Jewish or Christian—played no part in our initial salvation. It was a favor, a gift from God, conditioned only on our faith and repentance.

“But doesn’t Paul say in Romans 4 that if we do something, then it isn’t grace?” you may ask. Not at all. Paul says that if we *earn* our salvation by keeping all of the works of the [Mosaic] Law, then it isn’t grace (*charis*)—it’s wages or debt. Remember, *charis* means favor, goodwill, gift, or reward. It *never* means wages or debt. Even though our continuing salvation is conditioned on our maintaining an obedient love-faith relationship with Christ, it is always a gift. It is never something we are owed. It is not even something we deserve.

Conclusion on Grace

In the 16th and 17th centuries, our Anabaptist forefathers correctly understood the meaning of grace. They vigorously defended the historical, biblical meaning of grace against some of the new definitions of grace that were being advanced. They were profoundly grateful for the unmerited gift of salvation. At the same time, they grasped the fact that God’s favor or grace is not a “blank

check” that allows us to live ungodly lives and scoff at God’s commandments. No, God requires us to produce godly fruit if we are to remain in His favor or *charis*. At the same time, we can produce such godly fruit only through the enabling power of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



The Perfect Sacrifice

Adapted from a message by Keith Crider

“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).

We must base our ideas directly on Scripture. Our thinking is defective when we pose our own theories of Christ’s death while ignoring God’s careful preparation and foreshadowing in the Old Testament.

From Abel on, God’s people were familiar with the concept of sin being atoned for by a blood sacrifice. A blood sacrifice meant the killing of a victim on an altar.

What does the Old Testament—God’s great “preparatory”—show us about Jesus’ death?

- God provided the Lamb (Jesus) for the burnt offering. “God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:8).

- The Lamb died for the firstborn. It died as a sacrifice to provide blood. It was not punished, but the blood was accepted by God so the firstborn sons would not have to die (Exodus 12).

- The two lambs offered every day did not take on the sins of the people but were a blood sacrifice God accepted as an atonement for the sins of the people (Genesis 29:38–43).

- The lambs did not become sinful in some way. The atonement was made when the priest took the blood to the altar and burned the offering. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11).

It’s the blood that does it! The sacrifices [and THE SACRIFICE] did not have to become sinful and be punished in hell. God saw those Old Testament sacrifices and was satisfied when they were offered in obedient faith. Likewise, God saw Jesus’ sacrifice and was satisfied; He accepted the blood of His Son as an atonement for all penitent sinners throughout all time.

K. C. | Strasburg, Virginia

The Tragedy of the Crusades

by Lyndon Overholt

Brother Lyndon Overholt recently spent several years in the heart of the Middle East where he learned Arabic. Consequently he could understand many things that would be unintelligible to a tourist.

One thing he observed is how the lingering effects of the Crusades permeate the Arab world. The Crusades have not been forgotten; instead they have shaped the Arab mind so they identify all Christians today as part of the Western culture that spawned “The Tragedy of the Crusades.” - A. V. Ed.



As the weary crusaders paused on the hills overlooking Jerusalem, some of them began weeping for joy. It had been nearly two years since they set off from France and had faced unbelievable hardships along the way. They had tramped hundreds of miles through scorching deserts and high mountain passes clogged with snow. Their food and water supply had long since run out and they had been forced to pillage and plunder along the way in order to survive. Disease had ravished their ranks and their numbers had been cut down from an estimated 50,000 men to about 15,000 survivors.

During moments of doubt along the journey the men tried to buoy their spirits by thinking back to the reason this expedition was launched.

Just 2 years earlier, in 1095 AD, Pope Urban II made an impassioned speech to a group of clergymen and nobles gathered at the Council of Clermont, France. In the council he detailed atrocities being committed against Christian pilgrims visiting the Holy Lands. For example, a band of Christian pilgrims had reputedly been murdered while they were trying to visit the “Holy Sites” in Jerusalem. Even more ominous, the Muslims in control of Jerusalem had begun systematically restricting the access of Christian pilgrims—some had traveled hundreds of miles—who wanted to pay homage to the “Holy Sites.”

At the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II called for a “Holy War” to free the “Holy Lands” from the tyranny of the Muslims. To encourage recruitment he promised that anyone who took up arms for the sake of Christ and the Church would have their sins forgiven and be assured of eternal life.

Pope Urban’s call to join the Holy War was met with an outpouring of responses from peasants, noblemen, and knights all over France, Germany and Italy. Enthusiasm

ran high at the thought of joining such a high and noble endeavor. A crusader named Odo explained his reason for enlisting in the crusade: “I undertook the journey to Jerusalem as penance for my sins. Since divine mercy inspired me that owing to the enormity of my sins I should go to the sepulcher of our Savior in order that this offering of my devotion might be more acceptable in the sight of God.”

Pope Urban II was not satisfied with volunteers making only a general commitment to join in the crusade. The crusaders were required to take a public binding oath that they would fulfill the military expedition of taking back Jerusalem. As a sign of their vow they sewed a red cross onto their garments which they could only remove when they had successfully taken Jerusalem back from the infidels.

The crusaders set out from Europe in 4 different army groups. They shunned the shorter route through the Mediterranean Sea because Muslims controlled the ports along the coastline of the Middle East. This forced them to travel by foot on the overland route which was about 1800 miles and far more torturous than anyone thought.

The trip took a tremendous physical and emotional toll on the crusaders. By the time the crusaders traveled through Turkey and down into Syria their pillaging and plundering had given them beast-like status. Muslim historian Usama Ibn al Muniqd says, “All of those who were well-informed about the crusaders saw them as beasts superior in courage and fighting ardor, but in nothing else, just as animals are superior in strength and aggression”.

Ralf of Caen, who wrote a history of the crusades called *Gesta Tancredi* reported, “Some people say, ‘Constrained by lack of food they boiled pagan adults in cooking pots, impaled children on spits, and devoured them grilled.’”

Whether or not the crusaders were guilty of all the horrors they are accused of, they seemed to intentionally use barbaric tactics as they passed through Turkey and Syria in order to terrify the Muslim villagers into submission.

The crusaders did not immediately march on Jerusalem. They spent the winter campaigning in Syria where they attacked the ancient historical cities of Antioch and Nicaea and wrested them back from Muslim control.

When the crusaders finally reached the Holy Lands and stood on the mountains surrounding Jerusalem, it seemed to them like a dream come true. Hadn't God led them safely on this great and terrible journey to wreck vengeance on the Muslim infidels? Surely He wouldn't let them fail in their battle to take back Jerusalem, would He?

The crusaders wasted no time preparing for their attack on Jerusalem. They sent out scavenging parties as far as Samaria to collect wood to build assault towers. When the towers were in place they began attacking the walls with their battering rams. After several hours the wall gave way and the crusaders poured into the city and began hunting down their enemy. Many terrified Muslims sought shelter in the Al-Aqsa mosque and the Jews likewise retreated to their synagogue. According to Raymond of Aguilers, the crusaders slaughtered so ruthlessly that the horses sloshed through blood as they rode through the Temple Mount area. Jews and Arabs alike fell before their merciless swords. In a very short time the crusaders stood victoriously over their dead and dying victims.

In the crusaders' minds they had just fought one of the greatest holy wars in history. They had fulfilled the Oath of the Cross that they had taken some two years before and had taken God's Holy City back from the infidels. Surely God's Kingdom had been advanced through their courageous action, hadn't it?

Little did the crusaders know that their barbaric behavior would have a profound effect on Muslims down through the ages. In Arabic the word for "Crusades" is "il harb is salib," "the wars of the cross." And crusaders are known as "Musallibeen," "those that bear the cross."

Muslims now despise the Cross of Christ. The cross which is precious to Christians now represents death, destruction and jihad to Muslims. Muslims have come to see Christianity as a religion that is not above killing its enemies.

The Crusades have lived on in the memory of generations of Muslims. Even today, ISIS uses the horrors of the Crusades as propaganda to recruit people into their movement.

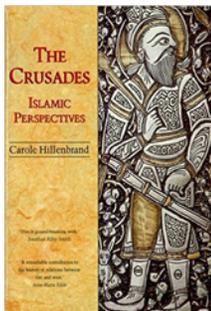
If only the crusaders would have remembered what Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world, if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight," they could have averted bringing a terrible stain on the Cross of Christ.

We as followers of Christ are called to embody the true nature of God's Kingdom. We understand that the Kingdom of God has no land mass, therefore it needs no soldiers. Neither does it have a central place of worship. Jesus said, "The day is coming when we will neither worship him in this mountain or that one, but the true worshippers of God will worship him in spirit and in truth."

The crusaders made the terrible assumption that God wanted them to fight over Jerusalem. In doing so, they put a stumbling block in the path of an entire people.

For further study on the subject, I recommend the following two books. Both are good reads and cite old historical texts of the crusades.

L. O. | Abbeville, South Carolina

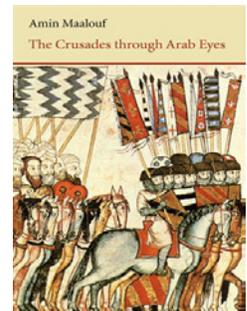


The Crusades through Arab Eyes
by Amin Maalouf

The author has combed the works of Arab chronicles of the Crusades, eyewitnesses and often participants. He retells their story and offers insights into the historical forces that shape Arab and Islamic consciousness today.

The Crusades: Islamic Perspective
by Carole Hillenbrand

With breathtaking command of medieval Muslim sources as well as the vast literature on medieval European and Muslim culture, Carole Hillenbrand has produced a book that shows not only how the Crusades were perceived by the Muslims, but how the Crusades affected, and still affect, the Muslim world - militarily, culturally, and psychologically.



Elementary Things

“For by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God” (*Hebrews 5:12*).

On page 15 of *Anabaptist Voice*, Issue #6, a writing challenge was presented to our readers. In Hebrews 6:1 & 2, the writer lists six things he would class as elementary. We requested that you take one of the six topics, explain it in an essay, and send it to AV.

Following are the responses of brethren who answered that challenge:

Repentance From Dead Works

by Johnny M. Hofer

As an Anabaptist growing up, I personally thought that everything I did was “living works” because I was doing it for the community or as an Anabaptist. One day I was reading the story of Saul in Acts 9 when I realized the difference. Before Saul came to Damascus, he thought he was doing everything right—pleasing the elders, chief priest, the people—but it was only right in his own eyes, and not what the Lord wanted him to do. It was “dead works.”

In the time of Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees had set up their own righteousness. Instead of keeping God’s laws and accepting what God had set up, they wanted to refine them to the point of perfection (in their eyes). Therefore, when Jesus showed up, He did not pass the checklist they had set up for themselves. But in God’s eyes, they were still dead works.

In the same way, you cannot do the Father’s will if He is not yet your Father. Therefore, all works done before He becomes your Father are dead works and are mostly done to please men. Oftentimes when people do what they call good works, they only do what is pleasing to themselves and, consequently, pick and choose what they want to do. But when a person is born again and really wants to follow Christ and His teachings, he has no choice but to do whatever the Father instructs him to do. Then a servant’s works that please God become living works instead of dead works.

“Everyone is talking about how you welcomed us and how you turned away from idols to serve the true and living God” (*I Thessalonians 1:9; CEV*).

J.H. | *Manitoba, Canada*



Repentance From Dead Works

by Lane Stahl

“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, ‘Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?’ I tell you, ‘Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish’” (*Luke 13:1-3*).

The Jews were telling Jesus the bad things other people were doing. How often have we found ourselves comparing our lives with others? We may think to ourselves that we evidently are in good standing with God because we aren’t doing all those wicked abominations other people are doing. It doesn’t matter what other people are doing. We must still begin the Christian life in the first grade of repentance.

Our only plumb line is Jesus Christ to whom we can compare ourselves. As Jesus pointed out, it doesn’t matter if we are not as bad as other people. We still need to repent of the sin in our lives, whether big or small. Any sin keeps us from a walk with Jesus. Therefore, it is an elementary thing to say that we must repent from dead works in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” was heard from both John the Baptist and Jesus. Jesus is saying that for us to become a part of God’s Kingdom we must repent from all works of darkness—lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life—and be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

May we be careful to take heed to the words of Scripture lest any false doctrine creep in among us and deceive us into thinking that repentance is not a necessary action we must take. Let us do the will of the Father and repent from all dead works, laying aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us.

L.S. | *Alberta, Canada*

Repentance From Dead Works

by David L. Burkholder

The writer of the Hebrew letter (unknown) is intent on urging his Jewish readers to fully embrace their new life in Christ. He goes to great lengths to show how Christ is better than the Law, the prophets and the priesthood, which was the basis of their former religious life and practice. It was difficult for them to easily and completely throw off these deeply entrenched fundamentals of their former religious life.

But they had come to faith in Christ, believing Him to be the One whom the prophets foretold to be the Messiah, the great Deliverer. They were rejoicing in their new-found faith, but had apparently stagnated in the beginning stages of this new faith. In Hebrews 5:12, the writer chides them for lack of spiritual growth. He continues that theme here in the first several verses of chapter six.

In verse one the writer urges his readers to “go on to maturity.” They had experienced salvation through the forgiveness of sin; now it was incumbent that they move on, grow in their understanding and practice of their faith. That meant laying aside Jewish practices which were no longer valid in their relationship with God, just as they had put off the dead works of sin when accepting God’s forgiveness (see also Hebrews 9:14).

Repentance is basic to the Christian life. But to remain vital, one must go on from the foundational principle and grow, both in understanding and practice. As one writer has stated: “What is needed for salvation is not lifeless works that cannot save, but faith toward God.” That succinctly describes the difference between the righteousness of Law and the righteousness which comes by faith in Christ.

Repentance from dead works lays the foundation for a life of faith. Growth toward maturity, an increasing and deeper understanding of that faith-life, is necessary for that life to remain pure and vital. So, the Hebrew writer says not to keep messing around on the foundation. Build on it!

D.L.B. | *Bridgewater, Virginia*

Faith Toward God

by Randy Gross

I believe the reason the writer of the book of Hebrews speaks of “faith toward God” as elementary is this: *in order for anybody to come to God he first must believe God is real or else he will never approach God.*

An atheist cannot come to God because he is bound by the chains of unbelief. In short, he has no “faith toward God.”

So faith toward God is a prerequisite in approaching God. According to Hebrews 6:1–2, faith is part of the ABCs of the Word of God. As it says in Hebrews 11, “**He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**”

I saw this aspect of “faith toward God” made vividly real to me one winter day. I was trying to go up a snow-packed hill with a single-axle flat-deck truck. I saw I was not going to be able to get up the hill, no matter how hard I tried. So somebody sent a big loader down the hill to pull me up. I connected my little truck to that big loader with a tow rope. Almost without effort, the loader pulled me up the hill.

This incident spoke powerfully to my heart. I pictured myself in the truck as being *mankind*, the big loader as *God*, and the rope that connected us as *faith*. Without the towrope of faith, a man can never approach God and move on to maturity in his Christian life.

So beloved Brethren, let us remember what the writer in Hebrews 6 is explaining to us. It would be sad if our children grew up and all they ever knew was the ABCs of faith. Let us not stay as “**children who are tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine**” (**Ephesians 4:14**), but let us take Hebrews 6 to heart. The writer is telling us to “go on to perfection.” And I love the way he concludes his point, “**And this we will do, if God permit**” (**Hebrews 6:3**).

R.G. | *Saskatchewan, Canada*

If our faith is not firmly anchored in God, whatever we read in His Word will be filtered through our own opinions, and will be somehow massaged to fit into our beliefs, rather than our beliefs shaped to fit what the Scriptures say.

Glenn M. Wenger

You Must Act

by Keith Crider

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith”
(II Corinthians 13:5)

This scripture tells us to regularly look into our life and see how we are doing. Examinations are not always painful and to be feared but are necessary.

Many times we may see signs of good health in our spiritual life—increased love for God and the things of God, love for the brotherhood, kind and loving deeds, and increasing dissatisfaction with the things of the world. When we find these things true in our life, we know the answer of a good conscience toward God and we experience the peace that passes understanding.

Repent and Change

On some occasions when we do our checkups, we may find sin—evil thoughts and deeds—lurking within. In these instances, in order to be acceptable to God, we must repent and change.

Let me be more specific. You must repent and change. (In my case, I must repent and change.) Stop looking around at others, and take a good long look into your own heart and life. You cannot change anyone else (although certainly your changing may influence others). God is calling you to make absolutely certain that the only person you can actually change is fully committed to Him.

So do it. Look at yourself closely while asking God to search you and lead you. Repent where you find sin or laziness. Then take personal responsibility for your life. Make the choices you need to make to be fully where God wants you to be.

The basic principles are simple. Applying them may seem daunting, but the Lord God is ready and wanting to help you apply them in very practical ways to every choice you make.

Make choices based on love for God

Choose to love God with all your heart. “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment” **(Mark 12:30)**.

If that seems hard to get hold of, Jesus and His apostles explained how to do it in very clear and concrete terms: “If you love me, keep my commandments” **(John**

14:15). A person cannot love God without keeping His commandments. The apostle John wrote, “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” **(1 John 5:3)**.

Sacrifice your life joyfully

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” **(Romans 12:1, 2)**.

This passage explains what God expects of you because of His love and mercy to you. Will you obey? Will you give yourself to Him joyfully and continually because of the mercies of God?

Actually, this sacrifice cannot be made grudgingly, for if you give yourself unwillingly, you nullify the sacrifice by selfishness.

Commit yourself to act

No one else can do it for you. You must be the one who seeks first “the kingdom of God and his righteousness” **(Matthew 6:33)**. You must be the one who loves not only with your tongue and your words, but also “in deed and in truth” **(1 John 3:18)**. You are the one who must not be deceived into thinking you can be righteous without doing righteous deeds. “Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous” **(1 John 3:6, 7)**.

We must determine that we will allow our God to actually rule our lives. Being a church member or being a Mennonite and fitting into the Mennonite lifestyle is not enough. In fact, if being a Mennonite is all we are, in God’s sight it’s only filthy rags.

Cultivate a desire to know God

This will come naturally (spiritually is the better word) to the one who sets His heart to love His God and make Him Lord. Jesus said in His prayer in John 17:3, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

To truly know God is to love Him. Loving God is desiring to obey and please Him. If we want to know God better we will want to know more of His will and way. This all leads to one place—His Word.

And so, if you know Him, you will love to be in His Word—in His Son, the living Word; and in the Bible, His written Word.

If you love Him, no one has to tell you to read the Word of God; you will be reading it, searching it and desiring to know Him better. Thus by learning His will, you can better obey and love Him.

Act in the context of the body of Christ

You can do none of this alone, for God designed it to be done in brotherhood. It is only in a local brotherhood that you can fully obey your Lord. So choose to be part of a local congregation and give your life to supporting it. Love its members, work to build it up in every way possible, and refuse, in any way, to detract from the brotherhood's unity in the Lord.

This do by the power, grace, and help of God's Spirit in you, and you will live—really live. **“Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all” (1 Timothy 4:15)**. Your church will be strengthened, and God will be glorified.

K.C. | Strasburg, Virginia



The Old Covenant

by Menno Knight

The glory of the New Covenant far exceeds the glory of the Old Covenant. It's the difference between the light from the sun and the light from the moon. When the sun is shining, the light from the moon is insignificant. Since the New Covenant has come into effect, the Old Covenant has faded away.

The passage from II Corinthians 3 tells us that the Old Covenant, possessed a power and glory that radiated from the face of Moses after he met with God. Then it goes on to say that the glory of a ministry of righteousness, which Paul preached, far surpassed the fading glory coming from Moses' face. The Old Covenant was good, but the New Covenant was far superior.

Before Abraham Was, “I AM”

In this essay, I use “Old Covenant” to refer to God's covenant with Abraham, not to the whole of the Old Testament Scripture. The Old Testament records the passage of around 2,000 years between the creation of Adam and the time of Abraham. In that 2,000 years of time God revealed himself to man in a number of ways so that man was not ignorant of what God desired of him.

We have the record that Cain displeased God, Enoch walked with God, Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and all the people on the earth were destroyed because they “did only evil continually.” It seems self-evident that God would not have condemned or commended people who had no idea what He expected of them.



“If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!”
(II Corinthians 3:9; NIV)

“Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.”
(Genesis 2-3; NIV)

“At the beginning the Creator made them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.’ ... Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”
(Matthew 19:4-6; NIV)

I would propose, then, that all people before the time of Abraham already knew the Ten Commandments that God later wrote on tablets of stone at Mount Sinai. And by extension, Abraham already knew those Ten Commandments plus other things—such as not eating blood—before God made His covenant with him. In other words, the Ten Commandments existed a long, long time before Mt. Sinai and were not special statutes created exclusively for the children of Israel. Instead, these Ten Statutes applied to all men everywhere.

The Covenant with Abraham

Let us look at the different promises God made to Abraham.

He would make of Abraham a great nation. Galatians 4:21–31 makes it clear that this great nation was to come through Isaac the son of promise and not through Ishmael. Galatians also tells us that these two sons were symbolic: Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, symbolized the Jews living under the Mosaic law. Isaac symbolized the Christians as the children freed from the bondage of circumcision and the Mosaic law. So this truth foreshadowed the promise that the “great nation” foretold was to be the people of God after Christ came.

He would bless Abraham and make his name great. Abraham certainly is a great name who is listed in Romans 4:16 and Hebrews 11 as a man renowned for his faith. And Romans 4:16 also calls him “the father of us all,” meaning “all those who are of faith.”

Abraham would be a blessing. By his faith in the promises of God, Abraham set an example for his physical and spiritual descendants to follow.

Anyone who blessed or cursed Abraham would likewise be blessed or cursed. A word of caution is in order here. In this statement God did not say that anyone who blesses or curses Abraham’s descendants would likewise be blessed or cursed. What God said here applied to Abraham himself or possibly to the Christ himself. We know it is a very serious offense to curse the Christ. However, what a blessing it is to bless the Christ and be blessed by Him.

All peoples on earth would be blessed through Abraham. The blessing that was to come through Abraham’s descendants was Christ, the Messiah. The apostle Paul makes this specific in his letter to the Galatians. Quoting from three passages in Genesis (Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 24:7) Paul says that the writer in Genesis specifically meant one descendant of Abraham and not many descendants. Therefore, the blessing referred to here was Christ, the Messiah. Furthermore, this promise says that all peoples on earth were to be blessed by the Messiah and not just one nation of Abraham’s physical descendants.

Christ, then, was *the blessing* foretold to Abraham. When God sent His Son to earth, He fulfilled this promise made to Abraham in what we refer to as a part of the Old Covenant.

The Father of Many Nations

Let us look now at another aspect of the Old Covenant which began with God’s promise to Abraham. God’s covenant with Abraham foretells that Abraham would be the father of the faithful in many nations, and not just of



“So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.” (Galatians 4:31; NKJV)

“For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. ... In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.”

(Romans 9:6-8; NIV)

“I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

(Genesis 12:2-3)

[God said to Abraham,] “This is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.”

(Genesis 17:4; NIV)

one Jewish nation. Romans 9:8 explains further that the promised blessing of the Messiah was for many nations (Gentiles) and not just for the Jews.

In Genesis 15 God appeared to Abraham in a vision and established a formal covenant with him. God revealed to Abraham that he would have an heir and descendants through him as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Romans 4:13-17 further lights up this passage for us. When God told Abraham he would have descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and that he would be the father of many nations, He was not speaking of Abraham's physical offspring, but of his spiritual lineage.

Therefore the covenant God made with Abraham detailed in Genesis 12, 15, and 17, could not have been for only one nation or race. Instead, God's promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations was fulfilled when the believing Gentiles and believing Jews were openly admitted into the church.

The Rite of Circumcision

Another aspect of the special covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants was the rite of circumcision.

Abraham and his descendants kept this part of God's covenant for 2000 years until the Jerusalem conference mentioned in Acts 15. At that time the Apostles and Elders clearly rendered circumcision unnecessary for both Jew and Gentile Christians while, *at the same time, declaring pre-Abraham parts of God's covenant with mankind still in effect*. The letter to the churches declared in Acts 15:29 that Christians should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.

This act of the church proved this part of God's covenant with Abraham was no longer necessary. Thus the rite of circumcision was only a part of the Old Covenant and not carried over into the New Covenant.

The Promised Land

A distinct part of the Old Covenant was that God would give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan (Genesis 15:18). So this land with its well-defined boundaries was part of the covenant God made with Abraham. But there was more to it than just a one-sided promise about land. God conditioned His blessings on obedience and pronounced curses on disobedience. This is emphatically brought out in Deuteronomy 11:26-28.

We can see in this passage, as well as in many others, that the tenure of the Israelites in the land God gave them was regularly conditioned by the word *if*. In the Old Covenant, the promise of land to Israel was always conditioned on their obedience to God. It was not a perpetual promise the Jews would live forever in the physical land of Canaan.

Besides the promised perpetual blessings for obedience in the land God would give the Israelites and the promised perpetual curses God would place upon them in foreign lands for disobedience, there is another aspect to consider. All the land promises God made to national Israel were fulfilled. Joshua tells the Israelites in his farewell address found in Joshua 23:14-15 that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed.



“For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the[Mosaic] Law, but through the righteousness of faith. ... that the promise may be certain ... to those who are of the faith of Abraham, *who is the father of us all.*”

(Romans 4:13,16; NASB)

[*God said to Abraham*], “This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, ...”

(Genesis 17:10-12; NIV)

“Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God.”

(Deuteronomy 11:26-28; NIV)

“...And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that *not* one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you, and *not* one word of them has failed.”

(Joshua 23:14; NKJV)

There is another truth to be considered about the land promise. Hebrews 11:13 clearly states that Abraham never received the promise while living on the earth, but he sought a heavenly land (Hebrews 11:16). If we understand that the Scripture teaches that Christ is the “seed” foretold in the promise to Abraham, *it appears that Christ is the one to whom the land was promised* ... forever. The promise of the Christ “inheriting the land” is no more a radical thought than when Jesus told the Jews, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. . . . But He was speaking of the temple of His body” (Matthew 2:19-21). This meaning for “land” is a typical example of what baffled the Jews about the Christ and His Kingdom that was to come. And Paul spent much of his time arguing with the Jews that the Christ was the Messiah, just as he did in the passage in Galatians 3.

Why God Made a Covenant

It is important to think about why God even made these agreements with Abraham and his descendants through Isaac. God said in Genesis 17:8-9 that He wanted a people He could call His own, forever. He did not want just any kind of people who served other gods, disobeyed His commandments, and were just like all the other nations. He stated clearly what kind of a nation He wanted Israel to be.

It is interesting to note that this is the language Peter used in I Peter 2:9 to describe the people of God under the New Covenant—*“a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people.”* And to make sure he was not talking about the nation of Israel, Peter added, “who once were not a people *but are now the people of God.*”

We see then, that what did not fully happen under the Old Covenant with the nation of Israel, did happen under the New Covenant. God found His treasured possession in the church.

A New Covenant Foretold

God and angels, through Moses, gave the laws for the nation of Israel and all the sacrifices and offerings and the statutes and the ordinances He wanted his people to keep.

“Moses took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.’”

In Exodus 24:7-8 we have the two parts of the covenant between God and Abraham’s blood descendants. God said what He wanted His people to do and not to do. And the people agreed to obey everything written in the law.

But in His covenant with Abraham’s descendants, God wanted something more than the keeping of rules and statutes, blood sacrifices, and offerings. The prophet Isaiah, speaking for God, said that God wanted a holy nation, a people that served Him not only with their mouths but also from their hearts. So also said the prophets Micah (6:8) and Hosea (6:6).

The prophet Jeremiah understood that the blood descendants of Abraham, the Israelites, did not keep the covenant God made with them. God wanted something more and foretold the making of a new covenant. Jeremiah cried out, “I will make a new covenant with my people. I will put a want-to in their hearts and they will serve me with joy and gladness rather than out of fear for the commandments of men.”



“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say, ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.”

(Galatians 3:16; NIV)

“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:5-6; NIV)

And Moses took the blood [from the sacrifices], sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘Behold, the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.’”

(Exodus 24:7-8; NKJV)

“These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their fear toward me is taught by the commandment of men.” (Isaiah 29:13; NIV)

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,’ declares the Lord. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.’” (Jeremiah 31:33; NIV)

The Passing of the Old Covenant

Ah! A new covenant! Jeremiah foretold the making of a new covenant that would overshadow the old one made with Abraham and his blood descendants through Isaac. When the new covenant of the heart came into effect it exceeded all the requirements of the Old Covenant God had set for the Israelites.

Jesus made clear to the Jews that to be a true child of Abraham one must do what Abraham did (John 8:39). And when the unbelieving Jews still claimed Abraham as their Father, Jesus put it to them in plowboy language, “You belong to your father, the devil.”

Jesus wanted them to understand that obedience and righteousness determine who is a true child of Abraham and to whom the covenant with Abraham applied. In order to make this point, Jesus told a parable about some caretakers of a vineyard that is recorded in three gospels—Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19. At the end of His story Jesus made the meaning of the parable plain, “The Kingdom of God would be taken away from the Jews and given to a people who loved and served Him.

The Rending of the Temple Veil

At Jesus’ death, the veil in the temple—4 inches thick, 60 feet high, 30 feet wide—tore from the top to the bottom. This divine rending of the veil signified the passing of the Old Covenant with the descendants of Abraham and the inauguration of the New Covenant with the People Of God.

The Surpassing Glory of the New Covenant

Hebrews offers many comparisons showing how the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant. I would like to quote some from Hebrews 12:18-24 (NIV) which summarizes the vast difference between the two covenants and what it means to us today.

The Mountain of Fear: “You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom, and storm, to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded.” The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, ‘I am trembling with fear.’”

The Mountain of Joy: “But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

There we have it. A *mountain of joy* instead of a *mountain of fear*—the brilliance of light from the sun compared to the luminescence of the moon.



“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings.”

(Hebrews 10:19-22; NIV)

“Jesus, when He had cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.”

(Matthew 27:50-52)



The Anabaptist Way

PRAISE HIM

Edith S. Witmer

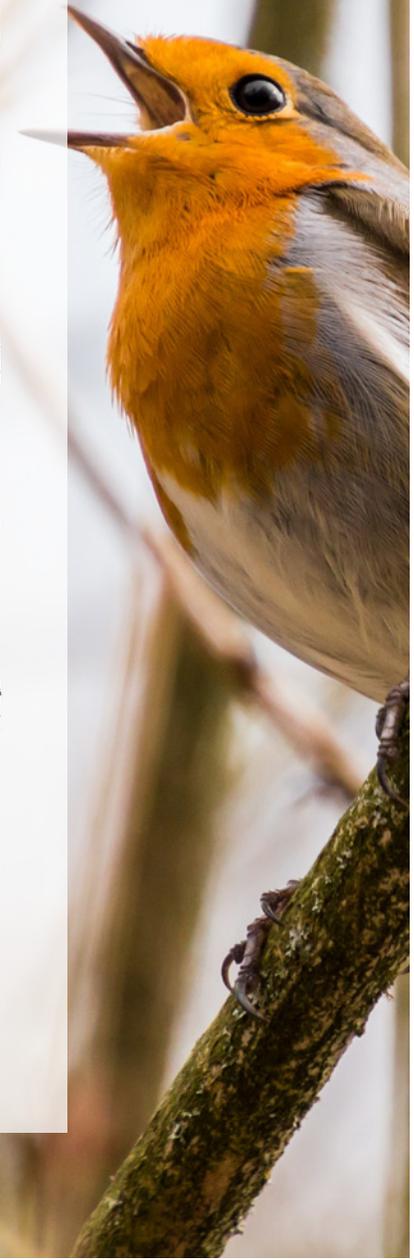
Edith S. Witmer

1. Our God is great and might - y. His works we will pro - claim:
2. Let all men fall be - fore Him, Each crea - ture on earth's crust
3. Let Heav'n and earth to - geth - er Pre - pare a song of praise

The won - der of His cour - sel, The glo - ry of His name!
Kneel down and laud His great - ness Whose works are true and just!
To glo - ri - fy our Mak - er For His maj - est - ic ways!

Praise Him _____ Let us _____
with a song ... of joy. songs of praise ... em - ploy

Praise Him, Lord of all! Praise Him, Lord of all!



Zion's Praises #49 | used by permission of author

Pyramids in Peru!

by Luke Martin



The group of us standing at the center plaza. Several pyramids surround the plaza, each with its main entrance facing the center. The rock in the center was likely used as a sundial and calendar.

When folks think of Peru and of ancient ruins, undoubtedly their minds go to *Machu Picchu*. But did you know there are ruins here in Peru that date back much, much farther than the relatively recent Incas? Recently I was reading the book *Brilliant* by Bruce Malone in which he talks about ancient pyramids all over the world. He mentioned that there are some ancient pyramid structures in Caral, Peru. I looked on the map; Caral is only about two hours north of us here in Huaral. Immediately I began looking for a good opportunity to go and visit these ruins.

On June 24 a bunch of us Martins with our visitors, my Uncle John Messaros and family, loaded up to check it out. Here is what we found.

Caral is thought to have been built about 3000 BC. That makes it the oldest city in the Americas and the second oldest city in the whole world. They date it only 100-200 years more recently than Mesopotamia, the oldest civilization in the world. Biblically speaking, this puts the construction of Caral very soon after the flood, likely right after the dispersion at the Tower of Babel. The Caral civilization lasted about 1100-1200 years.

Caral was discovered in 1949, but it has only been in the last twenty-some years that they have really been digging at the site and realizing its historical significance. The pyramids, when first discovered, were completely covered with dirt and rocks. They looked simply like small hills. It was only after archeologists dug the dirt off that the pyramid shape became obvious. It seems that the inhabitants covered up their structures before they

abandoned the city. Maybe they wanted to hide it from others or maybe they planned to return and therefore wanted to preserve the city.

Caral was considered the Sacred City and Capital of the civilization that stretched from the Pacific Coast along the Supe River Valley, up into the Andes Mountains. So far a total of twenty-five archeological sites have been discovered in this area. Archeologists have been working on eleven of these sites to date, and only three of those sites are open to the public. Each of these sites is thought to have been a city. Most of these cities were agricultural, with two fishing cities on the coast.

Caral is believed to have had 2000-3000 inhabitants. The complex covers about 150 acres. There are a total of 32 structures on the site, including the six pyramids. These pyramids were used as worship temples. The priests, who took care of the pyramids, lived close by. Archeologists have found no evidence of human sacrifice. According to our tour guide, Caral was a theocracy. One of their most important gods was *Pachamama*, or Mother Earth.

In the biggest pyramid they found a young person's body, estimated to be around twenty years old at his death. The body was missing fingers and toes and had evidence of head wounds. It is surmised that he was an evildoer and had been severely punished publicly as an example to the rest. No evidence of warfare or war arms has been found. It seems to have been a peaceful civilization. And really, if they were the first civilization on the continent, who would they fight with? So far, no cemetery has been found.



This pyramid is still mostly covered with dirt, just like they all used to be.



The largest pyramid has circular area in front of the main entrance. It is believed to have been used as a council or congress meeting place.

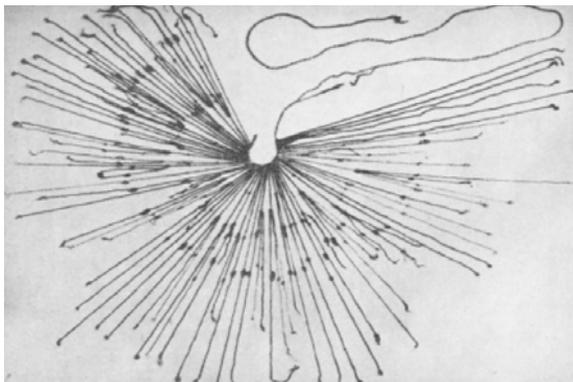


Close-up detail of one of the largest pyramids.

One of the impressive structures of the site is the amphitheater which is thirty meters in diameter. It was built with a definite knowledge of acoustics. The first Peruvian music concert was likely held here! In the amphitheater they found thirty-two flutes made from bones of condors and pelicans, as well as some cornets.

There are a few interesting similarities to modern Peru that have been found in Caral. *Panchamanca*, a method of cooking food underground, seems to have originated here. First, rocks are heated in a fire and then placed in the bottom of a hole in the ground. Meat, potatoes, and vegetables are placed on the rocks, then covered with leaves. Finally, it is all buried for several hours until the food is cooked. This is a common practice in Peru to this day.

A *quipu*, a series of strings tied together with knots on each string to represent certain things, has also been found here. The Incas are famous for using *quipus* as their only form of record keeping or writing. The one found at Caral had strings all of the same color and material. The Incas developed the system further to include different colored strings.



Example of a Quipu, an early form of writing.

One rock that was found here had a spiral design carved into it. This same design was replicated in one of the famous Nazca Lines in southern Peru, in the tail of the monkey. More recently, the same spiral design shows up in the modern Peru trademark, pictured here.



This is not an exhaustive essay on Caral, but hopefully it will give this little-known civilization some deserved recognition. Finding pyramids all over the world gives a strong case for the biblical account of civilizations spread out over the world from a common source—Babel. And why did all these folks know how to build pyramids? Perhaps the Tower of Babel itself was a pyramid.

About Us & the Church in Huaral, Peru

The mission began here in 2009. Four families were sent from Farmington, NM to begin the work. My older brother Ernest and his family were one of those first four families. I first came to Peru in 2010 to help Ernest build his house. While I was here, they asked me to consider coming long-term to help start an office for the Lamp & Light correspondence course students in Peru. So I came back to Peru to stay in April 2011 and I have been here ever since. I have been teaching school the last two years.

Outreach program

Already mentioned was the correspondence course work. Our mission is also the distributor for Mt. Zion Literature in Peru. We sell lots of Bibles and other Christian books, mostly published by Mennonite publishers. This includes school curriculum and lots of children's storybooks to schools. We have a local

bookstore but the bulk of our literature gets shipped to customers all over the country.

We distribute many tracts locally. We also go to the local prison with the correspondence courses. Interestingly, many of our local contacts have come through business dealings.

Support

We are self-supported. Most of the brothers who are not occupied full-time in the literature work have farms where they grow citrus and other crops. While we are individually self-supported, we do get some financial help for our church and school (i.e. school teacher's pay, help to pay for recent church construction, etc.).

The sale of literature does produce an income, but does not cover all the expenses of the courses and other free literature we distribute. We do get donations to help fund that ministry.

To learn more about exciting visits to remote schools where children have heard little more about the Bible than that Mary was the Mother of Jesus, you can subscribe to the Huaral, Peru e-newsletter at luzuverdadperu@gmail.com. At present there is no print version.

L.M. | Huaral, Peru



A Story from *Literature Ministry Newsletter*

In January we received a call from Wilber, in Sepahua, requesting *Antorchas* (The Torch of Truth) to promote the spiritual growth of their churches. Wilber is a missionary with a group of Evangelical churches that reach out to several tribal groups in the jungle. From what he reports, some of these tribes are yet almost untouched by civilization.

Sepahua is located across the Andes, in the jungle, approximately 460 km. (285 mi.) east and a little to the north from Huaral.

Normally we ship big literature packages by bus, but since Sepahua is beyond the reach of roads, we needed a different method. Wilber helped us work out the method of shipping, paid the shipping bill, and then called to thank us for the package.

In June Wilber called again and told us that literature of such a caliber is rare in his remote area. In addition, he has found that the native Indian tribes of the region are also interested in the periodicals. Living way out back, without electricity and TV, they need something to entertain themselves while relaxing in their hammocks, so they look for something to read. Not all of them can read Spanish, but at least they can look at the pictures, which sometimes say more to them than words.

Wilber was very hesitant to ask for a larger quantity of *Antorchas* because he was afraid we would refuse to send him many more. When we assured him that the vision behind the *Antorcha* is to get it into the hands of those who appreciate its content, he asked for 1,000 more!

Considering Wilber's remote and strategic location at Sepahua—Sepahua is the commercial center of the region, so business brings folks in from all over—we agreed to send him 1,000 each of two other periodicals beside the *Antorchas*.

—Adapted from a report by Ernest Martin



Peru is well-known for its beautiful flute music. Interestingly, that practice dates all the way back to Caral!

My Head Covering Testimony

by Kinuko Fukami

My head covering journey is part of the whole recovering process which has been ongoing ever since Jesus came into my life.

I was born in a Buddhist/Shintoist family in the southern part of Japan. My great-great grandfather was one of the last samurai who fought against the new government army in 1877. My grandmother used to tell me about her mother-in-law who was a wonderful, obedient wife. She told me that complete submissiveness and deep respect toward one's husband were the important ethics of samurai wives.

While hearing this, I said to myself, "Well, that might have been fine at that time, but the time has changed already. I am fortunate to be born in the modern, equal society."

The place I was raised was a traditional area, where I had not seen any Christian nor church. Of course, I had heard the name Jesus in my history class, but that was all. I recognized Jesus Christ as a founder of a western religion.

When I entered university in Tokyo, I met several Japanese professors who had converted to Christianity. "Oh, what a shame!" I thought. "Can't they see how we have been threatened by Western cultural colonization? Yes, we should learn from their great civilization and its academic heritage, but we should never sell our souls to their religion."

But I must tell you that I always had an ambivalent attitude toward the West, that is, caution and admiration. For example, I was fascinated by gender studies at college and admired the Western-educated feminist professors.

When I was a sophomore, I joined a service-learning program in the Philippines, where I met many international students from various Asian countries. To my dismay most of them were Christians. Hong Kong, India, Philippines ... these were the former colonized countries. Their being Christians, for me, was nothing but the after-effects of Western imperialism.

On the other hand I could not deny their sincerity. They were good people and it seemed to me that they were united under one faith in Jesus.

My inner conflict began when I actually went to visit my Indian friend and her family in southern India the following summer. There was an undeniable radiance on their countenances and I saw the light in this Christian family. In India, I was fighting inwardly not to be drawn

to something, or I should say Someone, who was there, because it was impossible I would ever become a Christian and break my family's heart.

Love breaks in

But I was already in the hands of God. His love finally conquered me when I went to Seoul as an exchange student in 1999. Korea has been my special country because I have been actively involved in the Korea-Japan student conference for reconciliation.

What made me kneel down in front of Jesus was the sacrificial love of Korean Christians toward me. One pastor loved me and other Japanese students, and later I heard from someone that his grandfather, who was also a pastor, was tortured to death by the Japanese army during the occupation period. I wholeheartedly accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and was baptized in the Protestant church in Seoul in 2000.

I immediately turned from my academic pursuit and worldly ambition and became an active member in the church in Tokyo. I went to divinity school while being an assistant of my leader in the church. I was in the leading position and I taught the Bible and ruled over men in the church.

Oh, may God forgive me! May the church forgive me! I had made many mistakes and hurt people. I had passion and love for Christ, but somehow I could not bear fruit out of my service.

I found it difficult to build good relationships with people around me. In a few words, there was a disorder in my mental and spiritual life and I did not know the cause of it. One morning, out of so much stress, I collected my little belongings and left my beloved church. That was the most difficult period of my life.

The Lord, however, did not abandon me. I thought everything was finished, but actually, it was the beginning of my real recovery in Him. Through some divine ways, I was allowed to come to southern Europe for mission work.

Stepping into God's order

There I met a wonderful brother in Christ who taught me the real reason of my disorder and failure. I started to read the Bible with a refreshed mind and found that I

had been violating God's divine order of man and woman. That was the root cause of my problem!

I found that God does not allow women to rule over men in the church, not because He wants to oppress us, but because He loves us so much. I repented of my arrogance and many other sins and asked Him to change me to be a woman after His heart. All of His commands are wise and loving. I experienced that when we obey His command, it brings healing and joy in our lives.

The head covering command in 1 Corinthians 11 caught my attention during those periods of study. Having read many articles concerning female roles in the church, I have already found that many theologians explain away the plain commands of God by either switching the definition of the original Greek or changing the biblical principle to mere cultural argument.

As I started to dig into these issues in 1 Corinthians 11, it became so clear to me that to cover my head while I am praying or prophesying is the universal command of God, which is still applicable for today. Brothers and sisters at Scroll Publishing really helped me in my historical research on this issue.

I was eager to know the truth, but at the same time, another voice told me it was better not to dig into these issues. Yes, this voice was the voice of my timidity and fear. I was afraid to know the truth, because inwardly I knew that this truth would eventually push me to the place of shame and loneliness before other people.

It seems to me that the decision to obey or not to obey is always in front of us. And, invariably, the way of obedience is narrower and harder, the way which usually does not appeal to our flesh. As a person from oriental syncretic background, I can testify that for the followers of Christ, there is no middle way. When we say "yes" to Jesus, we must say "no" to our flesh and to the world. It is painful, but it is the only way which we can show our ultimate allegiance and loyalty to our King Jesus.

After many inner struggles I finally made up my mind to put on the head covering whenever I pray.

Soon after this decision I was invited to the house of a pastor's family one night. When the pastor suggested that we pray together, I secretly took my veil from my bag and held it tightly in my hand and waited until everybody closed their eyes. Yes, I wanted to do my "head covering thing," but without being noticed by anybody.

But somehow this pastor noticed the stuff in my hand and shouted in a criticizing tone, "What? A veil?" My whole being felt burned by shame and I could hardly hold my tears.

Fear of being different might be rooted deeply in my Japanese mindset, or maybe it's simply because of my timid character; I don't know. With all my weaknesses, however, I had a faith that the power of Jesus surpassed and conquered all of these if only I surrendered to Him wholeheartedly. He is above cultures and human limitations. In Him, we shall be victors.

For the four years or so since my decision, I had been covering my head when all alone. From time to time I doubted, wavered, and wondered: if this was truth, how come I was still alone in doing it? However, He [the Holy Spirit] also brought me a deep sense of "order" and security in my head-covering journey.

For the first time in my life I truly, truly rejoiced in being a woman. I started to cherish the beauty of nature. Small birds, big birds, moss and oak trees ... they are beautiful, because they simply accept His design without complaining nor resisting. They are content with the place in which they are placed by God.

They simply submit to their creation order and sing praises to Him. I learned that where there is order, there is beauty. By putting on the head covering, I felt I was part of this great mystery of God's creation. I felt my inner being started to be integrated and healed in a deeper level.

What made me decide to cover full-time?

By now, you know well that I am a shy Asian woman. So it required of me so much courage and inner strength to start the head-covering practice in the church services. Just the love toward God's words and the power of the Holy Spirit made it possible to overcome my timidity and embark on the totally new adventure.

So you may wonder how it is possible that this shy Asian woman even started to cover full-time. What happened to her? What made her decide to take further steps? Well, I am going to tell you my story.

Desires and struggles

Sometime in the spring of 2014 I found that something in me started yearning for full-time covering. It was almost an irresistible desire that was hard to ignore or repress.

"But I am not a nun!" I told myself. "How can I ever walk around the streets and stores with my head veiled? After all, I am just an ordinary evangelical Christian. Oh, how I wish I was in a church environment such as an Old Order Mennonite church in the states or in Canada where all the sisters are covering full-time!"

An Asian, full-time head-covering woman? Well, I had never heard of, nor seen such a woman in my whole life. Not a single one! True, many Indian Christian ladies are still covering their heads, but their practices tend to be considered “cultural” by the world and so outsiders usually don’t think it strange.

But how about East Asian? The Christian population in Japan is less than 1%. So if you become a Christian in Japan you will be placed into an overwhelming minority group. Then if you decide to cover your head during the church service, you will be even more alienated from the rest of the people. So, imagine what will happen if you start to cover your head full-time in these environments. Would I be like a Martian?

From kindergarten to high school I had been trained to live uniformly—same school uniforms, same school bags, same manner to answer the questions, etc. We were not encouraged to develop our originality or individuality. In a word, this was our cultural norm.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, however, calls out each individual from the familiar, earthly cultural norm. Whether we like it or not, Jesus Christ with His authority compels us to strip off our external, earthly ornaments and medals. He presses hard to the core of my timidity and the source of earthly attachments and calls me, “Leave them, and follow Me.”

In order to attach myself to Him and His Word, I must learn how to detach myself from the earthly ties and norms. I must keep saying “no!” to my old world system with its values in order to abide in the True Vine (John 15).

First attempt

After several months of inner struggles, I finally decided to cover my head full-time. I put on a white triangle handkerchief and went outside. Everywhere I went I was very self-conscious. I tried my best to be normal and natural in my behavior. The following morning, however, I had to go to the embassy for paperwork. In the government office I could not help but feeling that I was a weird girl after all. The receptionist was kind but there was an obvious question mark on her face.

I came out of the office with blushed face and went to the bus stop. And then— I instinctively took off my veil. I could not continue it anymore. Thus, after only one day and a half, my first covering venture failed. The cultural tide was too strong for me to face it by myself.

Second attempt

Although I went back to wearing my covering only in my private daily life, the inner desire to cover full-time never ceased. On the contrary it increased and burned inside me day by day. I often said to myself, “Birds in the sky are free because they fly freely as they wish, without worrying about what others think.”

“Suppose you were living in this town by yourself, what would you want to do?” I asked myself. “Well, of course, I would joyously go around everywhere with my veil.” Then, sadly, I looked at my reality. I felt like a caged bird. I was not free. I was not doing what my conscience desired because of the fear of men.

Then I opened the letter pad and started to write to my elder sister in Pennsylvania. I poured out all of my heart, explaining how I failed on my first attempt and how I wish to do what my conscience desires. I sincerely asked her to pray for me that He [the Holy Spirit] would grant me power and courage to practice it. I also humbly asked my husband to pray for me about this issue.

The power of Christ

Thanks to their prayers and warm support I decided to start again. This time God granted me much more inner strength and determination to keep going. At the end of October, 2014, I joined a four-day Christian retreat. I had been deadly afraid of the reactions of the elders in the church there, but He gave me supernatural courage and boldness to keep going as a veiled woman.

I have been head covering my head for more than nine years now. From 2015, with my husband’s permission, I started to cover full-time.

I testify to the world that it is not I who live and act as I do, but Christ lives and works in me. I am a very, very timid woman, but the fire of Christ drives me to do something unbelievable. I testify to the world that Christ is our universal King and He is the living Son of God. He can use even a little, fragile vessel to manifest that His words endure forever.

Looking back on my life journey I can see His loving hands all the time. He not only saved me from the kingdom of darkness but from various worldly ideas and human opinions. I have made many mistakes but He graciously forgave me. May His name be gloried forever and ever! Amen.

— Submitted by Dean Taylor

Reflections: Our Anabaptist Tour of Europe

by Gary Butikofer

My initial reason for going on this Anabaptist tour of Europe was to visit Switzerland, especially the village of Butikofen where my ancestors acquired their surname. We were able to visit the village and spend a wonderful hour visiting with a ninety-year-old man, the historian of Butikofen.

Besides the above, probably the highlight of the trip was traveling with a busload of Anabaptists from all over North America and singing, worshipping, and fellowshiping together for over two weeks. Joy and I personally did not know anyone on the tour before we began, but we became well acquainted and were drawn closer together by this experience.

All the countries we travelled through were very beautiful, especially Switzerland. Now I can better identify with my forefathers' love of their country and their determination to stay there. And now I can better understand why only severe persecution could uproot them to immigrate to a new one. The Trachselwald Castle prison and the Anabaptist cave also helped me better appreciate our forefathers' strong convictions and their determination to live out their faith in the face of tremendous persecution. However, I was disgusted at the local Swiss government's sign near the cave describing the historical significance of

the cave by calling the Anabaptists "social revolutionaries" rather than "biblical, faith-based revolutionaries."

We had guided tours of castles and walled cities which made me appreciate better the freedom which we now enjoy. I am sure glad we don't have to live in castles or depend on their walls for our protection.

Rome had amazing architecture, beautiful paintings, and skilled sculptures. But what impressed me most about this city was its idolatry. Many people from around the world seemingly come to Rome to visit, touch and pray at sacred sites and statues of saints to receive physical and spiritual healing and blessings.

What impressed me at the catacombs were the ancient pictures or mosaics of Jesus' baptism found in some of the burial chambers. These pictures always show Jesus and John the Baptist standing knee-deep or waist-deep in the water and John pouring water on Jesus' head. That

may not prove anything but it does show how the early Christians thought Jesus was baptized.

All in all, we thank the Lord for a wonderful trip. We really appreciated Golden Rule for organizing the tour and Lewis Overholt for guiding us.

G. B. | Wisconsin



Entrance to a cave where Anabaptists met in hiding to escape persecution.



Walking through the beautiful Swiss countryside.



The Coliseum is a prime example of amazing Roman architecture that still stands.

Proverbs Illustrated

In a recent class study from the book of Proverbs, I was impressed with how many word pictures are used to teach the intended truth. Just on the subject of slothfulness I found nine references that draw memorable lessons with illustrations.

- Proverbs 6:6. "Go to the ant, you sluggard, consider her ways."
- Proverbs 10:2-5. "He who sleeps in harvest, is a son who causes shame."
- Proverbs 12:24-27. "The slothful man does not roast what he took in hunting."
- Proverbs 19:15. "Slothfulness casts one into a deep sleep."
- Proverbs 20:4. "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold."
- Proverbs 21:25-26. "His hands refuse to labor."
- Proverbs 24:30-34. "Its stone wall was broken down."
- Proverbs 26:13-16. "There is a lion in the road."
- Proverbs 6:11. "So shall your poverty come on you like a robber."

Anabaptist Voice encourages men and women to write stories, articles, and poems. Now we are beginning a section where we encourage artists and sketchers to illustrate teachings from Proverbs – "Proverbs Illustrated." We'll be waiting for your illustration from Proverbs and it need not be on slothfulness.

Take a look at this in-depth portrayal by a Georgia artist.



"A SLOTHFUL MAN BURIES HIS HAND IN THE BOWL, AND WILL NOT SO MUCH AS BRING IT TO HIS MOUTH."

PROVERBS 19:24

Interview With Myron Showalter

AV: What sparked your great interest in music?

MJS: As is typical of those who take interest in music, I come from a singing family. My father taught some music in our church school. In my growing-up years he co-compiled a songbook for our school titled *Songs We Sing*. My mother sang with her sisters, known as the Wadel Sisters. In our home we sang as we worked, we sang through several hymnbooks in family worship, we tried new songs, we repeated old favorites. Singing was part of our life.

AV: What helped shape your ability to sing?

MJS: Beyond what was absorbed in family singing, our school had music instruction for all grades. Clarence Fretz, the school's first principal, made sure that music was part of the curriculum.

AV: Why did you start composing music?

MJS: I don't know! That was a long time ago. Probably the first composition was an assignment for school. My general interest in music moved my creativity in a musical direction. In 1996, when I was still a youth, I and some other young men asked Brother John Hostetter for instruction in music composition. John had taught courses on this subject at Bible school and writers' meetings. Our text was a simple outline John had developed to teach his classes. We met regularly and learned much of the basics. From there it was book study on my own along with trial and error and observation of music already in print.

AV: How many different tunes have you composed?

MJS: A computer crash several years ago assigned some of my compositions to oblivion, meaning I no longer have a complete collection of everything I have composed. However, compositions of worth were on paper somewhere. I may have a dozen tunes that I would consider publishable. A sampling of my tunes can be found by looking up my name in the index of *Hymns of the Church*.

AV: Do these tunes come to you all at one sitting?

MJS: Typically, I compose a tune at one sitting which may be a few hours time. On recent compositions I find myself revisiting them later to make improvements, something I did not do on earlier compositions.

AV: How do you match up your tunes with words?

MJS: I don't think I have ever written a tune that amounted to anything that was not composed for a

specific text. However, I can't say that I internalize the text and allow it to guide the details of composition. My tunes are generic in that they fit equally well with more than one text. An exception would be NAZRET (Hymns of the Church, 258) which is tailored for the text. I would not say this is the best way to compose but it seems to be the groove I'm in.

AV: How can we increase the number of lyric and tune writers in Anabaptist circles?

MJS: Thankfully I can say that hymn-writing is in a healthy state among Anabaptists. I cannot say for sure why this is. It may have started with a few lone souls in the past who wrote some hymns. John Overholt, John Hostetter and others involved in CLP's "Making Melody" project did more than write songs; they educated and inspired the next generation of writers through Bible school and writers' meetings. More recently there has been an upsurge of hymn-writing. No doubt music-engraving software has boosted tune writing. In my home community some poets gathered regularly to critique each other's hymn poems and encourage one another in hymn-writing. There are currently some hymn composers circles that do a similar thing for tune writing.

We could ask, "How many of our people should write hymns?" All of us? Fifty percent? Ten percent? But that question is too statistical for evaluating the gifts among us. Rather, what are we doing with the gifts and opportunities we have? The conservative Mennonite movement is no longer in revival mode. Some of the energy that was put into establishing churches, schools and other institutions should be directed toward worthwhile causes. I see hymn-writing as helping to keep us revived as a group.



Tuning Fork of 432 Hz will give a true "A" from which the song leader can start the song.

AV: How do you typeset a hymn?

MJS: With a computer, of course! I am sure there are people among us who do not use a computer and I in no way want to communicate that a computer is necessary for working with music.

This question highlights the great change in music typesetting over the last few decades. My father was involved in some small songbook projects. In the 60's he used heated irons (wood files that he ground to the right shape and put in a soldering gun) to burn the notes onto mimeograph stencils. In the 80's he used rub-off notes, a system developed by Sanford Shank and used in *The Christian Hymnary*. As a youth when I wanted a song in shaped notes, I used a stencil with the shapes of the notes cut in it. The stencil needed to be placed for each note. White notes were outlined; black notes were filled in. Each system required a process for each note. Place the note, add stem, add flags or dots if needed, repeat the next note. It was tedious. In contrast, today professional-looking engraving of songs can be done on a desktop computer with free software.

AV: Is four-part harmony important in our church music?

MJS: Speaking as a 21st-century Mennonite, I would say four-part harmony is very important. After 100 years of four-part singing, it is a practice that is here to stay. However, we did not always sing in parts and there are still groups among us that treasure their unison singing. I would not want to be guilty of suggesting our practice is superior to theirs. But, I think our tradition certainly has merits that should be pointed out and appreciated. Here are a few:

- We can tap into a vast amount of hymnody sung by churches around the world. We sing German chorales, music from 15th and 16th century psalters, English and American hymn tunes, and folk and traditional melodies with four-part harmonies.
- If four-part singing were removed from our communities, our schools would miss the discipline of learning to harmonize and our families would be poorer without the wholesome recreation of learning to sing new songs in parts.
- There is intrinsic beauty in the interplay of four parts.



A Pitch Pipe contains all the keys needed to start any song and can be heard by everybody.

AV: What is different about the thoughts and style in the *Ausbund* and other Anabaptist hymnals compared to many hymnals of today?

MJS: I cannot answer this question as an expert or as one who uses the book for worship. I fall in the category of those who wish they could know more about the book but find the language a barrier. I appreciate the translation work that has been done to make the texts accessible to English-speaking people. Was this book intended to be used alone? There are indications that the early Anabaptists used other collections, such as *Lobwasser's Psalter*, with the *Ausbund*. The book is not arranged by subject nor does it have a full representation of subjects. Many of the songs are ballads with doctrine appearing almost as a byproduct. This contrasts with our well-organized hymnbooks that attempt to cover every subject with multiple hymns.

Many of the *Ausbund* songs were written by people who faced death for their faith. Cross-bearing is a prominent theme, seen as a means to remain faithful to the end. A word used in some hymns was recently pointed out to me. The German word is "waggen," related to the English word "wager," and could be translated "venture, risk, hazard, or dare." This was an expression of faith. When given the choice between their life, families, and possessions, or taking the consequences of following Christ and receiving His reward at the end, their faith was so firm in Christ that they "ventured/risked" all for Him. These themes are not absent from the hymns we borrow from Protestants but neither are they as prominent or stated as plainly.

AV: Should hymnals compiled in the 21st century include hymns from the *Ausbund*?

MJS: Yes. When we switched from German to English we dropped our German hymn heritage. This was not all bad. We no longer lived in a country of persecution. We needed hymns for a free church in a free land. But

it was not all good either. For example, we can absorb a skewed view of salvation. Here is a translation of one verse from *Ausbund*, #82, v.1. *Take notice, all you people Everywhere upon this earth, Be you young, old, great, or small, If you would be saved, You must refrain from sin And follow Christ the Lord, Living according to His will.*

How many of our “borrowed” hymns state salvation this clearly? It is good to have hymns available that recapture clearly the sentiments of the early Anabaptists.

AV: Why is it important to print the hymnals in shaped notes?

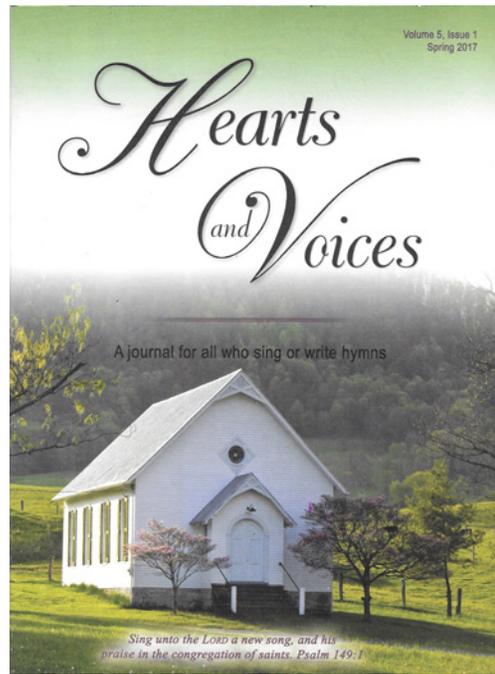
MJS: Here is a companion question: “How important is congregational, a cappella singing?” Probably shaped notes are the greatest aid to this tradition. Shaped notes take a lower skill set and can be learned by more people. While round notes have some academic (and practical) value, a move toward using them in our hymnals would either mean we are moving away from congregational singing or our singing is dying.

AV: How does the publication *Hearts and Voices* further interest in hymn-writing among Anabaptists?

MJS: *Hearts and Voices* is about more than encouraging hymn-writing, but that was definitely an impetus for starting the journal. Each issue has something practical for hymn-writers, either authors or composers or both. The center section has at least four pages of new hymns. This is where our writers can get some exposure for their work. Included is a text or two that needs a tune. We select from tunes written for these texts to put in later issues.

AV: How are you involved with *Hearts and Voices*?

MJS: I am an associate editor which means I do more editing work than some of the others on the staff. Specifically, I am responsible for the practical articles in hymn music composition.



AV: How does one subscribe to *Hearts and Voices*?

MJS: *Hearts and Voices* is published quarterly by Lamp and Light Publishers. A year subscription is \$15, two years is \$25. You can subscribe with the following contact:

Hearts and Voices
Lamp and Light Publishers
26 Road 5577, Farmington, NM 87401
Phone: (505) 632-3521. Fax: (505) 632-1246



Writing Challenge!

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.”
Hebrews 5:12

In Hebrews 6:1 & 2, the writer lists six things he would class as elementary. Take one of the four remaining topics, explain it in an essay and send to AV.

1. Doctrine of baptisms.
2. Laying on of hands.
3. Resurrection of the dead.
4. Eternal judgment.





Call To Service: Manna Translations

by James G. Landis

Traducciones Maná was born in 2014, out of a desire to publish more upbuilding material for the Spanish-speaking world.

Based on the activity at the website, <elcristianismoprimitivo.org> (primitivechristianity.org), it became apparent that there is a huge opportunity for sharing truth in a digital format. This website had been getting around 2000 hits a day, and many were signing up for Lamp and Light’s Bible study courses.

Roman Miller (Indiana) contacted Jacinto Yoder (Nicaragua) about translating more English material into Spanish. Jacinto sought out two other brothers from Costa Rica to begin the translation and editing work. Keiner Barrantes, a seasoned editor, and Marcos Miller, treasurer, together with Jacinto, formed a three-man committee. They were able to find other willing translators and editors, and were soon working on a few projects. They called themselves *Traducciones Maná* (Manna Translations).

The Opportunity

The vision is to translate material, creating ebooks for free downloads from an Anabaptist website. Terry

Bauman and a committee from Pennsylvania have developed a website where free Anabaptist literature is available for seekers anywhere in the world. The plan is for *Traducciones Maná* to use the Anabaptist Resource website to make Spanish ebooks available for free anywhere in the world.

Because there are many borders to cross in order to reach the twenty-two Spanish-speaking countries in the world, the internet offers us a way to freely enter all those countries without passports, taxes, or expense. With only a few clicks of a mouse, a seeker can download our translated ebooks from the website.

The Task

There is no shortage of literature available for translation. *Traducciones Maná* (TM) has assembled a team to get selected books translated, edited, typeset, and produced as an ebook.

Each book is assigned to a project coordinator who will see his project through from beginning to end. He will work on a schedule for each project and make sure each step is completed. After translation, there is a review by an editor who has an ear for quality Spanish sound,



Jacinto Yoder: I was born in Costa Rica but our family moved to Nicaragua 20 years ago. I met Kendra (Stoltzfus) from Minerva, Ohio when she came to serve at the clinic in Waslala and we’ve been married for six years. We have a little farm and a house beside a creek in Zapote Kum. My pastoral duties take the greater part of my efforts, but I put bread on the table through translating and editing.



Ronald Yoder: Our names are Ronald and Lorraine Yoder. Anastasia is 7, Felipe is 5, and Lauren is 10 months. I was born and raised here in Costa Rica; Lorraine moved here when we married. At the moment we are involved in the ministry here in Ciudad Quesada.

followed by a review by another editor. At the end of the editorial process, it is necessary to do a “hard copy” edit where mistakes seem to jump off the printed page. After each edit, the manuscript goes back to the project coordinator to accept or reject the changes suggested by the editors.

Next the manuscript goes to layout, followed by a final proofreading. When all the changes have been made, it is ready for the final PDF, .mobi, and .epub ebook formats, and will be made available for free downloads.

The Team

Manna Translations has tapped into an able pool of bilingual translators prepared by God for this work. In the mid sixties a number of families from the USA moved to various Central and South American countries with the goal of providing a conservative Anabaptist witness to the Hispanic people.

These families now have children who have grown up in that culture and understand the Spanish language just as well as, or better than, the English language. These grown children can switch from English to Spanish at the drop of a hat and get the full meaning in either language.

Manna Translations is tapping into that talent and using it to translate good Anabaptist English literature into Spanish and make it available to the Latin folks.



Keiner Enrique: I was born and raised in Costa Rica and I'm 39 years old. In 1998 I married Sabrina Maribel Ramos in El Salvador. God has given us three children. For several years I've worked full-time for publishing houses as a translator and reviewer.

Since there has been a great dearth in translators and editors for this work, Manna Translations is busy training new translators and editors so the number of books translated can be expanded.

Contributions for Manna Translations may be sent to:

Christian Light Publications
 Attn: Crystal Shank
 P.O. Box 1212 Harrisonburg, VA 22803
 Memo: Spanish Translations – E-book Division

- article approved by Jacinto Yoder



Books Completed and Available Online

MT has finished a few projects, some shown below:

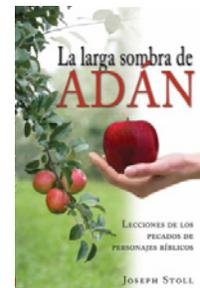
FYI: A medium-sized book like “A Change Of Allegiance” costs around \$6,000 dollars to translate, edit, and publish as an ebook



A Change of Allegiance

Dean Taylor

Radical Reformation Books



Adam's Long Shadow

Joseph Stoll

Vision Publishers



Reaching Out magazine

The Practical Side

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

— Colossians 3:17

This recurring feature in *Anabaptist Voice* consists of three parts.

1. **Reader Response**—feedback on previous stories
2. **The Rest of the Story**—what actually happened
3. **New Stories**—situations met by today’s Anabaptists

Here is your chance to help others live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ “right in the corner where you are.” This section is not for some idealistic future kingdom posing theological complicated questions with no good answers—for example, the woman who had seven brothers as husbands (*Matthew 22:24-28*).

Take the time to write *Anabaptist Voice* and share your situations where you faced a difficulty... and failed, or won a victory. As you ponder the situations in these stories and then share your answers and experiences with others, remember the words of Jesus when He told the packed-out house, “*My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s Word and put it into practice*” (**Luke 8:21**).



The Practical Side: Work Boots Required



The Practical Side: The Rest of the Story

What really happened in conclusion to stories from previous issues.

The Ram Is Dead

by Noah Power



We did dispute the credit card charge for the initial work from Shop A, but the credit card company ruled that the work had been done and they couldn’t resolve the dispute in our favor.

We then checked into small claims court and found that it had a filing fee of \$100 and the maximum claim amount could be \$7,500. There was no risk associated to filing, it would be a simple hearing in front of a magistrate where we would present our case, our evidence (pictures, blown turbo, and beat-up bolt), and our witnesses (our driver and Shop B mechanic, who said they would testify).

We did submit a couple reviews online but only presented the facts and kept out mean and spiteful

language. And we have told a couple people who asked us about recommendations to not go to Shop A.

We talked about it a couple different times; some days it seemed like the small claims court would be an easy thing to do and we should just try it. Maybe they would settle out of court if they knew we were serious. After a month or so of wrestling with this experience, we decided to just drop the whole thing. Simply let go

I don’t think of this experience too often; sometimes when I am looking over financial reports I remember that the Delivery Truck Repairs account is \$7,000 higher than it should be. And sometimes when I drive past Shop A, I wonder if the owner is there.

Finally, just last week we took the busted turbo and all other evidence out of storage and threw it away. Chapter closed.



The Practical Side: Reader Responses

Reader responses to stories from previous issues.

Normal People Can Keep Pets

by N. Joy Doggie



My concern has to do with “Gone to the Dogs.” The writer starts out with a perfectly valid point: Should we be in the business of selling extravagant things to people whose values are skewed, just because it makes us good money?

Then he strays into another foreign area when he asks, “Why do people buy expensive dogs?” Not all people keep dogs for the same reasons.

As far as pleasure goes, there are many different forms of pleasure that bring rejuvenation to the Christian. We, of course, need to be temperate in all things, but in the spirit of esteeming others better than ourselves, we need to give room to others to enjoy things that are not particularly appealing to us.

There really are people who have children and grandchildren and intimate friends at church, yea, even a satisfying and growing relationship with God, who occasionally hug their dogs.



We Must Forgive Our Brother

by Sevin T. Times



What is the debt that was canceled?

Okay, so there was no literal debt that was canceled. Songs that refer to debt allude to Jesus’ story in Matthew 18 about a servant who could not repay a debt. When he begged for forgiveness his master granted it. But after the servant did not grant his fellow servant the same kind of forgiveness, his master revoked the forgiveness he had formerly granted. Jesus’ point was that we too can lose our forgiveness if we do not forgive each other. The obvious comparison in this parable is that the king who canceled a servant’s debt represents God who has forgiven us. So to say that God has canceled my debt does not seem to me to be too much of a stretch. At least, it would be no more of a stretch than when Jesus handed his disciples some bread and said, “This is my body.”



Bloodguilt

by Bee Clear



In general, the societies of the world that are the most active in avoiding the conception of human beings (and aborting them if they are not successful) also become the societies of the world that are the most active in preserving frogs, bugs, trees, fish and birds.

Did this ever strike you as incongruous [inconsistent]? I suggest there may well be a cause-and-effect relationship between the willingness of these societies to routinely destroy or preclude [prevent by logical necessity] human life, and their fondness of going to extravagant extents to preserve plant and animal life.

Any society that routinely kills off its own young, in the name of freedom of choice and enlightened social values, consequently lives with a deep sense of bloodguilt. And that society will, predictably, do something to assuage the torment of that guilt. The blood of the murdered innocent ones cries unto God from the ground ... and from the heart of the murderer. He thinks, “Maybe if I spend a small fortune on nice accommodations for my cat, the guilt I feel for aborting my child will be lessened. Maybe if I advocate legislation in favor of preserving a bird, a fish, or a bug, the bloodguilt that torments me will be minimized.” It is an observable fact that bloodguilt drives humans to do unreasonable things—incongruous things.

When we sin in any way, there is an effective way to be rid of the resultant guilt: repent toward God. If you are guilty before God and you know it, I bring you good news: you can repent and God will forgive you! The very possibility of repentance is a sheer miracle. Why should God allow, yea, invite us to repent? And to experience repentance is pure joy—guilt gone! Love, joy, peace and the opportunity of holy living take guilt’s place.

The previous piece was not written as a direct answer to “Gone to the Dogs, but the point made strengthens the story.”

We Have Been Bought

by Rich R. Farr



I fully agree that we need to reject the false concepts presented in most Protestant theology — that Christ's death provides forgiveness for the sins of the elect in the past, present, and future. It argues that since Christ paid the penalty of sin, to charge man for it would be "double jeopardy," and contrary to the justice of God.

The Bible refers to Christ's death as providing for forgiveness for sin(s), reconciliation with God (atonement), and redemption. The later term has some interesting connotations in Scripture, possibly drawing on the analogy of a slave who is freed by the payment of a sum. Three passages refer to Christ having bought us:

- For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (I Corinthians 6:20).
- Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men (I Corinthians 7:23).
- Who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them (2 Peter 2:1).

There are other passages which imply that Christ bought us. Perhaps that is not the same as paying a debt, but it is pretty close. I certainly would not say that "all the sins of this world" were laid on Christ at His death, although His death made provision for them to be forgiven.

Many of these songs do leave out the aspect of discipleship [or of some other Bible teaching]. It is always impossible to incorporate the whole of biblical truth in our own statements.



Debt And Sin Mean The Same Thing

by Ree L. Search



I am wondering where "I. M. Troubled" got his understanding of what the Anabaptists believed in regard to the New Birth experience. I would like to do some research on this issue, but regardless of what they believed, the Word of God is the final authority on any subject. Wherever the Anabaptists did not see things correctly according to

Scripture, we should not follow them; we must always go back to the Word of God for our foundation.

I would like to answer his questions:

1. What debt? – Our debt of sin
2. When did He seal my pardon? – When He hung on the cross and shed His sinless blood and cried, "It is finished."
3. When were all the sins of the world laid upon Jesus? – When He drank the cup (Luke 22:42-44).

An answer to the practical question in AV06, page 40: "What is the right response when one does not agree with the stated wording in the hymn?"

Regarding these songs, I would urge I. M. Troubled to cry out to God that He would show him who he is outside of Christ so he can repent of his awful debt of sin.



The Whole Gospel Isn't In One Song

by U. Sing Praise



The writer of the article "No Debt" (AV Issue 6), posed some interesting questions. I have also wondered at certain phrases in some songs. However, I think it's important that we don't run away with a certain word or phrase and miss the message of the song.

Here is my take on the song, "Jesus Signed My Pardon." We are all born under sin. Romans 3:10, 3:23, and 5:14. We all have a (debt) load of sin that we are helpless to get rid of. We are all pronounced guilty and doomed to spiritual death. Nothing that I do of my own power can free me from this (debt) load of sin. No amount of good works will redeem this debt. But Christ Jesus came and provided the way of salvation. As we repent from our sin and surrender our life to Him, He pardons us from condemnation. He cancels or takes away our (debt) load of sin. The ransom has been paid.

The message of the two songs that were mentioned is rejoicing, praise and glory for the Lamb of God who provided salvation for all mankind. The author of the song, "Jesus Signed My Pardon" also wrote another song about discipleship and loving one another. In other words, the complete gospel message cannot be adequately contained or explained in one song.

The Practical Side: New Stories

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists.

Wires Crossed

by Mind Re Leaf



This is in response to “Dealing with Depression” on page 5 in AV06. In my mid thirties, I experienced my first panic and nerve attacks, which were very severe. They are the most miserable affliction that one can imagine. Any medication our doctor prescribed did not benefit in the least.

Symptoms were loss of sleep and feeling like my throat was filled with cotton which made it difficult to swallow food. Any task, work, or chores seemed like a big mountain. Also I could feel a second heartbeat in the center of my stomach where the rib cage stops.

Soon after our move to Costa Rica, I met a young doctor on the street. After I explained my symptoms to him, he said what I needed was Lorazepam. I walked across the street and was able to buy a supply of 2mg tablets. I experienced complete relief thirty minutes after taking my first tablet. And the relief lasted for about thirty hours.

I am now seventy-five and still keep a supply on hand for when I need help. Sometimes I can go without any medicine for six months. At other times, I still find 2mg/day is effective, but now I often take 4mg/day as needed.

Lorazepam can be bought only by a doctor's prescription. To my knowledge, I never had any bad effect from the medication all these years.

If only one person gets the relief I have gotten, it is great!

Anabaptist Voice does not sell or recommend any drugs, vitamins, or minerals. We publish the above testimony in the hope that with care and prudence a few others may be blessed by our brother's long experience.

We acknowledge that we are fearfully and wonderfully made by our Creator God, and that man really knows very little about the 10-100 trillion cells estimated to be in the human body.

As such we should approach all maladies and malfunctions of the body with a sense of humility and surrender of the will to our Maker. He knows everything about us and holds our life and breath and spirit in His hands.

Practical Questions:

1. Who are those in the church mentioned in I Corinthians 14:28 who have the gifts of healing?
2. Should we go to these in the church for help before or after we go to the doctor?
3. Should we call for anointing only when all other remedies have failed?



Cooing Doves

by Notso Blind



When we talk of courtship we mean a time when a young man puts on his “court manners” in an effort to win the trust of a young lady. As one brother put it years ago, “If a young man does not put on his best manners then, he never will.”

Good manners in courtship test the qualities of character important to the other person. For example, if he or she is not kind and thoughtful toward the other in little things, there is a good chance that trait will not improve as the years go by. The purpose of courtship, then, is not to deceive someone, but to evaluate the character of the young man and the young lady to find out if the other will make a suitable marriage partner for life.

By experience, I have found these courting practices to be of real practical value and have taught them to Christians in different settings—in the home, in the church, and in Bible classes for teachers.

The following page contrasts God's way with the world's way to make courtship differences more obvious. Basically, it shows that Christian courting couples are accountable to God, to both sets of parents, and to the church. This accountability nurtures a good relationship between the two prospective marriage partners.

Worldly dating is very unreal because the couple only does fun things together and each one sees only the best side of each other. However, Christians courting each other should spend time working with each other's families and seeing how each reacts in both difficult and fun situations. They need to see each other's weaknesses as well as their strengths.

Following these practices helps lay a proper foundation for a satisfying and enduring marriage. Or, it can notify courting couples that marriage would not be desirable.

Practical Questions:

1. What are good activities for dating couples?
2. How many times should dating couples see each other in a month?
3. How much texting and telephoning is good for dating couples?
4. What qualities should a courting young man look for in a young lady?
5. What qualities should a courting young lady look for in a young man?
6. How long should the courtship last?
7. How long should the engagement period be?



Good and Bad Courtship Practices

Worldly Dating

1. Purpose is mainly to have a good time
2. Could begin at a young age
3. Takes little or no prayer
4. Asks advice from no one
5. Obtains permission from only your special friend
6. Much privacy and isolation
7. No accountability to anyone
8. Entertainment and fun oriented
9. Very unreal situation
10. Emphasizes romantic love, feeling oriented, and self-centered love
11. Much physical contact
12. Assumes rights to other's body
13. Order of bonding—physical, emotional, spiritual
14. Makes marriage meaningless because rights reserved only for marriage are done in dating
15. Emphasizes short-term relationships
16. Good preparation for divorce

Christian Courtship

1. Purpose is to pursue marriage
2. Does not begin until old enough to get married
3. Takes much prayer
4. First seeks the opinion of those who best know your special friend
5. Obtains permission from both sets of parents before starting to date
6. Visiting in homes or in public places
7. Accountability to parents, family and the church
8. Emphasis on getting acquainted
9. Realistic situation
10. Emphasizes committed, sacrificial love; a giving of oneself to make the other happy.
11. Hands-off policy
12. No rights until marriage
13. Order of bonding—spiritual, emotional, physical after marriage
14. Marriage is intensely important and meaningful
15. Emphasizes permanent relationships
16. Good preparation for a lifelong, happy marriage

Swear Not

by Canny C. Clearly



Do not swear an oath at all. All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

(Matthew 5:34–37; NIV).

About ten years ago I became curious what the word “perjury” really means. I was asked by the government to sign numerous documents that included the word “perjury.” I did some research and found that perjury is “a deliberate lie while under oath.”

I realized then, that if I was asked to swear under oath, as an Anabaptist Christian I could not sign. I also realized that I could not be guilty of perjury unless I was under oath. Asking me to sign under penalty of perjury looked to me like a subtle way to get me to disobey Christ’s Word.

I talked to different ones in our fellowship and we became convicted that it is definitely going further than the “yes” and “no” that Jesus gave us. And He said anything more than “yes” or “no” is from the evil one.

So on the next tax return, instead of signing our names we wrote in the reference, Matthew 5:34–37. I did not get caught but three of the others did and were notified that they were fined \$5,000 for sending in a frivolous form.

We asked a family friend and Christian attorney for help. He told us he knows that the IRS is able to help us if we can get hold of the right person, but that just didn’t want to happen. Our attorney said the problem is that everything is now done with computers; humans only randomly check some tax returns. He said this was the reason I did not get caught and the others did.

The second year some of my brethren again did not sign their returns and got another notice saying they were again being fined \$5,000; total due now was \$10,000.

The third year they did catch my return and also sent me a letter saying that I was being fined \$5,000. My letter was signed by a real person.

Practical Questions:

1. How can we avoid swearing when signing legal documents?
2. Is signing a tax return committing perjury?
3. What are other forms of swearing of oaths that might affect us?
4. How does a stand on swearing of oaths appear to government officials?

Sold Out

by Right Price



When a slave stood on the block at a slave auction, there was going to be a change of ownership. Whoever bid the highest price would be the slave’s new owner, for better or for worse. The slave’s time and energy was not his own, but belonged to the owner that bought him.

We are not physical slaves, but we are servants of either God or the devil. Unlike the slaves of the south, we are the ones that determine who our owner will be. Satan has an advantage in the bidding, in that he offers to let you continue to do what you want to do - all that your flesh desires. You can be your own boss. He has no problem with you serving your own desires and also doing good works. Satan doesn’t care if we do good works, what he cares about is ownership. He likes us to think that we have retained ownership of ourselves, and can make our own decisions, when in reality he is gaining powerful control over us.

God’s bid is more costly. He purchased us with the price of His Son on the cross. That is the price of our redemption. If we accept His ownership, He saves us from sin and its consequences. He gives us power to overcome sin, but He demands complete ownership in order to do this. He wants us to trust in Him for our righteousness, redemption, and salvation and not look to ourselves. His criteria for this salvation is faith in Him, which is demonstrated by faithfulness to Him and trust in His salvation. Sell out to the Savior!

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16).

Adapted from *The Way of Truth*, Sept. - Oct. 2017

Practical Questions:

1. What are some evidences that you have sold out to the Savior?
2. What are some areas in your life where you want to retain control rather than surrender to the Savior?
3. Ask other brothers and sisters that you know well if they see any areas in your life that you have not surrendered to God. Can you accept what they say without attacking them?



Announcements, Meetings & Events

If you know of any meetings or events that would benefit the Kingdom of Christ and are open to attendance by the general Anabaptist community, please let us know so we can continue to feature this section in future issues.

OPEN HOUSE AT FAITH BUILDERS

November 17, 2017 10:00 AM–6:00 PM

Faith Builders has served the conservative Anabaptist church since 1987, and in those years we have given presentations in many communities about what happens here. However, many people have told us that they really understood the work of Faith Builders when they visited us and interacted with staff and students on campus.

Guys Mills is off the beaten path for many people, so without a specific event to attend or a friend to visit, few make the trip to Faith Builders. Open house provides that focused opportunity to visit Faith Builders.

We welcome church and ministry leaders, prayer supporters, donors, and business owners to the open house on November 17. In the past, parents and grandparents of current students have found this event to be a great time to visit Faith Builders. Pastors may find this to be an excellent opportunity to see for themselves what happens at Faith Builders and what the young people from their congregation are experiencing.

The mid-morning through early evening schedule allows at least some attendees to make the trip in one day. Guests will be oriented to Faith Builders, sample classes, visit with instructors and staff, and take a tour. Lunch and supper will be provided.

Registration needed: We welcome individuals or small groups, but space is limited. Please register online or call Vivian at 814-789-4518 extension 224.

Location: 28527 Guys Mills Road, Guys Mills, PA 16327



Rubies and Diamonds

“Wisdom is better than rubies” (Proverbs 8:11).

In past issues *Anabaptist Voice* has encouraged readers to send in “Sermon Snippets” from sermons preached in their local churches or at special meetings they attended. The idea has not caught on and we have received none.

In the hope that another title will better capture the idea, we are changing the name of the page to “Rubies and Diamonds: Memorable Quotes That Speak to the Heart.” The quote does not have to be an exact quote but should give the thought of the speaker.

We hope this will help to stir discussions at mealtime or in the living room, about the central theme of the sermon or at least ante up one good thought that was given in the message. After all, what is the point of sitting through hours of worship services if you don’t take home at least one ruby or diamond you can share with others?

AV is hoping for a flood of these rubies and diamonds that we can use. Send in the quote followed by the name of the speaker and the name of the congregation or church where it was given. Just for our records, we also would like to have the name and address of the person sending in the quote. For example:



“Everything Jesus did was to please the Father. Everything we do should also be done to please the Father.”
– Duane Eby at Burkeland Mennonite Church, Georgia



“The better we learn to know God, the more holy and righteous we will become.”
– Lonnie Yoder at Hephzibah Mennonite Church, Georgia

Submitted by James G. Landis, 5282 Hwy 56 South, Waynesboro, GA 30830



Circulation & Financial Statements

Income & Expense Report

July thru September 2017

July 2017 Beginning Balance	\$103.40
Income	
Donations for Issue #6	\$1,248.89
Local Support Donations*	\$8,730.99
Total Income	\$9,979.88
Expenses	
Handling & Packaging	\$619.00
Postage	\$3,620.88
Printing	\$5,740.00
Total Expense	\$9,979.88
Donations for Issue #7	\$1,383.00
September 2017 Ending Balance	\$1,486.40

ISSUE #4 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 5,250 | Print & Postage Cost: \$8,935
 Donations for Issue #4: \$6,435
 Local Support Donations: \$2,500

ISSUE #5 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 6,150 | Print & Postage Cost: \$9,636
 Donations for Issue #5: \$6,130
 Local Support Donations: \$3,506

ISSUE #6 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 6,300 | Print & Postage Cost: \$9,980
 Donations for Issue #6: \$1,249
 Local Support Donations: \$8,731

ISSUE #7 - ESTIMATED NUMBERS

Print Qty: 6,300 | Print & Postage Cost: \$10,000
 Donations Needed for AV07: \$8,500

*see section "Our Finances" on Page 4 for more info.



Note About Our Finances

Saturday morning, 19 August 2017, eight brethren interested in the work of *Anabaptist Voice* met in the basement of the Hephzibah Mennonite Church meeting house (Hephzibah, Georgia).

One of the items that came up for discussion was finances. Issue AV06 was just off the press, but we were over \$4,000 short of having enough funds on hand to pay the bill for the printing and mailing. All AV work other than printing and mailing expenses have been done by volunteers.

The bill has since been paid out of private funds and we are now on the threshold of publishing AV07 with an expected bill of another \$10,000. We have decided to let our readers know of the situation.

As one brother expressed it, "The way our statements have been in the magazine, it sounded like the AV funding was all taken care of from a small group of supporters—no need for donations. But there is a cost to publishing the magazine and the money must come from somewhere."

In our desire to be unencumbered with the burden of registration with government agencies and restrained by their rules and regulations, we have also forfeited the privilege of receiving direct donations to AV which are

tax deductible to the giver. However, AV has worked out an arrangement with Shalom Ministries in Dover, Ohio whereby they will serve as a conduit for charitable donations to *Anabaptist Voice*. Shalom Ministries is a registered 501c3 organization with activities listed that include the publishing of a magazine such as *Anabaptist Voice*.

If you wish to donate to *Anabaptist Voice* and would like a tax-deductible receipt, make your check payable to Shalom Ministries (please mark it for *Anabaptist Voice*). You will receive a receipt mailed to the name and address printed on your check, unless you tell us otherwise. Any donations *not* needing a receipt may be made out to *Anabaptist Voice*.

Mail all checks to: AV Production Team
 3287 HWY 201
 Due West SC 29639

The group that met together wishes to continue making AV available free to any who wish to receive it, as well as making it available for free distribution as an evangelistic tool in outreach ministry. We do not want to go to a subscription charge or beat the bushes with fund raisers. Enough said.

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“AND THINE EARS SHALL HEAR A WORD BEHIND THEE, SAYING, THIS IS THE WAY, WALK YE IN IT, WHEN YE TURN TO THE RIGHT HAND, AND WHEN YE TURN TO THE LEFT.”

ISAIAH :30:21

