

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

James 1:22

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

IN THIS ISSUE:

"THE NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE" - LESTER E. SHOWALTER

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"THE SWASTIKA OR THE CROSS" - CHESTER WEAVER

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"THE PAIN OF REACHING OUT" - LUKE MARTIN

Letter from the Editor

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

– Acts 17:11

Some of you have expressed sentiments that you dislike using pen names and initials to screen the identity of the writer. On the other hand, there are those who think the AV manner of identifying the writers is a good one.

I am sensitive to these feelings but would like to express some of the reasons for our practice in this matter. First of all, almost all our articles, reports, and stories do attach the writer’s name to their piece.

In many cases, writers of “The Practical Side” pieces do not want their names published and would not share their stories if we attached their names. No one likes to air their mistakes; if we only tell the triumphs, they will be perceived as bragging. Yet if writers are not willing to share their experiences, readers cannot learn from them.

I feel the same way about “Our Readers Write.” Writers may freely express their thoughts without fear of widespread quiet shunning. There is another practical reason for the policy of using initials instead of the full name. When I publish the writer’s name with the article, I go to a good bit of pain to make sure the writer approves what we publish. When readers write in, I am under no such obligation and freely edit these letters.

We make sure we have a physical address for every writer we publish. We do not want to publish ghost writers or fake stories. If legitimate questions come up, we can trace the identity of the writer and hold him or her accountable.

So if you don’t agree with things written under a pen name, hold me responsible. I know who the writer is and where to find him or her. Our use of pen names is aimed at helping you consider the content of the article or story rather than how the writer trims his beard or parts his hair.

I also appeal to the beginning of the Anabaptist movement to support this practice of withholding the writer’s name. In 1527, Anabaptist leaders met in secret in Schleitheim, Switzerland, and crafted the *Brotherly Union*. This powerful affirmation of faith, couched in simple language which all could understand, did not have the writer’s name attached to it.

Oh! By the way, who wrote the book of Hebrews?

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.

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 Editor

No Pen Names

I had looked forward for a long time for the next issue of *Anabaptist Voice*. Obviously you have not set a schedule for its publication. I appreciate this effort and think AV fills a place in conservative Mennonite literature.

I would recommend you not use fictitious names for authors of articles, such as Menno Knight. I like to know who wrote what. You could do as I have seen by signing articles with initials. But you are the editor. You are not working for me. Do as you think best.

L.E.S. | *Pennsylvania*

Anabaptist Voice: Our aim is to encourage the free exchange of ideas and experiences along with a critical examination of the truth being expressed. See "Letter from the Editor" on page 2.



Too Much Comparison

I have been enriched by reading AV. Thank you for your efforts.

There is something, in my opinion, that should be considered; it's the now and again comparison of Anabaptist vs. Protestant. Is this necessary? It can come off as a put-down toward Protestants (better-than-thou).

While, I am convinced that the Anabaptist faith parallels the NT more closely, I believe there are born-again Protestants who will come into the Kingdom, by the blood of the Lamb. Let's compare ourselves to the NT and the faith it outlines for us instead of "comparing ourselves among ourselves," which according to II Corinthians 10:12, is not wise."

E.J.S. | *Pennsylvania*

Anabaptist Voice: An understanding of what others believe and comparing it to our own teaching can be helpful. Whenever AV points out error we consistently try to teach the truth. Hence the comparisons.

Apply The Truth

We know that truth is rooted in the character of the Lord God and how He has revealed Himself. The truth of the Lord endures forever, but the great need today is to know His truth and apply it to daily living. Thank you for your efforts to proclaim that revealed truth and disciple believers.

Please send 23 copies to our church for one year.

D.B. | *North Dakota*



Different Shapes and Sizes

Thank you for the work you are doing for the Kingdom of God! May God bless your efforts in furthering His kingdom.

I realize that you have many different shapes and sizes of "Anabaptist" churches participating in this ministry. I would encourage you to present the doctrines the Anabaptist church was built on without misusing the Anabaptist name. Let your mission statement of "we follow Christ" be seen all through the publication.

One more thought for Anabaptists today. Six hundred years ago most Anabaptists would not have admitted they were Anabaptists to just anyone. Today it is almost the opposite extreme. It is now almost popular to be an Anabaptist in business and most other times as well. We need to rejoice, not that we are Anabaptists, but rather that our names are written in heaven (*Luke 10:20*).

M.S.M. | *Kentucky*

Anabaptist Voice: It is encouraging if the name "Anabaptist" comes to be understood in connection with "genuine followers of Christ." Our aim is to encourage and challenge true followers of Christ in the "Anabaptist Way," meaning we literally apply Bible teachings to our daily lives. See our statement "Historic Tenets of Anabaptism" on page 4.

Fitting In

I have found AV interesting enough that I would be happy to continue getting it for now. I confess that I have had a difficult time discerning exactly what the magazine represents. I believe in the first issue, there was an article on what an Anabaptist is and believes. I appreciated the points that were made, though I thought something very important was missing. I have been reading the magazine since then and hoping the point would be made sometime, but have not seen it.

On page 4 under the historic tenets of Anabaptism, point #4 says that we recognize the church as Christ's kingdom on earth. I would understand that originally, the Anabaptists highly valued the local church, and the way brotherhood was lived out in the local setting. I have never seen that emphasis in AV articles which makes me wonder whether AV does not believe that or if it is a chance oversight. The New Testament was written primarily to local churches, and that is where true Christianity is lived out. The "invisible" or "universal" church is not really the emphasis of the scriptures. Most of the epistles were addressed "to the church that is at a certain city." That's a specific church.

"Anabaptism" has become a rather popular buzzword among Christians today, and I wonder if our understanding of it is straying from the original. If we place value on the local church, then we will discipline our own tastes [and fit in, rather] than just calling [ourselves] "Anabaptists." Isn't that where self-denial and cross-bearing come into focus? I realize that no local Anabaptist church is perfect, but neither are any of us that try to fit into the local church.

I hope this does not sound like I dislike the magazine. That is not the case. But it does give me enough cause for concern that I am not sure I always want my teenagers reading it.

"If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8).

G.S. | Michigan

Anabaptist Voice: AV has stated that we believe a true church is one that puts the gospel into practice, but we leave the variations in the practice of the principles to the local church. And it is in the local church where sinful practices must be dealt with.

If someone wants to call himself an Anabaptist because he feels the historic understandings and practices of the Anabaptist churches properly represent the true church of Jesus Christ, we want to encourage him in obedience in every way we can. However, I think that Anabaptists have always been poor at "fitting in" because they value truth in practice above correct theology. That is why they

refused to let their babies be baptized and continued to practice believers baptism.



Be Practical

I appreciate your efforts to be practical and apply God's unchanging Word to our everyday lives.

G.O. | Nebraska



Connecting With Other Anabaptists

I have just read your Spring Issue #5 cover to cover and find it very interesting and instructive. I believe there is much we can learn from you and reading your magazine.

Maybe you know of our Bruderhof movement. We count ourselves to be Anabaptist but realize we have some unusual aspects. We are friends with many Amish and conservative Mennonites in Lancaster County Pennsylvania and also in Hudson, New York but wish we had more connections with such believers. Maybe we can have more as our communities grow in the Lord.

As you may know, we have no TV in our communities worldwide and the students in our schools and high schools do not have or use computers, Ipads, or internet. Neither do they have access to such things (thus they do much practical work as recommended in the article by Drago Stittleburg). We do use computers in our businesses and outreach, including our publishing house, in a controlled way.

As you will easily find out, our women are conservatively dressed and we have many beliefs in a conservative direction, [meaning that] we follow the Bible.

Our prayers are with you as you strive to follow and obey our Lord in today's declining society which is increasingly godless and fractured. We pray for revival of Christianity throughout our nation and the world and think of the first Christians in the godless Roman society where they flourished. Their lives challenge us so much today.

M.J. | New York

Anabaptist Voice: We are encouraged by your consistent practice in limited use of computers and the internet.

Disappointed in AV Theology

I'm sure there are some good things written in the *Anabaptist Voice*. But I find myself so often in disagreement with what I read that I do not wish to receive any more copies. I could not recommend it to others.

I was particularly disappointed by the article, "The Old Covenant," by one "identified" by the name "Menno Knight." He should have been rightly embarrassed to have his real name attached to such a shabby (sic), error-filled article. He hardly seems to handle the Word with any measure of fear and trembling. He makes God out to be a liar and His promises to be unreliable.

I cannot support the amillennial, replacement theology, that I regularly find in your publication.

R.S. | Oregon

Anabaptist Voice: Being ready for Christ's return by living a holy life today is the emphasis *Anabaptist Voice* wants to give. We assume that you agree with AV on how we should live on the earth until whatever else happens.

The question for the amillennials, the premillennials, the postmillennials and the panmillennials is this: If I believe exactly like you believe, how should I live my life today to prepare for the return of Christ and the coming judgment?



Hunting For Rubies

We have been blessed with the magazine *Anabaptist Voice*. The fall 2017 issue with the section "Rubies and Diamonds" challenged our family. This is something we discussed as a family and would like to discipline ourselves to participate with the request which was made in the article.

B.S. | Pennsylvania



Vision Realigned

If this isn't too much of a burden, could you send me some AV magazines for myself and some to give to other people who are searching. I find that the AV magazine can be very informative and useful in the Hutterite way of life, especially so when some of us need to have our vision realigned... thank you.

S.H. | Alberta

Pure Doctrine

Thanks so much for the good quality articles and pure doctrine!

J.S. | Illinois



Seeing Red

I appreciate very much your biblical, Anabaptist/Mennonite and conservative doctrine. It follows the pattern of doctrine laid out in the New Testament as it expounds the Kingdom of Heaven/God in Luke 16:16 and Matthew 13:52. I appreciate AV's call for consistent, sizable veilings for sisters in the churches. We should not appear like the doctrine of the veiling is almost gone.

I fear some Anabaptist descendants are losing sensitivity to the wrongness of increasing reddishness in clothing. I think the Bible is quite clear in protesting the use of red attire. Please read Proverbs 7:10; Isaiah 1:18; Revelation 17:1,4,6. The alternative is I Timothy 2:9. See also Revelation 20:3. Red signifies boldness, rebellion, blood-shed, and harlotry. Please see dictionary definitions of red and scarlet in full.

Purple in Revelations 17 may suggest royalty and may not have the ungodly connotation that red does. I doubt that purple grieves the Holy Spirit like red almost surely does. Perhaps an economical and plain purple dress can symbolize being daughters of the heavenly King.

I recommend printing William Byler's "Doing the Will of the Father" article (AV06 page 13) about once every year or so unless other equally good articles are available.

God bless you all.

L.E. | Wisconsin



What God wants of us is not some great service, but total surrender.

— Glenn M. Wenger



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 Editor

Anabaptist Voice asked Brother Andrew to write a critique of the “Old Covenant” article.

In AV07 (page 17), Menno Knight brought up the important topic of the Old and New Covenants. This topic is foundational to scriptural and Anabaptist theology, and it is important to understand it correctly.

Defining the Covenants

Near the beginning of the article Knight provides a definition of the Old Covenant quite different from the definition normally used. He writes, “I use ‘Old Covenant’ to refer to God’s covenant with Abraham.” This term generally refers to the covenant made with Moses and the children of Israel on Mt. Sinai. Knight draws a very close connection between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, seeming to almost make them into one covenant.

The Apostle Paul, however, treated them as two separate entities, calling the Abrahamic Covenant “the promise” and the Mosaic Covenant “the law.”

“Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his offspring. He does not say, ‘To descendants,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘To your offspring,’ which is Christ. Now I say this, ‘A covenant confirmed beforehand by God in Christ, the law, which came four hundred thirty years after, does not annul, so as to make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by promise’” (*Galatians 3:16-18, WEB*).

The Unconditional Covenant

The texts defining the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3 and chapter 15) make it clear that this was an unconditional covenant; God was going to accomplish what He had promised, no matter what. The Mosaic Law, however, was conditional; to receive its blessings, one must live up to its demands. No matter what moral standards Abraham knew and lived by, these were not built into the covenant God made to give the land of Canaan to his seed.

The Mosaic Law

Although many of the moral principles behind the Ten Commandments (such as prohibitions on murder and adultery) were certainly known before Moses, that specific set of commandments was part of the Mosaic Law. Paul makes it very clear that this Law, including the Ten Commandments, are part of the “administration of condemnation” which “was to be done away with” upon the coming of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ.

“Who also made us sufficient as servants of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the service of death, written engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly on the face of Moses for the glory of his face which was passing away, will not the ministry of the Spirit be with much more glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory” (*II Corinthians 3:6-9, WEB*).

A Lower Standard

Menno Knight writes, “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.” Why was this possible? Jesus explained why the Mosaic Covenant permitted a lower level of righteousness than God’s perfect will.

“Pharisees came to him, testing him and saying, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?’ He answered, ‘Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall join to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?’ So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, do not let man tear apart.

“They asked him, ‘Why then did Moses command us to give her a bill of divorce, and divorce her?’

“He said to them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so. I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries

her when she is divorced commits adultery” (*Matthew 19:3-9, WEB*).

“Because of the hardness of your hearts” the Mosaic standard of righteousness was lower than the ultimate righteousness which God desired for His people. Was Jesus perhaps thinking of the prophecy of Ezekiel?

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh... I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my ordinances, and do them” (*Ezekiel 36:25-27, see also 11:19-20, WEB*).

Here God promises to give a new heart and spirit—a soft, spiritual heart which would be both willing and capable of keeping God’s commandments. When the Holy Spirit was given as part of the New Covenant, He made it possible for us to live up to the teachings of Jesus, which were much higher than the teachings of Moses, by giving the promised soft and spiritual heart.

Living Without Law

The Old Covenant and its teachings—including the Ten Commandments—are no longer the guides for Christian conduct. Rather, we live by the New Covenant teachings of Jesus and His apostles, and the Holy Spirit makes us both willing and able to keep these commandments.

Andrew V. Ste. Marie | Manchester, MI



“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

– *Matthew 5:19*

Menno Knight responds:

Defining the Covenants

Every blessing the children of Israel received came because of the covenant God made with Abraham. The term “Mosaic Covenant” is not found in Scripture.

The Unconditional Covenant

Every promise God made to Abraham was fulfilled. He did bring the Christ into the world through the Israelites. God did miraculously give to the Israelites every foot of the land he had promised them (*Joshua 23:14-15*). But nowhere do we find in Scripture that the land was given to the physical descendants of Abraham forever. This land promise was always conditioned on obedience.

The Mosaic Law

God wrote the Ten Commandments with his own finger. The Mosaic Law, the Torah, was given through Moses. People often confuse the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic Law, but they are very different. Moses’ Law ended at the cross whereas the Ten Commandments are God’s eternal moral law and will last forever.

A Lower Standard

God does not change. Jesus did not have a problem with God’s law, but He upbraided those who sought to keep the letter of the law and failed to live up to the spirit of them. Paul explains why Jesus could give out a higher standard than the Mosaic Law upheld. In *Acts 17:30* Paul said, “God overlooked the past times of ignorance, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

Living Without Law

It is right that Christians live above the law in the sense that we have a higher standard. In *I Timothy 1:8-11*, Paul explains that God’s “moral law” is still in effect for the wicked but that the righteous have no need of it. Paul writes, “We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me” (*NIV*).

(If you are uncertain about the points made, I encourage you to go back and read the original article and study the supporting scriptures.)

The Necessity of Obedience

by Lester E. Showalter

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

Recently when I entered a hardware store, I saw a young clerk with purple hair for the first time. When I came to the counter to pay, only she and I were there. I asked, “What have you done to your hair?”

She answered in a matter-of-fact way, “I dyed my hair purple.” I asked if she was a Christian and she said she was. I then let her know I did not think Christ would want her to dye her hair. She responded that she did not think it mattered.

Like many other people who claim to be Christians, she apparently based her faith in the blood of Jesus Christ to forgive her sins and “other things” do not matter.

There are scriptures that seemingly support what the purple-haired lady believes. When the Philippian jailer asked what he needed to do to be saved, Paul and Silas replied, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (*Acts 16:31*). Taken by itself, one could understand the verse to say that nothing more than faith is required for salvation.

The prophet Habakkuk also stated the value of faith in simple words: “The just shall live by his faith” (*Habakkuk 2:4*). That great truth in those memorable words is repeated three times in the New Testament (*Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38*). Paul further interpreted that text with, “A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (*Romans 3:28*).

Based on these verses and other similar verses, these friends say that obedience is optional because the Scripture says, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (*Romans 3:23-24*). Many believe anything more than faith in Christ detracts from the efficacy of the work of Christ on the cross. That work was complete and sufficient. After all, many want to believe Christianity is not a works religion; it is based on faith in the work of Jesus Christ, not on our works.

But those who quote such scriptures to prove that obedience does not matter, neglect such verses as *Hebrews 12:14* where it says “without holiness no one shall see the Lord.” Is not holiness without obedience an impossibility, an oxymoron?

Or consider Jesus’ words, “If you love me keep my commandments” (*John 14:15*). How can anyone say he

loves Jesus if he does not obey His commandments? As the apostle James asks in *James 2*, “Can faith without works (*obedience*) save him?” And the simple answer is “no.” Obedience then, is a necessity to salvation and obedience does matter.

Were the Anabaptists wrong and misdirected with their doctrine of discipleship—a practice that required obedience to all the commandments of Christ and the rest of the New Testament? Is requiring discipleship and obedience of followers of Christ negating faith in the work of Christ? No! Works prove our faith.

In the Old Testament, obedience to the law and atoning sacrifices were the basis of salvation. The Children of Israel were spared having their first-born killed if they applied blood on their lintels and door posts. The death angel passed over the houses when he saw the evidence of obedience to the command. Salvation was in the doing.

Now we are saved by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. We do not shed any blood for the remission of our sin, but put our faith in the blood of Christ as a sacrifice that God accepted.

In the Old Testament, faith—strong faith—was needed to obey; obedience was their salvation. When the time came for the passover blood to be applied, the Children of Israel believed what God said. After seeing nine miraculous plagues upon Egypt, no one dared risk the coming death of the first born in his house. And so, moved by faith, they obeyed the commandment of God, sacrificed a flawless lamb, and put the blood on the doorposts and the lintel. Salvation was in the doing. Doing was the result of their faith.

Only strong faith in God and fear of His wrath would lead a person to apply blood around his door (Israelites) or build a huge boat for a flood that had never happened (Noah) or move his entire family to an unknown location (Abraham) or leave great prospects for wealth and fame to be identified with a despised people (Moses). The Bible calls these men “heroes of faith.”

These great men of the Old Testament demonstrated their faith by what they did. Were they then saved by their faith or by their works? They were saved by their faith that worked (*obedience*).

In contrast to the obedience of the heroes of faith mentioned in *Hebrews 11*, the amount of faith of the

Israelites in the Old Testament was revealed by what they did not do—show kindness to the powerless, keep the Sabbath, deal justly. No obedience, no faith. If faith, then obedience followed.

Has the required obedience to the commandments of God changed since Jesus has provided a “perfect salvation”? After all, we lustily sing, “Free from the law, oh, happy condition ... Jesus provides a perfect salvation ... He saves us once for all.” Does this mean that in the New Testament dispensation obedience is not required for salvation?

If obedience is seen as needed for salvation, there is a danger we will put our confidence in our obedience and good works. Paul made it clear, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (*Ephesians 2:9*).

In the minds of many professing Christians, works have nothing to do with our salvation. Dyeing our hair, tattooing our body, going to movies, dressing according to the fads of the world, smoking cigarettes, dancing, and listening to jazz music do not matter. Professing Christians would not condone stealing, murder, and adultery. But depending on marital circumstances, divorce does not seem to matter.

There are other clear commands in the New Testament such as “swear not at all,” “love your enemies,” and “let her be covered” that also do not seem to matter to many Christians. Here are some of the reasons given for this obvious disobedience to plain teachings in the New Testament.

- Some of those commands do not mean what they say.
- Some of those commandments apply only to a certain time and culture.
- Some of them do not apply to us since they were given for a dispensation yet to come.
- Some of them are classed as not essential to salvation.

This last excuse for not obeying all the teachings of the New Testament is especially pernicious. Once someone classes one commandment as not essential to salvation, any of them become subject to the same classification. As a result, the necessity of obedience is voided for any commandment so designated.

Anabaptists strongly disagree with such interpretations of Scripture. They have faith in God. They believe in the absolute need for the blood of Christ for remission of sin. They also believe in Paul’s further words: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk [live] in them” (*Ephesians 2:10*).

Anabaptists believe salvation is forgiveness of past sin and deliverance from a life of sin. “*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*” (*Romans 6:1-2*). Of course not! What kind of salvation would that be, to be forgiven of sin and then be doomed to continue in the bondage of sin? That would be like a prisoner allowed to be a criminal the rest of his life after he was pardoned of his past crime. Surely for his own good, he should be given instructions and rehabilitation. He may be required to not go places where strong drink is sold and to have no relationships with his former cronies. He may be asked to get a job that is with good citizens. It would all be for his benefit to not return to a life of crime.

So it is with the instruction of the New Testament. In some of the commandments we clearly see how they help us live a righteous life. In other cases it may not be so clear. For instance, why does it matter if I wear some jewelry? Why can’t I defend myself if others threaten me or take advantage of me? And why is it necessary for a woman to cover her beautiful hair? Why should I submit to an unreasonable boss? Why must I obey a command if I don’t understand the reason for it?

Are we wiser than God? Did God not know what He was doing to have certain precepts recorded in the Bible? It is not for us to decide what God meant by what he said or when and where He meant His words to apply. It is necessary to our salvation to live in obedience to God’s commandments.

A Christian obeys the New Testament directions for his life with willingness and joy, knowing they are for his good and so he can be a bright light to the world. That obedience does not save him, but helps him to stay saved. That is the sense of “salvation by obedience.” Paul meant when he wrote to the Philippians: “Ye have always obeyed...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (*Philippians 2:12*). From other writings of Paul, we know he did not mean that we earn or provide our own salvation. Salvation is a result of faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. But we must work to keep our faith lest we lose our faith and with it, lose our salvation. After a list of Christian virtues Peter warned: “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (*II Peter 1:10*).

L.E.S. | Greencastle, Pennsylvania



Speaking God's Language

by Wayne Stoller

"I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment."

– Matthew 12:36

These thoughts are sparked by the question, "Does God Speak Our Language?" (AV07, page 8).

We are all surrounded by a culture that communicates with an oral language. Each language is subject to change as time passes. Written languages change more slowly than oral languages. For example, Pennsylvania Dutch which is common in many plain circles, has no written standard or rules. As a result, it seems to be changing from a Pennsylvania Dutch to a Pennsylvania English.

Does God speak our language? I believe God understands all languages. But first and foremost, He hears and understands our hearts. "The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). The Spirit knows the deep things of God as well as the burdens upon our own hearts and can intercede better than we can in any language. Some prayers may sound good to others, but God hears what is in our hearts. If our hearts are evil, God already knows it and it will be evident to those around us. Likewise, if our hearts are pure, that also will be evident.

God's language transcends culture, time, and place. Psalm 19:1-3 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day upon day uttereth speech, and night upon night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." God can speak to His children in each place. His children know His voice (John 10:4).

His message to His children has always been consistent with His Word, no matter the culture or language. Perhaps we limit the Holy One if we expect God to speak to us according to our perception of Him. Rather than trying to make Him conform to our language culture, our language should conform to His holy standard.

In Genesis chapter seven, the Lord confounded the language of the peoples upon the earth so they would scatter and fulfill His command to multiply and replenish the earth. Each one of us must be obedient to what the Lord asks of us, whatever language we speak.

As we live in an ungodly culture, it is evident we are affected by good and bad influences; perhaps more than we perceive. For instance, words such as *kids*, *guys*, *dude*, and *old man* are considered normal in today's American

vocabulary and even infiltrate many plain churches. Perhaps this subtle influence is adopted innocently. Nevertheless, these words carry with them a spirit of casualness and disrespect and also degrade God-given authority.

In an American society where individualism and humanism teaches young people to "be yourself," "chart your own course," and "be who you want to be," authority of any kind is disregarded as bondage, archaic, and unneeded. Rebellion to authority breeds disrespect toward older people and toward peers. These influences become popularized by sources of media present in our culture and then seep into our churches. We must be careful that our language is God's language and does not reflect the ungodly influences of the culture around us.

We are in an American culture and we speak American English. If we are truly converted, God will touch our tongues and our speech will be distinguishable from the world. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt..." (Colossians 4:6). "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

God requires respect from His children. We are commanded to honor the Son (John 5:23), our father and mother (Ephesians 6:2), elders who rule well (I Timothy 5:17), our brethren (Romans 12:10), widows who are widows indeed (I Timothy 5:3), our employers (I Timothy 6:1), and all men (I Peter 2:17). This list may be incomplete, yet it is very inclusive and leaves no room for disrespect.

Job gives us interesting insight into how he was respected in his time and culture.

When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; ... When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained from talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me:

my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out ... Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel (*Job 29:5-21*).

Perhaps this manifestation of respect would be out of place in American culture today, but the people of God ought always show courtesy and respect to all those around us because God has called us to be salt and light to the world.

Our words ought to convey reverence and honor toward the God we serve. There are many examples where politeness and respect would be a beautiful testimony of Christian character. Terms such as “please,” “thank you,” “excuse me,” and “pardon me” ought to be common words among people of God.

On the other side, swear words and minced oaths ought never be used by God’s people, no matter how common and acceptable they are in the wicked world around us. If bad words occur frequently by coworkers or among our friends, we ought to reprove them or change our job and find new friends. We dare not allow our minds to be filled with evil words that slip out unbidden.

When speaking, we should always communicate with words that uphold God’s values.

I am not supporting the use of “thee” or “thou” in prayer, nor am I condemning those who use them. Formal deadness is freezing some churches while casual complacency is mesmerizing others. God help us all to be filled with heat from the divine fire of His Sovereignty!

God help us all to speak His language!

W.S. | *Sterling, Ohio*

The Essence of Anabaptism

1. Anabaptism is not a denomination with a fixed creed and an organizational structure.
2. Understanding the Word of God is not complicated.
3. The words of the Scripture must be put into practice.

– *Dean Taylor*

Anabaptist Confessions on Marriage

compiled by James G. Landis

This begins five one-page statements on marriage by different Anabaptist church groups. We believe each statement demonstrates a desire to interpret and then apply what the Scripture says in the life and practice of their churches. The statements do not digress into what society accepts or “less rigid” interpretations of Scripture and practices in other churches. Each group holds the Bible sacred and accepts the New Testament as the final rule of faith and practice for God’s people—key marks of the Anabaptist Way.

Each statement has been shortened in order to fit on one page so none of them include the total statement. We have exercised care in trying to select parts that emphasize different aspects in each of the selections. This does not mean the different statements disagree.

In most cases they are in full agreement. We submit these statements for your study because they are not of AV’s private interpretation, but represent the agreement of different Anabaptist churches on the basic principles of marriage.

Anabaptist Voice also believes that we do not need to trumpet what marriage is not in God’s plan, but that we need to be firm in knowing what God says marriage is.

Due to space limitations we cannot print the text of the many Bible references listed. But for the sake of uniformity among the different confessions, where Scripture quotations are printed out, we have used the New King James Version (NKJV).

Foundations of Our Faith and Calling

by *The Bruderhof*

Introduction

“We are an intentional Christian community of more than 2,700 people living in twenty-three settlements on four continents. We are a fellowship of families and singles, practicing radical discipleship in the spirit of the first church in Jerusalem. We gladly renounce private property and share everything in common. Our vocation is a life of service to God, each other, and you.”

Important Statement

Jesus asks us to live as citizens of his coming kingdom. It is not enough to accept him as our personal savior or to say to him “Lord, Lord.” We must prove our love to him in deeds, putting into practice his words in the Gospels, especially the Sermon on the Mount.

Statement on Marriage

Christ declared marriage to be the lifelong union of one man and one woman joined together by God, holy and instituted by him from the beginning: “But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:6-9).

Jesus had great joy in marriage and performed his first miracle at a wedding by changing water to wine. We too rejoice whenever a man and a woman are led by God to love each other and vow to be faithful to each other for life. In the church community, marriage vows are made publicly before the gathered members as witnesses, and the marriage is then confirmed by the church through the laying on of hands.

As a creation of God, marriage is not a human invention. It is a sacrament that precedes and transcends the authority of the state. When a man and a woman become one flesh in marriage, their union has a deep connection with God. He made man and woman for each other, each in his image and likeness, and yet each incomplete without the other.

God intended their union—a relationship unlike any other—for the bearing and rearing of children. In a true marriage, husband and wife will have an attitude of welcome toward the conception and birth of new life, even if this seems unlikely or impossible in their individual case.

Christ honors the mystery of marriage so highly that he demands a life of chastity. Sex is a gift from God, but if it is isolated from him and his will, it defiles the soul; apart from marriage, it is sin. The Bible clearly requires abstinence before marriage and outside of it. In fact, Jesus warns us that even a lustful glance is adultery of the heart.

The callings of man and woman in marriage are different, yet equal in worth. According to the New Testament, the husband is to be the head of the family, and the wife his helper. He must never dominate her, but should cherish and serve her in humility. At a wedding in our communities, the bridegroom promises to always honor and respect his bride, and is reminded of the apostle Peter’s warning that if he neglects this, God may refuse his prayers. Likewise, a wife should support her husband in what is good. Above all, both spouses alike are charged with leading each other closer to Christ.

Marriage is a great good, but not the greatest. For a believer, Christ must always come before everything, including the desire to marry (if single) or the commitment to one’s spouse (if married). In our communities, members can enter into marriage only with the blessing of the church community. Each of our marriages must be founded on a shared faith in Christ and dedicated to his service. At a wedding, bride and bridegroom promise never to follow each other in what is wrong, but to place obedience to Christ and his church above their bond to each other. This promise protects the foundation on which Christian marriage is built.

The New Testament speaks of the union of bride and bridegroom as a sacred mystery, a symbol of Christ’s love for the church. Jesus himself compared the kingdom of God to a wedding feast. Here we gain a glimpse of the deepest meaning of marriage: as a sign pointing to the coming of Christ’s perfect reign of love.

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All references accompanying the Bruderhof Statement:

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-24; 5:2; 9:1 | Song of Solomon 2:16 | Psalm 127:3-5 | Proverbs 5:1-20 | Hosea 2:14-23 | Matthew 5:27-32; 7:13-14; 11:28-30; 19:3-12; 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 28:20 | Mark 9:37; 10:2-13 | Luke 9:23; 14:26; 16:18 | John 2:1-11; 3:16-17; 8:3-11 | Romans 1:21-32; 7:1-3 | I Corinthians 6:9-20; 7:3-11, 39; 11:11-12 | II Corinthians 6:14-18 | Ephesians 5:21-33 | Galatians 3:28 | Colossians 3:19 | I Thessalonians 4:3-8 | Titus 2:11-14 | Hebrews 13:4 | I Peter 3:7 | I John 4:7-21 | Revelation 19:6-7.

Confession of Our Religion, Teaching, and Faith

By the Brothers who are known as the Hutterites

From the preface of Peter Riedemann's 1565 confession:

"In all this we do our utmost to have a blameless conscience before God and people. We should like, insofar as it is in our power, to attract and persuade everyone to renounce their ungodly nature and turn with all their hearts to God and his Christ. May almighty God grant his blessing and bring to pass the deliberation of his servants to his glory."

Marriage

Marriage is a union of two in which each one undertakes to care for the other, and the second agrees to obey the first. Through their agreement, two become one; they are no longer two but one. If this is to be a godly union, the two must come together in accordance with God's will and order, not through their own action and choice. That means that neither shall forsake the other, but together they shall endure good and bad times as long as they live.

Marriage consists of three stages or levels. 1) First is the union of God with the soul or spirit, 2) then that of the spirit with the body, and 3) third that of one person with another, that is, a man with a woman. [This order] is recognizable and understandable by all and therefore marriage serves as a picture to teach and to demonstrate [God's design.]

Since woman was taken from man and not man from woman, man has the lordship and woman has weakness, humility, and submission. Therefore, she should be under the yoke of her husband and obedient to him. This was commanded by God, who said to her, "Your husband shall be your Lord." Therefore, a woman should look up to her husband, seek his counsel, and do nothing without it. When she fails to do this, she rejects her God-given place in the order of creation and encroaches upon the lordship of her husband. She also turns her back on the commands of the Creator and on the promise of submission she gave her husband when they were united in marriage, which is to honor her husband as a wife should.

The man, on the other hand, as one in whom something of God's glory is seen, should have compassion on the woman as the weaker instrument. He should go before her in love and kindness and care for her not only in temporal [things] but still more in spiritual things. He should faithfully share with her all he has been given by God.

He should go before her in honesty, courage, and all Christian virtues, so that in him she may have a mirror of righteousness, an invitation to piety, and a guide who will lead her to God. Where the husband does not do this, or does it carelessly and superficially, he turns his back on the glory that was given him by God and on God's order.

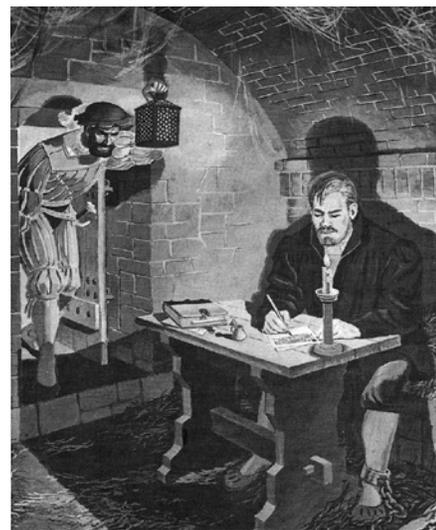
To both, the man and the woman, is ordained what belongs to each one.... Even as the man should accept, love, care for and rule over the woman, so the [human] spirit desires to provide and rule over the body. [In the same way God should rule over the human spirit.] Again, as the woman should obey the man, so also what is earthly [the man] should obey what is heavenly, namely, the [Holy] Spirit....

When this takes place, the marriage is observed rightly in all three levels and remains close to God:

1. The union of God with the human soul or spirit.
2. The union of the human spirit with the body.
3. The union of a man and a woman.

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Bible references accompanying the Hutterite statement:
Genesis 2:7, 21, 22; 3:16-19; 24:7 | Malachi 2:10-16
Matthew 19:3-8 | Mark 10:2-9 | Romans 6:12-13; 7:2-3;
8:3-9 | I Corinthians 6:16-17; 7:1-8, 10; 11:3-9.
Ephesians 5:22-32 | Colossians 3:18-23 | I Peter 3:1-7
I Timothy 3:1-4.



Peter Riedemann, writing the *Confession of Faith* while imprisoned at Wolkersdorf Castle near Marburg in 1540-1542. Painting by Ivan Moon, 1975.

Doctrinal Treatise of the Old German Baptist Brethren

Approved by the Brotherhood (Sixth Edition 2003)

Introduction to Treatise

“The object [in this treatise] is to set forth the nature and purpose of the doctrine and ordinances as taught in the New Testament and practiced by the Old German Baptist Brethren. It is not intended to outline nor establish a creed, and for this reason we have refrained from quoting the formula of words used on special occasions (such as baptism and anointing) in explaining these articles of faith as practiced by our Fraternity. Our Church Fathers have ever held the New Testament Scripture, in its fulness, to be our only creed. They did not see fit to produce a Creed Book for fear lest the frailty of man leave out some point of doctrine or add another. The design is simply to follow the instruction of the apostle Peter where he says to ‘*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*’ (I Peter 3:15).” The motive [in this treatise] is to help others realize the sacredness of God’s Word that they might enjoy the blessings He extends to the children of men, to confirm and strengthen the faith of the believer, and to lead the seeker after truth in the way of Gospel light and understanding. It is our desire to reemphasize the virtue of the “Old Way” and the “Old Paths” as practiced by the apostolic Church, believing that to be the only means of finding rest for the soul in this world of trouble.”

Statement on Marriage

Marriage is the first and oldest institution in the world, and dates from the garden of Eden. God, seeing that it was not good for man to be alone, made for him a woman and thus sanctified and set his approval on the marriage relation. No institution in nature can be more holy, and none should be more highly respected.

In the beginning, God intended that there should be one woman for each man, and that a union between the two should be for life. The idea of divorce, or separation, never entered into the primary arrangement. Divorce became an after-consideration, and was brought about by sin and hardness of the hearts of the people. When the Pharisees tempted Jesus concerning divorce, he answered them in these words, “*Have you not read, that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they two shall become one flesh’?* So then, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4-6).

In this scripture, the Savior plainly forbids man to terminate the marriage relationship, and warns that to do so would be contrary to the direct act of God. The irrevocable character of the marriage covenant is the burden of the Savior’s words. It is the first and primary lesson to be learned about the institution of marriage and, if it had been heeded, would have prevented much sin and sorrow from entering the world.

Jesus further instructs the Pharisees, saying, “*Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her commits adultery*” (Matthew 19:8-9). This permits the putting away of the unfaithful companion, but does in no way annul nor set aside the marriage contract. The guilty wife is not permitted to remarry, giving clear proof that she is still bound to her husband. That this is true is shown by the fact that anyone afterward marrying her would be guilty of adultery. Where one is bound, the other is bound also, and that for life.

Consider marriage further. It is a great mystery, second to none in nature, that two individuals—a man and woman, two composite characters and personalities—can so blend their lives that God is pleased to call them one flesh. Yet it is God’s decree, and when God joins them together, they are blended in love; and whenever love is the joining link, the mystery of becoming one flesh quickly loses its impossibilities.

As time goes on, that love grows stronger and stronger. Each one labors unselfishly in that growing love for the welfare and happiness of the other, until soon their thoughts are blended in one pattern. Their desires are one; their views are one; their aims in life are one; they walk and labor together heart-to-heart and hand-in-hand as one body, one flesh, and one mind. They ever respect each other and permit love and reason to rule their lives.

Such a marriage, where the first love is never allowed to end because love guides them, is of God—joined of God. From such a home will flow all that God intended when he created and joined the first man and woman and instituted the first marriage.



Position Statement on the Subject of Divorce and Remarriage

Approved by the Beachy Amish Constituency

This “Position Statement” reaffirms the sanctity of the marriage bond mentioned in previous statements but goes on to give practical guidance to churches faced with difficult situations.

Scripturally, there is nothing which breaks the marriage bond, except death (Romans 7:1-3).

1) The act of adultery does not dissolve the marriage bond. It should be quickly pointed out, though, that such unfaithfulness decidedly affects the quality of the marital relationship and leaves a permanent scar on the persons involved (Proverbs 13:15b).

2) The “legal” (in the eyes of this world) document of divorce, from God’s point of view, does not break the marriage bond. Otherwise, a subsequent marital relationship with another would not be called adultery (Mark 10:11-12).

3) The conversion of one of [the] two unbelieving married partners does not dissolve the marriage bond. If the unbelieving partner should leave, the marriage bond continues (I Corinthians 7:12-14).

4) A divorced person who enters a second marital relationship while the original partner is still living might, indeed, get recognition from the state as being “legally” married. But “from the beginning it was not so” (Matthew

19:8b), and God is not pleased with the adulterous marital union [because in His sight] the first marriage bond is still binding. The Scriptures lift up a high and holy standard for marriage and God does not sanction the “allowances” and “loopholes” which are brought forward by the carnal mind of man (Proverbs 6:32-33).

The church is called to minister with loving and caring consideration to those who are caught in the tangles of divorce and remarriage (Galatians 6:1-3). The church has the scriptural responsibility to show such ones the eternal principles from the Scriptures which govern the marriage relationship.

While the final decision to separate from an adulterous marital union must be “voluntary,” God does require a separation to bring about a reconciliation with Himself. The continuing adulterous marital union is seen as a “state” of sin and sincere repentance from any “state” of sin necessitates a separation from the sin.

In conclusion, we believe the church is called to demonstrate the holiness and permanence of the marriage relationship. Furthermore, the church is commissioned to make disciples of all nations and to teach them how to follow the commands of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Position Statement Concerning Divorce and Remarriage

By Master’s International Ministries

Master’s International Ministries maintains a home base in Wellesley, Ontario and a field base in Ukraine. MIM’s main purpose is to aid in establishing biblical, indigenous Anabaptist churches. All other activities—providing food, clothing, and medicines to the needy; teaching Bible doctrine and practice; literature distribution—aid in carrying out the main purpose of church planting.

Our effort to carefully state the biblical teaching concerning divorce and remarriage requires us to understand what constitutes marriage and the permanence of marriage as designed by God.

Statements on marriage

1. God designed marriage at the time of creation (Genesis 2:21-24).

2. Jesus Christ confirms marriage in the New Testament (Mark 10:6-9).

3. Marriage is not established by a physical relationship, but by one man and one woman mutually consenting

to be united in marriage. Since these vows are made before God, an authorized person should officiate at the ceremony and others should be in attendance to witness the vows made (Matthew 1:24-25; 19:6) (Malachi 2:14).

4. The marriage law is relevant to all mankind on the face of the earth regardless if the church or the state performs the marriage ceremony. It not only pertains to Christians but also includes heathen or non-Christians—Pilot’s wife was mentioned at the time of Christ’s trial (Matthew 27:19).

5. The scriptures teach that marriage is an honorable lifelong commitment between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others and is solemnized by vows before God (Matthew 19:6a) (I Corinthians 7:39).

6. Man is not authorized to dissolve what God has joined together (Matthew 19:6b) (Romans 7:1-3).

7. The New Testament makes allowance for separation in certain situations, but never for remarriage (Matthew 5:31-32) (Matthew 19:4-8) (Mark 10:10-12).

Statement of Position on Divorce and Remarriage

By Southeastern Mennonite Conference

In approaching the problems brought on by the evils of divorce and remarriage, we need first to understand the scriptural significance of marriage. Marriage was ordained by God in the creation and is confirmed in the New Testament by Jesus Christ. Marriage is a relationship between one man and one woman, dissoluble only by death. It involves a voluntary, unreserved commitment to each other for life and supersedes all other human relationships. Marriage is a union which is recognized and validated by God, whether the contract is solemnized by the church or by the state and whether the contracting persons are believers or unbelievers (Genesis 2:21-24; Matthew 19:3-6; Mark 10:6-9; Hebrews 13:4).

In order to establish a scriptural position on divorce and remarriage, we must also consider the biblical teaching on adultery. In both Old and New Testaments the unfaithfulness of God's people is referred to as adultery in a figurative sense. Literally, adultery means voluntary sexual relations between a married man and a woman not his wife, or between a married woman and a man not her husband. However, the Scriptures teach that adultery involves more than the act of immorality. Adultery is also a breach of fidelity between husband and wife. Jesus said, "Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality, causes her to commit [or continues to commit] adultery against her." Such persons enter upon an adulterous relationship (Jeremiah 3; Hosea 1, 2, 3; Matthew 16:4; James 4:4; Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:3).

The indissolubility of the marriage bond is a principle that is basic to a consistent interpretation and application of Bible teachings in relation to problems issuing from divorce and remarriage. When confronted with the question of divorce, Jesus based His response solidly on God's ordinance in creation when He said, "So then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Scripturally, there is nothing which breaks the marriage bond except death. The act of adultery does not dissolve the marriage bond, although it decidedly affects the quality of a marriage relationship and leaves a permanent scar on the persons involved. A legal document called divorce, from God's point of view, does not break the marriage bond, else remarriage would not be adultery. Even the conversion of one of the two unbelieving married partners does not dissolve the marriage bond. If the unbelieving partner should leave, the marriage bond continues. Divorced persons

who enter a second marriage relation while their first partners are still living may be recognized by the state as legally married, but "from the beginning it was not so" (Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:6-8; Mark 10:4-9; Prov. 6:32, 33; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10-16, 39).

The church is called to minister with loving and caring consideration to those who are caught in the tangles of divorce and remarriage. Concern for their personal salvation should motivate us to lead them to a full commitment to Jesus Christ and to show them from the Scriptures those holy principles which regulate the marriage relationship. While the final decision to separate from an adulterous relationship would be voluntary, God requires it for reconciliation to Himself (John 4:13-18; 8:1-11; Romans 15:14; Galatians 6:1-3; Colossians 4:6).

In keeping with the Bible principles of practical holiness, Christian expediency, and a blameless witness, we believe it would be inconsistent for couples who sincerely repent of their adulterous marriage relationship to continue to live in the same dwelling or to maintain close relationships.

In conclusion, we believe the church is called to demonstrate the holiness and permanency of the marriage relationship. Furthermore, she is commissioned to make disciples of all nations and to teach them how to follow the commands of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Officially adopted as a statement of position and policy on June 24, 1983, by the Southeastern Mennonite Conference.



God's Way: Marriages That Last!

Alchemy

by Kelvin Mast

Alchemy is an ancient quasi-magical art. Those who practiced it tried to find formulas for the following things:

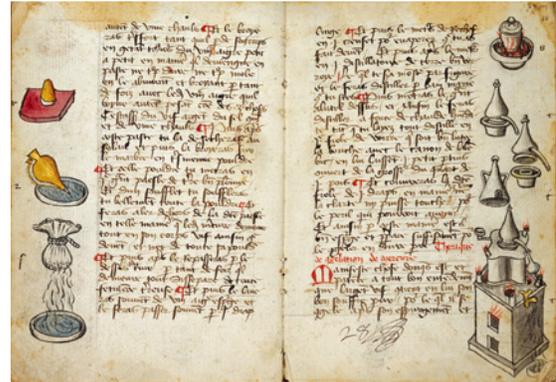
1. Cures for any disease
2. Eternal youthfulness
3. Transmute base metals into gold

We wonder how farfetched those ancient people could get.

But on second thought, we wonder how far fetched modern people can get. Consider the following:

1. Cure any disease? Disease and sickness are part of the curse, and Satan would have us forget that. Sure, we seek for health, eat good foods, and take a little wine (medicine). Have a busted leg? Go to a doctor and get it fixed. But a search for a cure-all is futile because it won't happen until we leave this world. Then those in Christ will know no more pain; all tears will be wiped away, all sickness will be a thing of the past. But those results of Christ's work will never be achieved by sinful men.

2. Confer eternal youth? In the hospital in Chihuahua I had a short conversation with a lady whose husband was in surgery for a face lift—a birthday gift from her! For what? My wife has seen this phrase different places: "Hate that gray? Wash it away!" But the Bible says gray hair is a crown of glory to a godly person. Why would we lay up treasure on earth when we know we are not going to be here forever? Satan told Eve, "Ye shall not surely die." He still suggests the same lie in the minds of the unwary. We are mortal, and we ought not act as if we are not. Jesus gives us a positive perspective when He said of His followers, "I give unto them eternal life." Let's not forget that.



A page from a book on alchemical processes and receipts, circa 15th century.

Photo credit to Wellcome Images

3. Make gold from common metals? Gold has been used for ages as a standard for wealth. It cannot be transmuted from base metals. Gold is gold. Satan tries to get us to believe we can achieve a high standard through evil means: happiness by immorality, joy by pleasure-seeking, peace by fighting, wealth through mammon. But look around you. It doesn't work. The Bible is the ultimate "gold standard." It shows us how to live happily, free from corrupted means. It tells us the way to get to that city where we can walk on streets of pure gold. (Revelation 21:18, 21)

Ancient Alchemy? No.

Modern Alchemy? No.

Give me "that old time religion," the one based on the Bible, the one relevant to old times, modern times, and future times. Absolutely!

K.M. | Chihuahua, Mexico



Right Character Is Pure Gold

by H. L. M., A Tunker Brethren preacher in 1909

Men do not always distinguish between character and reputation. Reputation is the image on the coin, while character is the gold in it. The image may be placed on any cheap metal, and so a worthless man may have a great reputation. But pure gold is gold, even if it bears no image stamped upon it. And so a man may have a righteous character long after his reputation has gone to the dogs.

— garnered by Peter Hoover

“Writing Challenge” Responses

by multiple writers

The following articles were written in response to the “Writing Challenge” from page 15 of *Anabaptist Voice*, Issue #6.

Repentance from Dead Works

by Jonathan Mast

What is true repentance? What are dead works? Why is this command so necessary?

Repentance helps us see ourselves.

True repentance requires godly sorrow first. “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death” (II Corinthians 7:10). Godly sorrow makes us loathe the sin we committed. We want a pure relationship with Christ.

Repentance is merely seeing ourselves for who we are and seeing God for who He is. Job’s meeting with God describes this well. “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6). When our sin is under the light of God’s holiness, we feel very insignificant. True repentance stirs up true humility.

We must purge our life of dead works.

Dead works do not encourage spiritual growth. These works pull us downward toward fleshly desires and death. “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21). If we participate in these fleshly works, we cannot expect to be in God’s kingdom. God allows only the pure in heart to enter His kingdom.

Living in sin is spiritual adultery.

If we participate in sin and still try to follow God, we are living in spiritual adultery. “A married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another

man. So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code” (Romans 7:2-6). When we agree to follow Christ, we become His wife. Going back to our old sins and dead husband is nothing short of adultery to Christ. Christ wants fidelity to Him.

Jesus also points out that after we’re committed to Him, we can’t look back and still be useful. “Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God’” (Luke 9:62). God wants us to follow Him wholeheartedly.

And lastly, God says we cannot follow the flesh and have spiritual life. “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13). Let us not walk after the flesh; let us walk after the Spirit. God gives a blessing to those who leave the flesh behind and proclaim loyalty to Him. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). May we try to follow the Spirit in all our actions and words.

J. M. | Howe, Indiana

All Scripture in this article is quoted from the New International Version (NIV).



NEW Writing Challenge!

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy [them] but to fulfill [them].” Matthew 5:17

Explain what you believe Jesus meant in this passage from Matthew. Remember to keep it practical; how does it affect YOU TODAY?



The Doctrine of Baptisms

by Benjamin Haldeman

Anabaptist Voice encouraged readers to address parts of Hebrews 6:1-6. Here is my attempt at “doctrine of baptisms.” Shalom.

Strangers have asked me if I am saved, but they haven't asked if I am sanctified. Obviously, I am not glorified yet. Salvation is not a one-time event; it is a journey with a destination. We answer Christ's call and follow Him. *“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified”*(Romans 8:29, 30). Our being conformed to the image of Christ starts with justification, then sanctification, followed by glorification.

Hebrews 6:1 speaks of the first things or principles of the doctrine of Christ. We first hear the law of God and how we are sinners because we have broken the law. *“For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law’”*(Galatians 3:10). We are convicted by the Holy Spirit and then repent by confessing our sin and turning from it. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”*(I John 1:9). Christ then redeems us from the curse of the law that was on us. *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole’”*(Galatians 3:13). Our acceptance of this gospel is signified by our acceptance of water baptism. *“But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and*

the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”(Acts 8:12). Mark 16:16 says, *“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”* It is a basic Anabaptist teaching that belief precedes baptism. Babies cannot believe. Baptism of babies has no more eternal value than a water bath.

The foundational doctrines are to be taught to new believers, but believers must mature. Therefore, as growing Christians, we are [not to spend all our time on baptism, but] to leave the first things of the doctrine of Christ and go on to perfection by giving love to others. *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus”* (I John 4:16,17).

B. H. | Greencastle, Pennsylvania

All Scripture in this article is quoted from the New International Version (NIV).



“I live either like a pilgrim and stranger or like a permanent citizen. The choice is mine.”

Elson Mast, Northern Light Mennonite Church, Alaska

The Anabaptist Way

They burned, they bled,
They drowned and fled.
The preachers said they shouldn't;
The rulers said they couldn't.
But they went right on baptizing.

The theologians of the day argued with a frown,
Until the Council made it clear exactly who did rule the town.
They said, "Rebaptism we will not tolerate."
So for those who thus insist, we send out the magistrate."
But they went right on baptizing.

The question for theology went thus:
If on the baby water poured,
Could he of treasure be assured?
And, if true, did it matter much to all,
If more water on the head did fall?
But they went right on baptizing.

Or, if the water on the baby poured, did no good at all,
Then why did parents be so radical,
That for their children they refused consent,
For the water to be poured before they did repent?
But they went right on baptizing.

The Anabaptists argued thus,
"The water on the baby poured,
Can safely be ignored.
The babe cannot believe, repent, confess,
Nor live a life of holiness."
And they went right on baptizing.

The churchmen countered with their wrath,
"Our baptism is not, as you say, 'a water bath.'
It's the rebaptism that you do that can only be a fake,
And so it's to the dungeon or the stake."
But they went right on baptizing.

And so if the choice you faced,
'Twas water for the babe or to the stake,
Would your decision be,
In conscience to be free,
And not allow the matter settled by theology,
And then go right on baptizing?

- JGL

The Swastika or the Cross

by Chester Weaver

Nightmare in Red is a terrible story of suffering and anguish. We would like to forget it, but we should not. God gave us this true story, written and documented with facts, so that we might learn from it. In it we can witness the terrible depravity of human nature when people abandon their allegiance to Almighty God and place it in a nation or a man. This whole story flies in the face of the humanistic philosophy which says that man is basically good.

Nightmare in Red proves that man is not good, but man without God is evil. Readers of this book stand aghast at human depravity. All wars invite human depravity but modern wars and their aftermath demonstrate the failure of “enlightened” man to improve his behavior. Morally, men are no better today than they ever were throughout history.

Nightmare in Red is set in German Nazi territory near Danzig, present-day Poland. At the beginning of this true story the Russian army was pushing the German Nazi army westward toward defeat. Horst Gerlach’s home was just south of Elbing, a Prussian city which was reduced to rubble in the early part of the story. Horst himself was picked up by the Russians and was sent on a long, bitterly cold, boxcar train ride into the gulag, a work camp (Vorkuta) north of the Arctic Circle in Siberia.

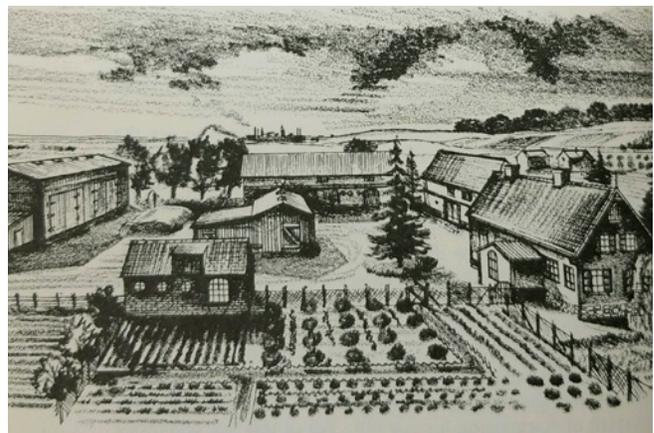
What lessons can we learn from *Nightmare in Red* by Horst Gerlach? Allow me to answer this question in two ways. First, I offer some general observations, numbered below. Second, I allow Horst to answer the question in his own words.

General Observations

1. Horst was the son of a Mennonite mother who had married his Lutheran father. Horst’s father was a veteran of World War I and proud of the fact. His farmer father had also served in World War II but during the course of this story had been at home running his farm until being marched away by the invading Russians and never heard from again. His mother actually survived the war by remaining on the family farm. But in the context of this home, Horst came to love the ideology of Adolph Hitler and served loyally in Hitler Youth activities. He lost himself in the German mentality of considering Adolph Hitler as the national “messiah.” With his German people he

believed that Germany needed to regain the place in the family of nations it had lost in World War I as well as the lie he was told by the adults around him, “Germany cannot lose the war; it is too well prepared.” Hitler’s Nazi kingdom could not fail.

2. Horst writes, “Mother taught us boys formal prayers to use when we went to bed, but we never prayed at the table. When we were invited to the pastor’s home I observed that one member of his family led in prayer before the meal. This and other incidents caused me to conclude that intercession was the job of the clergy and that the average member did not need to worry much about it. But when my grandmother died in 1937 and I saw a Bible which had been placed by her head, I almost trembled at the sight of it, thinking this must be a holy book, perhaps a book which deals with the dead.”
3. War destroys morality. Soldiers thrust into warfare do not serve a lofty cause; they strive to stay alive. This fact is true for each side fighting the other. Human selfishness knows no bounds, whether it is stealing, raping, destroying property, or killing. As long as the soldier survives, anything is permissible. Natural human sympathies disappear as the animal nature of man emerges from the shell of civilization. Men and women of virtue must not deceive themselves into thinking that their virtue will protect them during wartime. It seems that God Almighty stands back to allow hell to destroy itself.



Sketch of 1936 Gerlach farmstead by J. Gleysteen

4. War quickly destroys with bombs and guns what took years and years to construct. Armies will do anything, including burning a house at night so that they have some light by which to work. And sometimes the destruction is random, dependent upon the whims or feelings of the destroyer. Economic value to the owner is forgotten in favor of military value at the moment.
5. Wartime victors driven by godless ideology have no more morality after the war than during the war. Christianity teaches that human life is always sacred. In this case godless communism operated as if human life was cheap. It did not really matter that much if the gulag devoured thousands upon thousands of human beings.
6. Wartime victims are the same way. The human drive to stay alive causes naturally “nice” people to do all kinds of selfish things to remain alive. Evidently, the drive to survive consumes the thoughts and behavior of concentration camp inmates, causing them to be heartless toward their fellow inmates. One difference does stand out: since the inmates are all trying to remain alive, some kind of camaraderie develops among them. They all have the “project” to remain alive and thus give assistance to others, as they can, at times.
7. Horst lost his later teenage years to his captors. Death, life, time, love, growth, and humanity lost their normal meaning to him. He had known these values up until he turned sixteen. Then his world switched to survival mode for the next five or six years. His coming to America in 1951 opened his mind and heart to values he had never experienced before. “While at home [Germany], hanging over my bed was a picture of a battle in which my grandfather had participated. In my room here [South Dakota] there hung a motto saying, ‘God Is Love.’ While at home I had had a wild-west book on my desk; here I found a Bible. At home I had looked into the face of the revered Field Marshal von Hindenburg on the walls; here I looked into a picture which bore the likeness of the crucified Lord. At home we had often talked about the ancient hero Leonidas; here we often talked about the living God. Instead of beer, my new friends drank Kool-aid.”
8. Horst continued to regain his humanity by moving to Goshen, Indiana, in 1952. During the Brunk Revival meetings, Christ penetrated his heart. “I came under tremendous conviction. Many of the events of my life passed through my

mind. The proud German, the stiff nationalist, the hater of the Jews, the secret sinner, the militarist, the enemy of the Russians—all these images of myself were running in vain competition for superiority in my life.” Horst responded to the invitation for something better. “I, Horst Gerlach, had met the God who had spared me for just this hour. From this day on, things have been different for me. Whereas I used to look at life from a purely human and egotistical point of view, I now see it in the Christian perspective. I received a completely new understanding of the claims of Christ upon His people and now have laid aside my earlier attitudes through His grace.... Now the interventions of my earlier life took on greater meaning. The lessons I had learned in my suffering were not unknown to God. He alone had spared my life for the greater glory of His name.”

Horst’s Answers

And now we consider the words of Horst Gerlach himself as he presents lesson after lesson to us as readers.

Of the reasons why Germans followed Hitler, Horst says the following: “In 1918 Germany lost the first World War, a loss which set off a whole series of chain reactions. After the treaty of Versailles, Germany lost considerable land, as well as her colonies, and had to pay \$33,000,000 to the victorious nations....The once-proud imperial army was reduced to 100,000 men, and there was economic depression.

“There was a communist revolution; the emperor had to go, and things went from bad to worse....In one year all the money became worthless. In the end, a million marks were needed in order to buy a box of matches. Older people, who all their lives had saved money, lost it overnight, becoming completely helpless in their old age. Many farmers lost their farms because they were unable to pay their debts and taxes. Laborers received low wages and unemployment was high.” Hitler became obsessed with a remedy for the problem. Hitler participated in a brief political uprising but was captured and jailed for it. While sitting in jail he wrote *Mein Kampf*, his story and his ideas for the future.

“President Hindenburg died in 1934. Hitler proclaimed that no one was worthy to take the president’s position. Thus he had all the power of president and chancellor in his hands, especially after a law was passed giving him complete liberty....

“The papers talked much about the simplicity of the new chancellor who neither smoked or drank, nor had

time to get married since he was so occupied with the 'welfare' of the German people."

He goes on to say, "Hitler was able to secure work and bread for the people. Even though their freedom had to be sacrificed, their primary interest was taken care of...."

"Hitler was so popular because the people had found new security. Everybody was employed and received a fairly good wage. The farmers were promised guaranteed prices, enabling them again to calculate and think ahead. The young men could receive social recognition by joining the army, and the rearming of the whole nation brought employment for factory workers and fast advancement for the more ingenious.

"Couples who had many children received government aid and school tuition was paid. Medals were given to women who had many children...."

"Former skeptics of Hitler became satisfied and blinded by the obvious successes. Thus many deep thinkers and even those with much experience were caught off guard...."

"Thus it went on. The great Autobahn (turnpike) system was built. The Volkswagen (people's car) was to be made available at a low price. Many political gatherings were arranged; nationalism was intensified. In his speeches, Hitler emphasized that he was a peace-loving man.

"In 1939 I began attending high school in our county seat. Much emphasis was placed on the subjects of German, arithmetic, English, and Latin. But sports were emphasized most. It was very hard to be promoted to another class if one failed in sports...."

"Our faith in God was constantly undermined in our natural science classes. Our biology teacher told us that

he who believes in God and does not believe in evolution makes a fool of himself.

"At the age of ten, I joined the Jungvolk (young folk), as required by law. Every healthy German boy or girl had to join either the Young Folk or Young Women's Club, the junior organizations of the Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth). Exercises were held twice a week for two hours...."

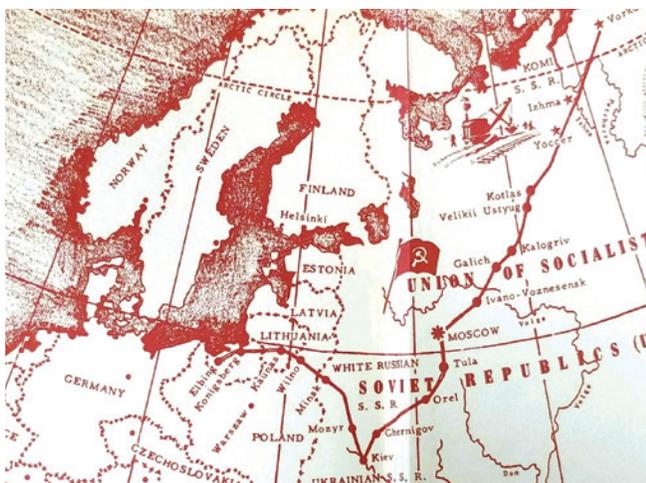
"The Hitler Youth had been organized with one main purpose—to prepare the youth for the later military service. To accomplish this goal, we played warlike games outdoors, although we did not use weapons. We practiced camouflaging, crawling on the ground with the least visibility, carrying dispatches, patrolling, and other army skills. We also practiced marching, including goose-stepping. We sang patriotic songs, especially those which dealt with war, victory, and 'heroic' death for the fatherland. On rainy or on snowy days we received political instructions—we discussed our nation, contemporary affairs, and the history of the Nazi party. We were all drilled in self-discipline and strict obedience to our superiors. We were also hardened against the climate. We ran around in shorts, slept out in tents, and spent lots of time outdoors so as to become used to the climate...."

"The Hitler Youth meetings were often planned for Sunday forenoon so that it was impossible for us to attend church....Nevertheless, when I became fourteen, I wanted to be confirmed as my brothers and my other relatives had been.... Although we were not forbidden to go to church, the general attitude was not favorable toward church attendance...."

"Even traditional believers in nonresistant love for enemies, such as the Mennonites had been, were carried away by the spirit of nationalism. Many of my Mennonite cousins and friends were in the army and public offices, advancing just as fast as all the rest of the Germans. Even though some of the ministers had been in favor of nonresistance, the young people in cooperation with the SS had pressured the preachers so long that they finally yielded. Since economic problems had been solved by the introduction of guaranteed prices for grain, livestock, poultry, and dairy products, these Mennonite farmers had overlooked what was behind the scene...."

"When they discovered that militant Nazism was at the same time engaged in a struggle against the Jews and the confessing church of Jesus Christ, and the world at large, it was too late for a return to sound Christianity...."

"Another cause of the spiritual breakdown of the German nation was the anti-Semitism, sown for many decades in the German mind and finally coming to a



Horst Gerlach's 2500-Mile Trip to Siberia

culmination in Himmler, chief of the Gestapo; Rosenberg, philosopher of the party; and Hitler, chief of them all. Alfred Rosenberg in his book *Mythos of the 20th Century*, supplied the confused fancies for the new Nordic religion, with the sun as its symbol.

“A few Christians, the so-called ‘Confessing Church,’ opposed these ideas, but the rest of the church yielded, forming the so-called ‘German Christians’ world citizenship and tried to get the ‘Jewish’ component out of the Christian doctrine. All I remember concerning this from my youth was the fact that our Jewish friends and businessmen did not appear anymore and, later on in our catechism instruction meetings, our pastor spoke briefly of the Old Testament as some Jewish legend. The aim of these people was indoctrination, especially of the youth, with the view that they were members of the superior race....”

“After the Nazis had proclaimed Germans as the superior race, they also found a good substitute for the Christian festivals, reintroducing the old festivals of the Norsemen and the Germanic tribes. One was the Yule Festival, celebrated by the old Norsemen around Christmastime on December 22—at the winter solstice the sun reaches its lowest point for the year.

“The Norsemen used to get together on this day and celebrate with much beer and fighting. After the Nazi takeover, some of the old Germanic stories were read over the radio during the Christmas season, and we in the Hitler Youth used the material of those stories for our Christmas celebrations. Of course there was a transition period; in the beginning there was only a combination of Christianity and Norse mythology; later on the aim was

toward complete eradication of the Christian Christmas and the substitution of the Norse Yule Festival....”

“The atheism of German science, the liberalism of German theology, and the Aryan race ideology had reached its culmination in the Third Reich. Scientists thought they could get along without God, the church thought that the authority of the Bible could only be recognized if it agreed with reason, and the race fanatics thought that their heredity would guarantee them a glorious future forever. In the homes, schools, and public places there hung pictures of Adolph Hitler.

“Each morning before school began, one of us boys had the invocation by reciting a quotation from Hitler. I still remember the one I once memorized: ‘Not men lukewarm and neutralists make history, but those who take war upon themselves!’ After that we sang a patriotic song. We also had to memorize the life story of Hitler, with special emphasis on the fact that he was a writer, artist, field commander, and statesman all in one person.”

We tend to think that the Nazi story could never be repeated in our enlightened, high-tech age. The economic, political, technological, and even philosophical machinery in place in the United States of America would preclude any kind of repeat. We should not be so sure. God remains sovereign over all and from generation to generation reminds men that He is sovereign in spite of how intelligent men think they are. Fifty years ago He allowed the German people to destroy themselves with their “enlightened” intelligence!

C.W. | Itasca, Texas



A Kingdom Lesson



McGrath, Gerlach & Landis, 1990

In 1990, I accompanied William McGrath on an Anabaptist tour. One of the places he took us to was Weirhof where Horst Gerlach taught school in the “gymnasium.” Horst kindly took us on a tour of the Weirhof Mennonite Church building and cemetery.

My mind recoiled at the plaques placed on the wall in front of the balcony—one on each side. The one plaque listed the soldiers from that congregation who died in World War I. The plaque on the other side listed the soldiers from the congregation who died in World War II. On the plaques and in the cemetery we picked out a number of “Mennonite” names. I could not grasp it.

We should learn one lesson from *Nightmare in Red*: We, and succeeding generations, must never forget to which kingdom we belong.

— James G. Landis

Rubies & Diamonds

Memorable quotes that speak to the heart.



“The attitude of gratitude is the antidote to many ills.”

– Ernest Strubhar at Cimarron Christian Brotherhood, OK



“If we are half-hearted Christians, we will be deceived.”

– Elson Mast at Northern Light Mennonite Church, AK



“A man who never sees himself as a sinner has not yet known how God sees him.”

– Johnny R. Miller at Lyndonville Amish Church, NY



“Everything in the universe exists because God is.”

– Rodney Witmer at Iglesia Menonita del Valle de Huaral, Peru



“Godly men and women in the Old Testament were called God’s servants. In the New Testament, saints are called the sons of God.”

– Brian Yoder at Southern Mennonite Fellowship Meetings, GA



“It is not enough to be in Christ—He needs to be in us.”

– Calvin Yoder at Southern Mennonite Fellowship Meetings, GA



“The devil blinds people with ease and pleasure.”

– Elson Mast at Northern Light Mennonite Church, AK



“When someone believes, no proof is necessary. When someone disbelieves, no proof is possible.”

– Marcus Troyer at Lyndonville Amish Church, NY



“We will never counteract the evils of this world if we are not acquainted with the Word of God.”

– Lee Stoltzfus at West Haven Amish Mennonite Church, PA



“To excel in anything takes determination, time, and commitment. The Christian life is a narrow way which requires persistence and a passion!”

– Wendell Martin at Garber Menno Church, PA

Share your rubies and diamonds with AV readers. 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 would like to have the name and address of the person sending in the quote.



On The War Front: In Ecuador

by Ulanda Wright

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

– Colossians 4:2-6; (NIV)

“O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever!” I am rejoicing in the Lord for His faithfulness and for His goodness to the children of men. “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His wonderful works and for His goodness to the children of men!” I am also particularly thankful for the opportunities to share His goodness with others and to be witnesses of the work He is doing in the lives of people here in Ecuador.

Friday morning we were able to have an outing together as a family. Our destination was the Kuepfers’ former neighborhood in the city of *Durán*, which lies across the river from the great (in size, that is) city of *Guayaquil*. Because the bridge between *Bucay* and *Cumandá* is undergoing a renovation, we took a different route to *Durán* through the towns *El Rosario* (The Rosary), *Naranjito* (Little Orange), and the city of *Milagro* (Miracle). It was a first-time change of scenery for me which I thoroughly enjoyed. After leaving the hills of *Bucay*, the road stretched out past fields of pasture, sugar cane, and occasional patches of closely planted, spiny pineapple plants. The girls declared that one must have good boots to be able to pick pineapples! Yeah, good boots and some tough denim clothes, it appeared to me, but perhaps it was not as prickly as it looked!

Just passing through, I got the feeling that *Naranjito* was a comfortable coastal town. But in spite of its charming name, the town is noted for its drug trafficking and robbery crimes.

Near *Milagro*, we whizzed past *vireo* (nursery) after *vireo* bursting with brightly colored flowers, graceful palms, and all manner of outdoor ornamentals. Shrieks of delight filled the van as we girls excitedly pointed out the flowers that caught our attention. The cascading bougainvilleas always catch my eye. They bloom so profusely at the nurseries, but seem to have more leaves

than flowers when we move them to our farm in the clouds. I am suspicious they must prefer more sunshine.

The city of *Milagro* also had some decor projects underway. As we entered the city, we saw workers buzzing around the form of an immense hummingbird and trumpet-flower sculpture. On the way out of the city, we passed a giant pineapple sculpture on which scales were being skillfully crafted.

But far more exciting and beautiful were the people who gave our trip its purpose. Just a couple houses away from where the Kuepfers used to live, we were met at the door by a young Ecuadorian girl wearing a lovely head covering. It was so refreshing and amazing to see! After making sure we were all graciously seated inside the first room, she disappeared and her older sister Andrea appeared, also wearing a skirt and head covering. Andrea spent a good while getting reacquainted with the Kuepfers whom she had not seen for a couple years. It was very interesting to hear her testimony of what God has been doing in her life.

Eventually we were joined by her very friendly parents, Rafael and Adelina. Rafael and his wife, like many from their hometown of *Esmeraldas* (Emeralds), Ecuador are of African-American descent. I liked Adelina immediately. She was so warm, jovial, and expressive. It was such a joy to sit and listen to her share with us womenfolk the truths God had been showing her since the Kuepfers had moved away to *Bucay*.

When the Kuepfers had known her and her family in *Durán*, Adelina had loved to dress and deck her hair, as many ladies of modern evangelical society do. She was also the *pastora* (woman pastor) of the church (then considered Pentecostal) that gathered in their home. It was very thrilling and moving to hear her share how the conviction grew in her heart that she needed to be in her blessed place of submission as a woman, cover her head, and dress modestly. Her testimony especially touched us all because we know so well how the Ecuadorian women struggle to even fathom how anyone beside a gringa or a nun can wear a head covering. They always seem to think the head covering is fine for us, but is certainly not for them!

Adelina received an onslaught of criticism from many of her evangelical friends. She heard comments such as, “the apostle Paul was wrong!” or “that was for the early church, but not for us today.” Her question

to her friends was, “Why is any of the New Testament for us then?” Nevertheless, many of her former friends abandoned her and she realized they had not been true friends.

Adelina realized that if she wanted to be saved, she was just going to have to follow Jesus, no matter what. Thankfully, her husband was not against her. Also, other women belonging to their small congregation of believers started obeying Christ’s command to cover their heads.

Adelina and Andrea said that at first they felt so embarrassed with their head coverings. Adelina would wear it in the house but would not always wear it abroad. Now she testifies that she would feel just as embarrassed to leave the house without it. Praise the Lord for the power of His Holy Spirit working through the Word in honest hearts! How lovely to see the same teachings of Christ being lived out in people of another country and another race! In Christ there is no Jew or Greek, Latino or North American, white, brown, or black. The Word had fallen upon good ground, ready to bear fruit.

I also really appreciated what Adelina shared about denominations. She came to the point where she understood she had simply been taught error in the Pentecostal church. Now she wanted to be nothing more than a Christian. “No more Pentecostal, Methodist, Baptist ... I am just a Christian because I want to follow Jesus,” she told us.

These dear ladies expressed a desire to come out to *Bucay* to visit and learn how to sew more modest clothing. We assured them we would all welcome their visit very much. Martha and I also told them how much we wish our dear Ecuadorian friends here in *Bucay* could see and hear their testimony. I particularly thought of Carolina, Nancy, Maggie, and Beatriz. I can imagine that seeing other Ecuadorian ladies willing to follow Jesus in this way would have a profound impact on them. May God be glorified!

Bro. Conrad also had a very meaningful talk with Rafael. Rafael seems to be struggling with his job. He knows it would be wrong for him personally to be harming people, but he is employed in a non-combatant branch of the Ecuadorian Marine Forces. I think he is concerned how he would provide for his family, but his conscience seems to be bothering him in relation to his connection to the Marine Forces. Brother Conrad sensed Bro. Rafael’s desire to come out on the side of following Jesus. Bro. Conrad is considering sharing the book, *A Change of Allegiance* in which Dean Taylor shares how he [Dean] felt convicted to give up his job in the US military because it conflicted with the teachings of Christ.

Lord willing, we are planning to have a group from this church in *Durán* come visit the brethren here this coming weekend. We are looking forward to spending time with them. We hope and pray their obedience will encourage and convict their fellow countrymen to see that Christ’s commands are for them as well.

Yesterday Martha suggested that Mariah and I go pay Nancy a visit and see if there would be any way we could help her. We were pleasantly surprised to find Nate, Luanne, and little Micaiah already there visiting Nancy. Sister Luanne had been helping Nancy’s daughter Camila with her English homework. Maggie and her son Michael were also there because Maggie was helping Nancy make *dulce de zambo*, an apple-butter-like spread made out of a white-fleshed gourd called *panela*, natural brown sugar, and sweet spices.

Nancy asked where we had gone Friday, and the question directed our whole conversation where we talked about modesty, disobedience, and the ability to live holy in Christ. I was so glad God gave us this opportunity to share with Nancy and Maggie.

Nancy was surprised to hear of Ecuadorian women wearing head coverings and wanting to wear modest dresses. Maggie surprised us by acting as though she, too, would like to wear modest dresses and that she would not be ashamed to do so. The burden I have on my heart is that Maggie will realize just changing the way she dresses will not make her suddenly born again or a part of us. May God help us to teach carefully so Maggie will receive correct teaching. I don’t want to discourage her from dressing modestly, but what about even weightier matters in her life which she needs to deal with and change in order to enter into the Kingdom of God and truly be born of His Spirit?



Head Coverings and Modest Dresses

Walter's Beatriz gave birth to a perfectly tiny, yet perfectly lovely little son called Michael Neimar. They have not been back to services yet since the birth of the baby.

Luke's sister Leanna, her husband Titus, and three little boys are down visiting for several weeks. We are awaiting a work crew of young men to arrive from the church at Worthington, Indiana, this week. They are coming to help with construction of the house which the church is building on the farm near Conrads.

We are also praying earnestly for our closest neighbors, Don Willian and his family. At one time, Don Willian had appeared close to the Kingdom of Heaven. He had stopped drinking and regularly attended Bible studies with Conrads and the others who were meeting with them at the time. But Don Willian did not really enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, and fell back into drinking and discontinued attending the Bible studies.

Now, he has also been hired to work on the new construction. We are praying that his time spent with Luke, Nate, and the other brethren can be used of God to draw him back to the way of life in Christ. He had been telling different ones that he wants to start attending Bible studies again. We will see, and pray.

Our hearts ache for our dear neighbors. Their home desperately needs Jesus, just as we all do. Willian and Carmen have two teenage sons, a daughter in her early teens, twins (a boy and a girl), and a toddler son. They work hard in banana farming but as Don Willian is a slave to drink and other vices, you can imagine what happens many times with a good part of his income.

Last week, Carolina had called twice wanting to come to the farm to visit, but she could not make it because the *moto* (motorcycle) was not working properly. I was so happy to hear she was wanting to come. I hope she will

be willing to meet Adelina and Andrea, but Carolina has not been coming to Bible studies since we discontinued the services at her house. There is much to pray about. May God give us wisdom.

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command...Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. ... If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me (John 14:15, 21, 23; NIV).

These verses, in all their simplicity, have been speaking to me lately, especially after conversing with ones such as Nancy who say, "But God surely knows my heart." It seems that many think God will somehow overlook disobedience because in their hearts they want to be Christians. But I do not have a very strong "want to" if it doesn't actually lead me to repent and change. I still love myself more than I love Jesus if I am resisting His will. It is just that simple and there is no way of getting around it. Many times people try to make things so complicated because they don't like what Jesus tells them to do.

I am thankful for those who press into the Kingdom even if there be few who find it. Praise the Lord for the victory in Jesus!

May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with all those of you that love Him with an undying, obedient love (from Eph. 6:24).

U.W. | Bucay, Ecuador



Long Walk to Church



Gathering With Friends

Proverbs Illustrated

In a recent Sunday School class study from the book of Proverbs, I was impressed with how many word pictures are used to teach truth. Many Proverbs draw memorable lessons with word pictures.

Anabaptist Voice would like to include in "Proverbs Illustrated" your own original sketch illustrating some of the great truths found in this book of wisdom.



Light Is Good

by Menno Knight

“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

– I John 1:5

I recently read this statement, “Many environmentalists, naturalists, and medical researchers consider light pollution to be one of the fastest growing and most pervasive forms of environmental pollution.” The term “light pollution” makes it sound as though light is something bad, like garbage.

Supposedly, when we turn on the lights it messes up our “natural” body rhythms and neither animals, plants, nor humans can function properly. The theory doesn’t make sense at all because from pole to pole there is a wide variation in the amount of light that people, animals, and plants receive from daylight and moonlight.

Furthermore, it is in the poorest places on earth where little light brightens life and darkness can only be broken with candles, lanterns, and torches. In many such places, electric power is erratic and undependable. Productivity drops because people cannot see to carry on their work or the enjoyment of life. In short, light is good and not evil.

God worshippers should not use the term, “light pollution.” It contradicts everything we know about God and His people. From Genesis to Revelation, light is always used to illustrate something good and darkness pictures evil.

Genesis tells us that in the beginning God said, “Let there be light. And God saw that the light was good.” In this way, God separated light from the pervading darkness. “God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness He called ‘night.’”

Light! Light! Light! From the beginning light blesses man. Where there is light men do not stumble in darkness or grope about as blind men. The God-given abundance of electric light blesses the world and its people. Light is good and not evil.

At the time of the Exodus, God plagued the Egyptians with darkness so thick it could be felt. For three days the Egyptians could not see the face of another person or move about. Yet all the Israelites could move about in the places where they lived because there was light.

What a contrast. Light is life. Darkness is death.

When Pharaoh and his army pursued the Israelites at the Red Sea, God placed a pillar of cloud between them which gave light to the Israelites while leaving the Egyptians in darkness. Again we can see that light

brought deliverance while darkness brought doom and death.

Job, in his misery, pictures the day of his birth as thick darkness and gloom, when no light shined. His counselors spoke of the lamp of the wicked man being snuffed out and the light in his tent going out. Elihu speaks of enjoying “the light of life.” In Job 38:15 God speaks of “denying light to the wicked.” Again we see that darkness is pictured as bad and light is pictured as good.

The Psalms are full of light pictures:

“The Lord is my light and my salvation” (Psalm 27:1).

“He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday sun” (Psalm 37:6).

“Even the light has gone from my eyes” (Psalm 38:10).

“Light shines on the righteous” (Psalm 97:11).

“The Lord wraps himself in light” (Psalm 104:2).

“Your word is a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

“The entrance of your words gives light”
(Psalm 119:130).

Proverbs 4:18-19 says, “The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”

We see then, the understanding that “light is good” is natural to the nature of the world; most animals, plants, and mankind like the light. God created us that way. We don’t have to be scholars or scientists to reason this out.

Nor does it take great comprehension to picture darkness as evil. Even children fear the night and its unseen creatures and sounds.

But like the theory of evolution, godless men are trying to picture light as bad. Counter to what we naturally understand, their theories about the bad effects of light are all filled with “maybe this and maybe that,” “some think,” suppositions, and nameless fears. These dreamers want to teach that what God said is good, is evil. Don’t believe them.

In the created world, light is better than darkness. Good men love the light and evil men prefer the darkness in which to do their evil deeds. The Bible uses this natural understanding for love of light to illustrate good and the natural fear of darkness to picture evil.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

“ ... let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

– Matthew 5:15



The Gospel of John tells us in chapter one that Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus shines in the gloom and darkness of the world, and the darkness cannot overpower His light.

John the Baptist testified that Jesus was the true light that gives light and life to everyone in the world.

Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah, “The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.”

Jesus said in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

After bringing light and sight to a man born blind and delivering him from the chains of darkness, Jesus declared in John 9:4-5, “Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

When Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain, they caught a glimpse of the dazzling light Jesus talked about when He said, “I am the light of the world.” On that mountain His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:14-15) Jesus tells his followers, “You are the light of the world.... Men do not light a lamp and put it under a bowl, but they put it on a stand so that it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” I repeat, let men see the light of your good works.

Light is good. In the Bible, darkness is usually pictured as bad and evil. People will be cast into outer darkness. Gentiles are called to turn from darkness to light. When the Lord comes, He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness. God called us out of darkness into

His marvelous light. Anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and stumbles around in the dark. The Lord holds some angels in darkness. God consigns some wicked, rebellious people to the blackest darkness forever.

In Luke 11:33-36, Jesus used the eye to illustrate the light of spiritual understanding. He teaches that if the eyes are healthy, the whole body is full of light. But when the eye is unhealthy—covered over with cataracts or the retina is detached—the whole body is full of darkness. Then He tells those listening, “Watch that the light within you has not gone out. Make sure your whole body is full of inner light and not partly covered over with darkness.”

The good news is: light cannot be overpowered by darkness! No matter how small the candle, the darkness cannot snuff it out. So let the light of life and truth and goodness shine both within and without your body.

I do not look forward to living in a world where they turn down the lights and let darkness, poverty, and wickedness run rampant—a world where men hide their evil deeds from the light of truth, and fancy they can escape the judgment of God.

In the parable of the tares, Jesus said that when the angels gather in the harvest, the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

I look forward to living in the “City of Light” where there is no need for the inferior light of the sun. God is the light in that city and no dark corners blot out the light. There is no night there.

Neither will evil men or the evil one darken our joy. Only the multitudes of the righteous clad in white robes will shine forth in the brilliant, dazzling light of God’s glory.

LIGHT IS GOOD!

The Pain of Reaching Out

by Luke Martin

A few years ago some of our group here in Peru faced several armed robberies. One of these holdups happened at our local bookstore where I was working with Lamp & Light Bible correspondence courses and Mt. Zion Literature sales.

One evening just before closing time, two men snuck into the bookstore. One of them pulled a pistol on my co-worker and me, demanding our money. I quickly searched the places where we sometimes kept stashes of cash, but there was very little around. They took our cell phones and money from our pockets. Once they realized we had no large piles of money, they locked us into the closet and then searched the office for more valuables. They stole my laptop and camera. I wrote the following article a few weeks after the incident.

I've had this postcard hanging by my desk for awhile. Recently it has taken on a new significance.



This print is available from Scroll Publishing

I used to wonder how it must feel to have a guy pull a gun on you, demanding your money and possessions. Maybe some of you wonder the same thing. Let me assure you, there is nothing fun about it. After the robbery, I felt like retreating way down into a deep hole behind lots of bars and locks where no evil eyes could see me and where there would be no chance of anybody doing that to me again.

But then I stop and ponder the reason we are here in this wicked world.

And my eyes rest on that famous painting of Dirk Willems. I think about what happened to him on that cold day so many years ago when he reached out his hand to rescue his captor. I think of how much that cost him personally.

And I see a parallel.

God has called us to reach out to the sinking society about us with His message of love and forgiveness. He has commissioned us with the job of making disciples of all nations. We are called to be ambassadors of Christ's kingdom, to show hurting mankind that there is a better way to live. We are called to lift up crying souls that have broken through the once attractive crust of sin and fallen into the icy waters on the other side, in which they will surely perish. That is why we are here—to reach out our hand. That is our job, wherever we are.

When we reach out to society, we make ourselves vulnerable. It would have been much “safer” for Dirk to keep running; just to get out of there and run far, far away. Surely he could have found a dark cave somewhere and hid where his now wet pursuer could not find him.

But Dirk didn't. Should we?

Yes, fleeing would be the “easy” thing to do. But Jesus never promised his followers an easy life. Actually, He promised quite the opposite. Go read again what He said about following Him, if you haven't lately.

Then I think of our perfect example, Jesus Himself. He left the glories and the security of heaven to come down to this sin-cursed earth. He came down from all that was holy and pure to this wicked, filthy, dirty planet. A very vulnerable venture, to be sure. He even went so far as to allow Himself to be tempted by the devil in person. Wouldn't it have been much “safer” for Him to have never done it?

“It's just not a good idea,” I hear someone say. “Way too risky. Too much at stake.”

The irony of it all is that the very folks He came to save rejected Him, beat Him, stripped His clothes off and finally killed Him.

“See, I told you it wasn't a good idea.”

But wait, Mr. Critic. That is not the end. After three days of apparent defeat, Jesus triumphantly rose from the tomb, bringing new life for all those who follow Him to the cross. What a tremendous blessing is ours today because of the risk He took!

We are called to share this message of new life with others. Yes, it is dangerous and risky business. As defenseless Christians, whenever we open ourselves to help someone else, we make ourselves vulnerable. We

should not be surprised if the very same hand we reach out to help slaps us or even kills us for doing good.

It happened to Christ. It happened to Dirk. And we have no reason to believe that it won't happen to us as well.

To be honest, my flesh recoils from this. I don't like to get hurt. It doesn't feel good. It's not nice. It's so hard.

But this is not the end. Ask me over there if it was a good idea or not.

L.M. | *Huaral, Peru*



“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

– *Matthew 5:11-12*

Dirk Willems Rescues Pursuer

by *Dan Graves*

The story behind the famous Dirk Willems sketch.

Because Dirk Willem was a hated Anabaptist he was captured and imprisoned in his home town of Asperen in the Netherlands. Knowing that his fate would be death if he remained in prison, Dirk made a rope of strips of cloth and slid down it over the prison wall. A guard chased him.

Frost had covered a nearby pond with a thin layer of ice. Dirk risked a dash across it. He made it to safety, but the ice broke under his pursuer who cried for help. Dirk believed the Scripture that a man should help his enemies. He immediately turned back and pulled the floundering man from the frigid water.

In gratitude for his life, the man would have let Dirk escape, but a burgomaster (chief magistrate) standing on the shore sternly ordered him to arrest Dirk and bring him back, reminding him of the oath he had sworn as an officer of the peace.

Back to prison went Dirk. He was condemned to death for being rebaptized, allowing secret church services in his home and letting others be baptized there. The record of his sentencing concludes: “all of which is contrary to our holy Christian faith, and to the decrees of his royal majesty, and ought not be tolerated, but severely punished for an example to others; therefore, we the aforesaid judges, having, with mature deliberation of council, examined and considered all that was to be considered in this matter, have condemned and do condemn by these presents in the name; and in the behalf, of his royal majesty, as Count of Holland, the aforesaid Dirk Willems, prisoner, persisting obstinately in his opinion, that he shall be executed with fire until death ensues; and declare all his property confiscated for the benefit of his royal majesty.”

Dirk was burned to death on this day, May 16, 1569. His tongue was not clamped. The wind blew the flame away from him so that his death was long and miserable. Time and again Dirk cried out to God. Finally one of the authorities could not bear to see him suffer any longer and ordered an underling to end his torment with a quick death.



Shown above is a scan of the original etching from the 1685 edition of *Martyrs Mirror*.

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“SO SHALL YOUR POVERTY COME ON YOU LIKE A ROBBER, AND YOUR WANT LIKE AN ARMED MAN.”

PROVERBS 6:11



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 they 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.

Swear Not

by Canny C. Clearly



Swear not at all.... Let your communication be ‘yes’ and ‘no,’ for whatsoever is more than these cometh [from the evil one]” (*Matthew 5:34-37*).

When I received a letter from the IRS signed by a real person, I sent them a letter explaining my position. On the outside of the envelope I wrote “ATT” and the name of the person that had signed my notice.

Lo and behold, everything was cleared up, not only for myself, but also the others who had been fined \$10,000. We praise God for His goodness as a lot of prayer and soul searching went into this battle.

Now when I file my taxes, I sign my name after the following note:

“In Matthew 5:34–37 Jesus says, ‘Swear not at all. Let your communication be yes and no. Whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.’ Therefore, I do not want to sign my name under penalty of perjury, which is a form of swearing. I ask you to bear patiently with me on this matter.

“I also affirm with a ‘yes’ that the information on Forms 1096 and 1099 is correct to the best of my knowledge.”

Then I sign the note with my signature. This has worked perfectly ever since. Here is a word to anyone who is convicted against swearing or signing under penalty of perjury. You will have to go through the \$5,000 fine thing to get to the right person. Then put “Attention” with the name of the person on the outside of the envelope with your answer inside.

May the Lord bless and preserve us with true faith.

The Practical Side: Reader Responses

Reader responses to stories from previous issues.

Cooing Doves

by Notso Blind



The author of “Cooing Doves” answers the “Practical Questions” (AV07, page 40).

It is difficult to set down hard-and-fast rules for courting couples because people and their situations

vary so much depending on the age of the couple, their maturity or lack of it, their level of commitment to our Lord, and the distance they live apart. Ideally, it would be best if the young man would meet with the father of the young lady and agree on the details of the guidelines for this courtship—how often, where, how long for each visit, what to do and what not to do.

1. What are good activities for dating couples?

As far as where to go and what to do when courting, I would recommend spending the majority of the time in each other’s homes. Take the opportunity to visit and work with all the members of each other’s family to observe and get a feel for all the interrelationships among them, especially how your special friend relates to others and how others respond to him or her. Participate in various farm, garden, lawn, shop, kitchen, construction or clean-up work, etc. that can use your help. Other possibilities could be eating out in restaurants, enjoying picnics, attending church services, and attending church youth activities.

Of course, the family should allow the young couple some quality private time to get better acquainted with each other. But the emphasis should not be on entertainment because that is not what marriage is about.

Keeping your hands off each other should be a commitment that is understood and agreed upon from the very beginning.

2 & 3. How many times should dating couples see each other in a month? How much texting and telephoning is good for couples?

If they live close to each other, perhaps one visit a week or every two weeks would be sufficient with a phone call or texting once or twice between visits. If they live far apart, perhaps one lengthy visit every month or every several months would be more appropriate.

4 & 5. What qualities should a courting couple look for in each other?

The first quality to look for in a potential spouse is their commitment and love to Christ and whether they have similar beliefs, convictions, and lifestyle as you. Are they kind, considerate, polite, respectful, modest in dress and behavior, a hard worker, good at saving money and using it wisely, submissive to parents and the church, slow to anger, not easily disturbed and have a positive outlook on life? In other words, do they exemplify the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22? Hopefully, the couple rates high in most of these qualities.

6 & 7. How long should the courtship last? How long should the engagement period be?

To give a general idea, I would suggest the courtship last at least a year so they get to know each other well, but the engagement period extend only six months or less.

The couple should get to know each other so well that there will be few surprises after marriage. Love for our Lord, and love and respect for each other will go a long way in providing a lifelong, happy marriage.

* * * * *

These guidelines for courtship are backed by experience and have resulted in many wonderful Christian marriages by those who followed them.



Consent Impossible

by Hi Goals



In AV07, “The Practical Side,” (page 40), it was suggested in point number five, that Christians should obtain permission from both sets of parents before starting to date. I agree it is preferable to obtain permission from both sets of parents

before beginning a courtship. This should generally be the case where both sets of parents are Bible-believing and practicing followers of Jesus. This is true in our own settings. Yes, God has given parents as protection this way! But in cases where the parents are not practicing believers, Matthew 10:35-38 tells us that parents may turn

against children because they walk in obedience to the commands of Christ.

Yet there are many scenarios which could be given where one or both sets of parents would never consent to courtship or marriage, and it is really because the child is a genuine Christian desirous of another genuine Christian in marriage. For instance, what does one do if the parents are practicing Roman Catholics, hardcore fundamentalists, Muslims, individualists, or have racist attitudes and concepts? Such attitudes and beliefs on the part of the parents would make it impossible to obtain their consent for a genuine Christian courtship and marriage.

Yet I know it is possible to have a very beautiful marriage where the wife comes from a home where her parents are individualists—the father is with no church anywhere although he is supposedly “Anabaptist.” So it is possible for Christians to have a godly courtship without first obtaining the consent of both sets of parents.

What should couples from ungodly homes do who desire a Christian marriage? Obviously they cannot go to, or rely on, their parents if both sets of parents are either non-Christians or holding to unscriptural practices. However, if one set of parents are practicing believers, it would certainly be wise to accept their counsel.

I do believe that for some, especially in our churches, the church is the place to go for direction and guidance on these matters. If the young man and young woman are in scriptural churches, the brothers and sisters in their congregations should know them and be equipped to give wise counsel to the Christian couple.



Same Penalty

by Lee Gal Assistant



In the fall issue (*AV07, page 41*), Canny C. Clearly seems to see signing one’s name to a legal document as the equivalent of swearing an oath because he was to do so “under penalty of perjury.”

I am not a lawyer, but it seems pretty clear to me that he has sworn no oath by so doing. He is simply under a legal obligation to make a true statement on the form; if he violates this obligation he is subject to the same penalties that apply to someone who HAS sworn to tell the truth and violates that oath.

According to the U.S. Code quoted on the Cornell Law School website (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/28/1746>), “...any matter...required or permitted to be supported, evidenced, established, or proved by the sworn declaration,... [or]oath...may, with like force and effect, be supported, evidenced, established, or proved by the unsworn declaration...in writing of such person which is subscribed by him, as true under penalty of perjury...”

The complete quote is even more clear in my opinion. So I see the information given by this man on his income tax return as an unsworn declaration, but with the same legal force as if he had “affirmed” it in court.



Go Home

by Will Work



I was recently called up for jury duty selection. An official asked me to swear to tell the truth. I replied, “I will tell the whole truth, nothing but the truth, the whole time. Nothing else. Swearing has nothing to do with it.”

The judge replied, “Go back home and get to work.”



Strike Through

by Amoot Point



In response to Canny C. Clearly (*AV 07, page 41*), I believe there’s something important he is missing.

One of the great privileges we enjoy in this country is that we are given the option to affirm rather than to swear in legal testimony or in the signing of legal documents. I routinely strike through the word “swear” and write in “affirm.” I do this on tax forms, car titles, and any other place the word “swear” appears.

This being true, our affirmed testimony is considered equal to a sworn testimony; therefore, the definition of perjury must also apply to testimony that is affirmed. So if we affirm rather than swear, would not signing “under penalty of perjury” simply be stating that we uphold what we have affirmed? It seems to me that refusing to sign the tax return is belaboring a moot point.

The Practical Side: New Stories

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists.

Roadkill?

by A. Bie Stander



One evening I was driving up the road near my home. Several vehicles had pulled to the side of the one-lane road and about three people were out of their cars. I saw what had captured their attention.

A beautiful 8-point buck was in a shallow ditch off to one side, struggling to get up. I'd never seen a buck that close before so I pulled to the side.

I recognized one of the young men, but I'd never seen him so angry before. I heard him say, "Shot it from his truck!" and "spot-lighted him!" Several more friends of mine who lived up the road had walked to the area where the buck lay. I wondered why no one put the buck out of his misery.

Finally, another fellow arrived with a pistol and shot the buck, putting it out of its pain with a single, well-placed bullet. No one was in a hurry to even touch the animal but after some discussion, it was decided that the new man in the neighborhood who had seen the buck get shot would take it home.

After talking with neighbors and church friends, I learned why the folks gathered around the deer had behaved so strangely. It had been shot with a rifle and rifle season did not start for two more days. In addition, it had been shot from a truck on a public road. To further top off hunting violations, the illegal hunter had shot within 400 feet of a residential home and within 500 feet of the church. It is also illegal to carry a loaded firearm in a vehicle, more than 30 minutes after sunset.

It all made me wonder what the proper response of an Anabaptist in this situation is.

Practical Questions:

1. Should I drive by "on the other side" and mind my own business?
2. Should I tell everyone what I saw and the illegal doings?
3. Should I call the game warden and report the incident to him?

Time Wasted

by Always Rezonable



A church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for thirty years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But try as hard as I can, I can't remember a single one of them. So I think I'm wasting my time and the preachers are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

Practical Questions:

1. Why is it good to go to church?
2. Why is going to church not a waste of time?
3. Why is going to meeting better than worshipping at home by yourselves?



Down On Christ Mass

by Up von Conshuns



Christmas used to be my favorite holiday of the year, but now that I have learned more—Jesus was not born at this time of the year and the only way He told us to remember Him is through communion—and have grown in my walk with Christ, I no longer celebrate it. I have also become aware of how Christmas is steeped in lies, myths, and Catholicism. I feel it greatly weakens our testimony when we wrangle with others to "keep Christ in Christmas."

Many think they do well to make Christmas about Jesus and not about Christmas trees and commercialism, but that is only the first layer to unwrap regarding Christmas.

Christmas didn't start as a Christian holiday. The foundation of this holiday was pagan celebrations of the "rebirth" of the "sun-god" at the winter solstice—

the shortest day of the year in the northern hemisphere. This sun-god worship started out as a pagan holiday and remains so to this day with its full complement of pagan traditions.

Catholicism, in its quest to obtain converts, allowed the heathen to keep their pagan festivals and gave them a Christian veneer. Catholicism co-opted the pagan holiday of the sun-god myth, added Jesus to it, and thus invented “Christmas.” As an example of false teaching, in Christmas—means *mass of Christ*—the priest believes he crucifies the Son of God anew and the wafer becomes the literal body of Christ and the wine becomes His literal blood. Thus this Christ mass is a blasphemous imitation of Christian communion.

We should not model our worship of God after ways the heathen worship their gods. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 12:30, “Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be not destroyed from before thee; and thou enquire not after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God ...”

I think tacking Jesus onto a holiday that is not about Him cheapens Him and makes Him seem mythical. What do candles, wreaths, trees, reindeer, Santa Claus, the winter solstice, gifts, a holiday spirit, family get-togethers, and sumptuous meals have to do with the birth of Christ? These are the trappings of the way the world celebrates Xmas.

And then there is the counterfeit god (Santa Claus) involved in the Christmas worship by the world. Although Christians may be celebrating a different way than unbelievers, the fact remains that the date, name of the holiday, and many traditions are the same.

Practical Questions:

1. How should a Christian respond to the greeting, “Merry Christmas”?
2. How should a Christian answer, “Did you have a good Christmas”?
3. What attention do you give to celebrating Christmas at your house or church?
4. Can you give any good reasons for changing the manner of remembering Christ’s birth at your home or church?



“Our job is not to tame down the world but to call people out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light”

Calvin Yoder, Southern Mennonite Fellowship Meetings, Georgia

Pay Me

by Wen I. Cann



This fall, I rented some equipment from a local plain Mennonite. I agreed to pay so much rent per day for the equipment, but had no written contract.

In the fall, work slowed and I was unable to pay him in a timely fashion. I contacted him and promised I would pay him as soon as I had the funds to do so.

About a week later I discovered that this man had used my debit card as a credit card and taken the money out of my account without my consent.

I approached the man and tried to tell him he was not practicing nonresistance. I tried to say, “What’s the use of plain “separated” clothing if we don’t practice nonresistance in business?” (*I did not have the best attitude*).

His response was, “You are judging me and you are just a bitter, angry, malicious person.”

So, to date I have just let the matter drop but I am wondering:

- What is my proper response?
- What is the biblical way of collecting debt from people?

Practical Questions:

1. What violations of Bible principles are evident in this account?
2. What practical steps should be taken to reconcile these two brethren?





Upcoming 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.

The Shepherd's Institute

February 26 - March 2, 2018

Speakers: Chester Weaver, TX | Linford Berry, VA | Milo Zehr

Topics: Movies: Are They What We Think They Are? | Introduction to World Views (Theology) | Ecclesiastes: Wisdom for Life | Communicating Biblical Truth Effectively (Preaching) | Principles of Growth and Change (Pastoring)

Location: Believers Fellowship Church, Grove City, MN

Contact: Chester Weaver at (817) 648-1863 or via email at chesterweaver@pcfnet.net.



18th Annual Men's Seminar

March 2 & 3, 2018

Title: "God's Mandate for Godly Men".

Speakers: Pete Whitt of Montezuma, GA and Steven Brubaker of Guys Mills, PA.

Topics: "Why Some Children Learn Differently" | "A Godly Man" | "A Father's Impact On Desire To Learn" | "A Church Man" | "Eternal Value of Christian Education" | "A Family Man"

Registration: There is no registration fee. A free-will offering will be lifted to cover seminar expenses. Meals are provided & donation containers are located at the food line.

Lodging: Rooms are available at Hartwell Mennonite Center at \$50 per room plus a one time \$10 cleaning fee. (*Sleep as many in one room as you wish*). Bring your own sheets, pillows and towels or you may rent them for a charge. For lodging at the Center, contact Todd Hochstetler at (706) 376-1200 or Todd's cell at (803) 672-9488. There are also chain hotels available in Hartwell or Elberton.

Location: "The Hartwell Mennonite Center" at 3214 Royston Hwy, Hartwell, GA 30643

Contact: Nelson Kurtz at (706) 376.5836 or (706) 717.1802.



2018 Anabaptist Identity Conference

March 15 - 17, 2018

Speakers: Andrew Ste.Marie, MI | Chester Weaver, TX | John L. Ruth, PA | John D. Martin, PA | David Bercot, PA | Wolfgang Migianni, OH | Jerry D. Miller, OH | Donny Brechbill, PA

Topics: The Anabaptist and Pietist Response to the Revolutionary War, the Civil War and WW I | Erasmus or Jesus | The Ideal Resistance | The Apocrypha | The Mark of the Beast | Jehovah's Witnesses | River Brethren | Birth Control | Community | Farm & Family

Registration: We would appreciate registration to attend the conference. Please provide your name, phone number and how many people will be attending. You may call (941) 822-5315 and leave a voicemail message or email your information to hsofgrace6550@yahoo.com.

Location: "The Sale Barn in Mt. Hope" at 8076 St. Rt. 241, Millersburg, OH 44654.



Circulation & Financial Statements

Income & Expense Report

October thru December 2017

October 2017 Beginning Balance	\$1,486.40
Income	
Donations for Issue #7	\$6,353.30
Local Support Donations*	\$4,018.05
Total Income	\$10,371.35
Expenses	
Handling & Packaging	\$619.00
Postage	\$3,670.35
Printing	6,066.00
Misc.	\$16.00
Total Expense	\$10,371.35
Donations for Issue #8	\$8,114.25
December 2017 Ending Balance	\$9,600.65

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 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 6,300 | Print & Postage Cost: \$9,736
Donations for Issue #7: \$6,353
Local Support Donations: \$4,018

ISSUE #8 - ESTIMATED NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,500 | Print & Postage Cost: \$8,000

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



Circulation Note

From the beginning, our mailing list has been cobbled together from here and there. Over time, 3,000 indicated they wanted to receive AV while around 2,800 gave no indication they wanted to continue receiving *Anabaptist Voice*.

We made the decision to include a jacket on AV07 for the 2,800 who had not told us they wanted the magazine. The jacket simply said the recipient should notify us by mail or email if they wished to continue receiving *Anabaptist Voice*. Otherwise, they would be taken off the mailing list. We are happy to report that 1,600 out of the 2,800 have indicated a desire to continue receiving the magazine! This means our updated mailing list will call for a print run of 4,500 for our next issue.

Lord willing, in February 2018, Issue #8 will go to 48 states—Connecticut and Rhode Island excepted—and eight other countries.

It is still our desire to expand the mailing list and make AV available free to anyone who wishes to receive it as well as in quantity to those wishing to use it as a tool in outreach ministry.

You can help expand our mailing list by telling your friends, by passing the magazine on after you've read it, by placing it in the breakroom of your workplace, etc.

Finances Note

We are humbled and encouraged by the donations that have come in to support the work of AV. The support has been so generous that all bills are paid and we have enough money on hand to pay for the costs of printing and distributing AV08. Thank you!

It is our ongoing desire to be unencumbered with the burden of registration with government agencies and restrained by their rules and regulations. In order to continue operating in this way, 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 501(c)3 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:

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“AND GOD SAW EVERY THING THAT HE HAD MADE, AND, BEHOLD, IT WAS VERY GOOD. AND THE EVENING AND THE MORNING WERE THE SIXTH DAY.”

GENESIS 1:31

