

Be ye doers
of the Word
and not hearers
only...
James 1:22

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

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Letter from the Editor

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” – **Matthew 11:18**



Elephant Ears

Four weeks ago I surrendered to reality and went to be fitted with prescription hearing aids. With my new “elephant ears” I can hear chairs creaking, doors “slamming,” paper rustling, my own footsteps, clocks ticking, birds singing, the din at a church dinner, and my wife talking in a “normal” tone of voice. Some sounds I want to hear, but others are annoying. Mentally I must learn to “tune out” noise I do not wish to hear and listen only to the things I want to hear.

This reminds me of the song we used to sing at Bible school and Sunday school many years ago:

“Oh, be careful little ears what you hear,
There’s a Father up above
And He’s looking down in love,
Oh be careful little ears what you hear.”

We should be careful what we hear. God is listening too.

There is another way of not hearing when we should be listening. Acts 7:57 says, “**Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him [Stephen] with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him.**” These zealous Jews did not want to hear the truth, so they closed their ears and refused to listen to Stephen’s preaching.

We can do the same today.

So it goes with millions according to this news item I read from Plain News. “Young people lead millions in climate change protests. ... Young people have recently come to the forefront in advocating more [government] action to battle climate change with the mentality that, ‘You will die of old age, but we will die of climate change.’” Governments could just as well tell the sun to quit shining. These millions ought to be reading their Bibles and studying their history books instead of believing the lies of the climate change hucksters.

They will all die. That is correct. But they have stopped their ears to past and present evidence and the truth of God’s Word: After death they will meet the God who made the world and everything in it. They should repent and CHANGE.

Let us keep our ears open to the truth of God’s Word.

In this issue, godly men and women who uphold the authority of the Scripture, and the power of God who gave it to us, write to exhort, encourage, and teach the faithful ones. Do not “tune them out” or “stop up your ears” before you have considered what they say.

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 may obtain a tax deduction.

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 one 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 some 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 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. Not all comments by readers express the thoughts of *Anabaptist Voice*, but we think they may have some merit in showing different points of view.

AV Editor

Bad Manuscripts

For years I have been deeply disturbed at how the use of new Bible translations, based on manuscripts less reliable and proven than those which underlie the KJV, have crept into Anabaptist circles.

Although I am not keen on the NKJV, I was relieved that *Anabaptist Voice* at least had a policy with regards to the issue and prominently displays it on page 4.

“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.”

I noticed in your latest issue (AV13) that the back cover includes a quote from the NLT (New Living Translation) which, if I am not mistaken, is a paraphrased version and, in my opinion, should be labeled as such.

S.M. | Virginia



Send More

I am part of a small assembly of believers in Arlington, Washington, who meet in homes. We receive five copies of *Anabaptist Voice*. As we often have additional families or guests with us, we would like two additional copies included in our mailing—seven total. Thank you for your work.

G.M. | Washington State



Should Be Banished

Thank you for your “editor’s perspective” following the “Social Media Frontiers” article (AV14, page 34). It seems it is almost popular to warn against the dangers of social media so long as you don’t make the point that it needs to be banished. The stakes are higher than they ever were with radio and television.

L.T. | Wisconsin

Not For Me

I’m not sure how to say why *Anabaptist Voice* does not speak for or to me. I would consider myself committed to Christ, but not to what I would call ultra-conservative Anabaptism. I do not like that label. No label really works, but without a long dialog those labels need to suffice.

AV promotes a form of Christianity that I find discouraging. The stories and articles seem to speak of a kind of radical view that is largely unrealistic, divisive, and exclusive. Radical does not always mean accurate.

I’m sorry to say that. I am already finding this email more negative than I wish it to be. I believe the staff of AV have good motives, but AV portrays to me a Christianity that is culturally stagnant. I just can’t measure up to it or identify with it. I started getting AV when I was with the Amish, and was hopeful for it. But it turned out to be just more of the same of what I was getting with the Amish. I don’t think it represents Christianity well. All the statements of faith and those things in the front sound good and right, but the articles still reflect something else. I can’t put my finger on it, so I am likely not giving very helpful feedback to improve your publication.

T.J. | Ohio



Beautiful Publication

I thank and congratulate you for the *Anabaptist Voice*. It is a beautiful publication that helps us deepen our faith, and is inspirational. AV also strengthens our connection to the rich and fascinating culture and history of our Anabaptist forefathers.

I think AV is just wonderful. It has blessed me already many times over via your interview about AV with Anabaptist Perspectives, and also via the digital editions that I was able to access online. And yet again, it has blessed me in bringing me in touch with both you and your colleague, Abner.

J.K. | Pennsylvania

Incarcerated

I am currently incarcerated with a release date around January 2023.

I am writing to request a subscription to *Anabaptist Voice*. It was recommended to me by a dear friend and brother. I would like to be able to share with him what we read as we grow together in faith and fellowship.

I am sincere in my desire to be more Christlike and to grow stronger in the faith. I would like to share my testimony with any who care to hear it.

In short, I was addicted to adultery and pornography. I made bad choices, went into depression, and was imprisoned. While in prison, I repented of my sins and committed my life to serving Christ.

Now I am delivered from my addictions and grow in faith daily. Some days are harder than others, but Christ is Victor.

Since my arrest five-and-one-half years ago, I have been blessed beyond measure. God accomplished what I never would have been able to do; I have been able to talk with my ex-wife and work on healing the hurts of past faults/sins.

Thank you for your time, energy, and service unto our Lord Jesus Christ, and for your prayers.

G.G. | Georgia



Showing Support

I enjoy the many articles and discussions in *Anabaptist Voice*. I realize some of your materials come from your audience. So in support of your work, I would like to submit a few articles for your consideration. You are welcome to use them if you choose to do so. I thought they might be of interest for the December publication. I am not sure when that would be. We appreciate the work you do!

M.D.Y. | Arkansas



Unseen Damage

I appreciate the caution you, as editor, have expressed in regards to social media and the use of the internet (AV14, page 34). I have deep concern about what social media is doing to the churches, including ours, that allow it, even in a restricted form.

E.S. | Oklahoma



AV14 Roundup

AV14 was an especially interesting read for me. Here are a few thoughts that occurred to me while reading this issue.

I think that the article, “Rightly Dividing the Word” was very well written. However, I’ve heard people use the word “interpret” to explain away plain New Testament truth, as if there were other ways of looking at the headship covering, for example. Interpretation is necessary for the parables, the Old Covenant, and the Revelation. However, James wrote that we should simply “receive with meekness the implanted word.”

I thought that the articles on the Revelation were very balanced, though I do not agree entirely with all of the final interpretations. I still think that in all of them, there is a common goal.

What I agree with more than anything else, and what is also a personal concern of mine, is the thought that there are dangers in using the book as a springboard to jump right out of the whole context of our Anabaptist/New Testament teaching. The book should not rewrite the norms of the gospel; salvation is through Christ alone (there is no salvation through the re-institution of Mosaic sacrifices). Nonresistance is still in effect (the Münsterites exemplify this error). There are no second-chance opportunities (it is appointed unto man once to die). We should have no other modern interpretations that in essence re-write the gospel message.

I had to weep for sadness and then joy while reading Brother Roger Flatmo’s spiritual journey.

Brother Mark Yoder’s article on the Reina Valera Bible and the life of the translator was especially captivating to me because we use that version every Sunday. I had often wondered about any Radical Reformation adherents in Spain. This article spawned a little more research on his life. Since I am currently reading a book entitled *History of the Bernese Anabaptists*, Casiodoro’s likening Calvin’s Geneva to Rome, and even worse, was very compelling. Our ancestors were persecuted in Protestant Switzerland for around 250 years. Twenty-first century Anabaptists should take note of the persistent animosity that Protestants had toward Anabaptists. Why should we be ingesting their literature and sermons today?

May God richly bless you and your work.

J.B. | Chile

The Time Is at Hand

I have been studying both the book of Revelation and general eschatology for a little over a year. What I have discovered is that the two are not as connected as I once thought. I concur with Menno Knight's interpretation of the passages in which Jesus declares that the time of Revelation's fulfillment is "near" or "at hand."

In the first three verses of Revelation, John twice repeats the statement that the events that follow will be fulfilled in the near future. Since the recent encroachment of dispensationalism and flashy proponents of it like the *Left Behind* series, Christians have glossed over these markers, explaining them away by saying, "Well, one day is as a thousand years." That statement from II Peter 3:8 is not to be used as a mathematical formula to reinterpret God's clear communication at both the beginning and the end of Revelation. Rather, Peter is urging his audience to be patient because God is patient, and his statement indicates that it may be a long time before Jesus returns.

Furthermore, contrasting Daniel 12 with Revelation 22 reinforces a first-century fulfillment of Revelation. In Daniel 9, Daniel is given a very specific prophecy concerning the time when the Messiah was to appear. This prophecy is fulfilled almost 500 years in the future. Yet in Daniel 12:4, Daniel is told to seal up the book because the time was not yet upon them. However, in Revelation 22:10, John is told, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near."

One key to understanding Revelation is to interpret the large, easier symbols first, and allow their interpretation to aid in interpreting the lesser symbols. As an example, take the much publicized "number of the beast" from Revelation 13. It helps us if we understand how numbers were used by John's audience. Neither Greek nor Hebrew used a specific set of numerals like we do today; rather, they used specific letters from their alphabets as numerals. Therefore, it was possible to turn any person's name into a number, hence the phrase in Revelation 13:17, "number of his name."

In Hebrew characters, the word "beast" adds up to six hundred sixty-six. If we remember who was in power during that time, it does not take long to discover that "Nero Caesar," in Hebrew, adds up to 666. Add to this the fact that the beast has seven heads, and in Revelation 17:10 we are told that the seven heads represent "seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while." If you count the Roman rulers beginning with Julius Caesar, the sixth one who "is" lands directly on Nero. Furthermore,

Emperor Galba, who would be the seventh, did rule for only seven months, confirming John's words about the seventh who "must remain only a little while."

The "mark of the beast" is another seemingly mysterious symbol that is easily interpreted if we know early church history and the Old Testament. Revelation 13:16 says that this mark was made on the right hand and on the forehead, and verse 17 adds that commerce is prohibited without this mark.

From history we know that Christians in the first century, especially under Nero, were required to offer a pinch of incense upon an altar and state that "Caesar is Lord." To prove they went through with this, they were given an official document, signed by a witness, without which they were unable to buy or sell.

In studying the book of Revelation over the past year, it has quickly become one of my favorite books. I don't dispute that it uses much difficult, symbolic language. However, our interpretive work doesn't get any easier when we join in with popular Christian culture in assuming that this book is going to have some type of fantastical, future fulfillment. Revelation gives hope. It was written to churches who were under constant duress from a hostile government, yet it is a message that promises deliverance and victory through suffering.

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

L.M. | Virginia



Keep Article Handy

I really appreciated the article "Rightly Dividing the Word" (AV14, page 7). I feel it would be a good idea to keep this article handy and periodically read through it as we study our Bible.

The three articles on Revelation were interesting to read (AV14, pages 12-16). When studying different understandings of Revelation, I like to keep II Peter 1:20-21 in mind, "Knowing this first, no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

D.L.H. | Ohio

Building a Strong Church Family

by Javan Bender

“Whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”
— **Mark 3:35**

Text: Matthew 12:46-50

Purpose Statement: To present the church as a strong, close family.

Themes to Develop:

1. What early listeners understood the family to be.
2. Marks of a weak family bond in Western civilization.
3. How to build a strong church family.

Conclusion: Our local church can be a strong family, obedient to the will of the Father, and united by the clear purpose of serving one another.

Introduction

I want us to consider one of the most-used metaphors in Scripture for describing the church. Scripture talks often about the church as a family, and it uses family language to describe our relationships to each other—brother, sister, and mother. Hopefully, this message will give you a richer, fuller understanding of how we are related to each other, and what it really means to be part of the family of God.

I am convinced that if we see ourselves merely as a loosely-joined, haphazard collection of people who all happen to be believers, we will not experience the depth or quality of relationships that Christ calls us to as members of His family.

It is evident that unless we grasp who we are as brothers and sisters in Christ, and learn to relate to one another from that reality, our talk about deference, respect, and forgiveness will end up flowing from duty rather than love.

First-Century Listeners

First, we will look closely at what first-century listeners would have understood as they heard Jesus talk about the “family of God.” When we talk about the church as “family,” we do not see “family” in the same way that first-century Middle Eastern people understood it. Let us look at some of the understandings about family that the people Jesus talked to, and the apostles wrote to, held.

I make the assertion that when Jesus called His followers to join His family group, when He raised His

hand to the crowd and said, “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,” and when Paul declared that we are no “more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,” they were calling people to be part of the family of God in a strong-group sense.

Here are some marks of what family meant in Jesus’ day:

- In the New Testament world, the group took priority over the individual.
- In the New Testament world, a person’s most important group was his blood family.
- In the New Testament world, the closest family bond was not the bond of marriage; it was the bond between siblings.
- A very high regard for one’s ancestry marked Bible times. For instance, “Mordecai son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish” (Esther 2:5), or “John son of Zechariah” (Luke 3:2). Children were to obey their parents, even into adulthood.

I am NOT saying that strong-group families are always good—gangs and the Mafia would be considered strong groups. Nor am I suggesting we should go back to arranged marriages or describe our family lineage every time we meet someone new.

I am saying that the strong-group family gives us a more accurate picture of what Jesus had in mind for the church. I believe these are some of the marks of the culture in which Jesus lived and taught.

I can illustrate what it means to be part of a strong family in our world with a story by Joseph Hellerman, from his book, *When the Church Was a Family*.

Tijuana, the bustling metropolis just across the border from California, has become a mecca for people all over Mexico who come in hopes of a better way of life. Until recently, Tijuana boasted an unemployment rate of less than 1 percent, and opportunities, in comparison to the rest of Mexico, abounded.

In 1988 Juan José Espíritu came to Tijuana from Guadalajara with his mother and family. Juan was 13 years old at the time, and he promptly went to work cleaning a stained glass window studio to help support his mother and his five younger siblings.

Ten years later at 23 years of age, Juan earned \$480/month—the salary of many teachers and bank employees—creating Tiffany-style stained glass windows. But Juan's success had come at the expense of his own education and a normal adolescence.

Juan made none of these sacrifices for the sake of his own individual goals and aspirations. Instead, Juan envisioned that his good fortune would give his younger siblings the educational and vocational opportunities that he had missed. He would not allow them to quit school and work as he had. "Perhaps one of them will become a doctor," Espíritu said. "That is my desire." Juan, the individual, laid down his life for the sake of the group.



Marks of a Weak Family Bond

Now I am going to contrast the strong family bond we found in New Testament times with the weak family bond we find in Western notions of family life today.

- Little communication. Seldom eat meals together. Little time to visit other than once or twice a week at church meetings.
- Seldom see each other except on holidays, family get togethers, weddings, and funerals.
- Little emotional/spiritual dependence.

When we look at this picture of the church as family, our natural tendency is to take our experience of family and our ideals of family relations and project them onto what relationships should look like in the body of Christ. What I have observed in the last twenty years or so is an increasing emphasis on the global church and a decreasing emphasis on the local church, especially traditional notions of church membership, which include submission to one another and mutual accountability. "Let's all be one happy family in Jesus!" is the cry. That all sounds good on the surface, but what I feel at a deeper level in that cry is, "Let's not get too close to each other."

This is the feeling whether expressed or not: "Go mind your own business and I'll tend to mine." This Western attitude shines especially bright when dealing with finances. The meaning of the cry is, "I don't want

others to feel any kind of obligation to me and I certainly don't want to be obligated to them. As long as we can feel good toward each other and have a high level of emotional involvement in our corporate worship times, I am satisfied."

The picture of the church I see in the Western mind functions more like a social club than a family, or a brotherhood. In a social club, people meet when it suits them and participate as it fits their schedule. People feel good about themselves when they have their name on the roll and attend meetings, but have no obligation to the group.

In the Western mind, the church is a weak group where one's own feelings and needs can be superficially dealt with in a personal relationship with God. There is no need for a brotherhood to meddle in one's affairs until one faces disablement and death. In short, the difference between a social club church and a family or brotherhood relationship can be summed up like this: The social club church serves my needs, while in the church of Jesus Christ, everything is about how I can serve the brotherhood.

How to Build a Strong Church Family

I have studied the differences between our 21st-century American ideas of family and brotherhood. I am convinced that if we fully embrace our connectedness as brothers and sisters in Christ, we can capture what it means to relate to each other as members of the family of God; we can build strong brotherhoods with strong family-type bonds.

Now let us step back and take a look at this picture of the "church as family" once again. With this understanding of strong-group family, perhaps we can hear Jesus' words with new insight. Perhaps this picture of church as a strong family looks less like the smiling, dressed-up pictures that come to our house at Christmastime and more like a picture of Juan Espíritu. Perhaps this picture looks less like independent individuals who happen to share the same last name and more like a group that is tied together and committed to one another where no petty grievances can come between them.

Now let us look at some scriptures and see what Jesus taught about a strong family. Jesus taught that a strong spiritual family:

- puts a relation with Him above blood relationships (Matthew 12:48-49).
- includes all those who do the will of the Father (Matthew 12:50).

- can bring separation from earthly family (Matthew 10:35-37).
- can bring suffering (Matthew 10:38).
- supercedes familial loyalty (Matthew 8:21-22).
- does provide material blessings with persecutions (Mark 10:29-30).

I also want to look at Acts 2 and observe some elements of strong-group family values evident in this account. These first followers of Jesus were:

- united around common beliefs/values (verse 42).
- united around a common table—sharing meals together (verses 42, 46).
- united around common needs/desires—praying together (verse 42).
- united around a common purse—sharing financial resources with one another (verses 44, 45).
- united in worship (verse 47)

I believe God's intent is for His church—your congregation—to function as a family, a strong-group family in the same way the early church functioned. Look again at the three things I have just listed.

1. We ought to foster strong connections/relationships with our brothers and sisters.
2. We ought to be willing to sacrifice for one another and seek another's good over our own.
3. We ought to be committed to one another through thick and thin.

In general terms, I believe those things would please God for His church—your congregation. Now I will share with you a vision of how these general ideas can be put into practice, things I have already seen in some churches.

I picture a congregation that is warm, dynamic, and filled with many mutually satisfying relationships—a place where church members interact with one another in meaningful, informal ways throughout the week (lunch/tea with one brother/sister a week).

I picture a congregation where big decisions are made in the context of a supportive church family. In this congregation, the younger ones go freely to seek wisdom, insight, and guidance from the elderly while they sit in the office or on the porch. The younger help and support the elderly and provide a comfortable environment in which they can grow old gracefully. In this congregation, singles are not marginalized but are nurtured and included in the activities of families. In this beautiful congregation members support and care for one another financially, emotionally, spiritually, and physically (babysitting and work projects).

Members share meals in each other's homes, not just on Sundays, but on weekdays as well. Whether in formal or informal settings, members can disagree but continue to be brothers.

The congregation I envision is a brotherhood where people choose to forgive and bind up wounds rather than dividing and tearing down through gossip and slander and malice and ill will. In this calm retreat from the world, brothers and sisters trust one another and work hard to rebuild trust where it has been broken. Then when trust has been restored, they link arms together and march forward together to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world.



Bald Eagle Boys Camp

I found Bald Eagle Boys Camp to be the kind of place I have just described. In a sense, the staff team functioned as a strong-group family. We shared deeply with one another. We ate meals together. We laughed together. We cried together. We engaged in fun activities together when we were off-duty.

But the thing that really pulled us together and made us a team was the fact that we were united around a common purpose. We had a common goal—a shared work to do. When those who were off-duty got together on a Saturday night for a dutch-oven cook-off, we knew full well that tomorrow morning we would need to head back into the woods to face a group of hurting boys.

We knew that in the next week we would likely be cursed and yelled at and that there would be many difficult things to face. So as the off-duty group pulled our chairs closer together around the dying embers of the fire, we gathered strength from one another, not just so we could go to bed that night feeling like we had “connected” with our friends, but we gathered strength from one another so we could go out and fulfill the work we were called to do.

Likewise, Jesus calls the church to be a strong-group family, meaningfully connected with one another and deeply committed to each other. But we are a family so we can go out and minister to a confused and hurting world. In God's strength and power, we stand united and call others to join the family of God, the church.

J.B. | *South Carolina*

The Short Answer

by Norman Ward



Calvin Coolidge

Calvin Coolidge, the 30th president of the United States, hailed from Vermont. Being a true type of old-time Vermonter, he was a man of few words. He earned the nickname “Silent Cal” because it was hard to get him to elaborate very much on a subject.

One Sunday his wife, Grace, was sick and stayed home from church. When he returned, she was full of curiosity as to how the service went, so she began the process of trying to draw the information from her husband.

“How was church, Calvin?” she asked.

“Good,” he replied.

“What did the minister preach about?” she asked next.

“Sin,” the President responded.

“Well,” she probed, “what did he say about it?”

“He was against it,” Coolidge answered.

I don’t know where the Coolidges went to church when they lived in Washington, but at least their preacher was on the same side of that issue as God, which I’m afraid would put him in the minority today.

The antinomians, a false cult that popped up in the first century, taught that if we are saved by believing in Christ, then it doesn’t matter how we live after that. The antinomians thought one can deliberately sin in every way imaginable and still be fine because they once “believed.” The apostle John wrote his first epistle to refute that dangerous doctrine.

Today’s proponents of this ancient false doctrine are not quite so blatantly outspoken about it as some of their predecessors, but the standard of much professed “Christian” conduct betrays the fact that the idea is still alive today.

The Lord, however, didn’t leave us in the dark as to what He thinks on this subject. All we have to do is go to the Word. Paul asks this pointed question in Romans 6:1, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” Then on down in verse 15, he asks practically the same question again, “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?”

Good questions. The short answer is the same both times in good old King James English, “**God forbid.**” Now that’s plain enough, right?

I studied this answer in a few other languages:

French – “*Loin de la!*” In English, “**Far from that!**”

Spanish – “*En ninguna manera.*” In English, “**By no means**” or “In no kind of manner” or “In no way.”

Portuguese – “*De modo nenhum.*” In English, “Of mode (method) none” or, “**There’s no kind of way that will work.**”

Italian – “*E’ assurdo!*” In English, “**That’s absurd!**”

Romanian – “*Nicidecum!*” which means, “**Certainly not!**”

Russian – A one-word answer—just five letters in Cyrillic font, which means, “**No way.**”

Swedish – “*Bort det,*” which means, “**Away (with) that.**”

Norwegian – “*Langt derifra!*” which means, “**Far from it!**”

Danish – “*Det vaere langt fra!*” which means, “**That is far off!**” A literal translation is like, “It be long way from (that!)”

Dutch – “*Dat zij verre*” which means, “**Far be it (from) that.**” Literally it says, “That be far off, distant, remote from.”

German – “*Das sei ferne!*” meaning, “That is distant!” (from being right). Used as it is here, this phrase is sort of a colloquial way of saying, “**That is ridiculous!**”

To repeat the questions, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (**Romans 6:1**). “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?” (**Romans 6:15**).

The short answer is: “**God forbid.**” “**Far from that!**” “**By no means.**” “**That won’t work.**” “**That’s absurd!**” “**Certainly not!**” “**No way!**” “**Away with that!**” “**Far from it!**” “**That is far off!**” “**Far be it from that.**” “**That is ridiculous!**”

Do you suppose the Lord is saying to us when it comes to the sin question: “What part of ‘NO’ don’t you understand?”

N.W. | Georgia

Rubies & Diamonds

Memorable quotes that speak to the heart.



“Your prayers need go no further than the ceiling if God is in the room.”

– Carl Hoover at Mountain View Mennonite Church, PA



“Knowing God is a journey with no shortcuts. We can never graduate from knowing God.”

– Alan Troyer at Altona Youth Bible School, MN



“Missions is ordinary people helping ordinary people with ordinary problems.”

– Ivan Beachy at Faith Mission Fellowship, VA



“The old man is dead. Do not try to wake him up.”

– Brian Hendricks at Shekinah Mennonite Church, MO



“The stone pile Joshua had built was not life. It only pointed to where God had worked.”

– Allen Petre at Lenawee Mennonite Church, MI



“The fear of the Lord helps us know what to do when we don’t know what to do.”

– Nathan Yoder at Faith Mission Fellowship, VA



“The Good Shepherd is never far away from the sheep that went astray.”

– a servant of the Hutterian Brethren, AB



“When the world frowns on Christians, our faith should see us through the trials of life.”

– Allen Hilty at Old Brethren Church, OH



“Our life is like a billboard that advertises what our life is about.”

– Joel Gingerich at Minerva Christian Fellowship, OH



“Christian joy is not produced by will power; it is created by giving my will to the Father.”

– Nate Nissley at Farmington Mennonite Church, MO

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 also would like to have the name and address of the person sending in the quote.

The Difference

by Menno Knight

“Whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

– Matthew 5:19-20 (NIV)

I was visiting with old friends dating back to my high school days. I will call them Tom and Sylvia. He and his wife were no longer Anabaptists and now worship with another group. His wife wore pants, had cut hair, and wore no veiling. They both wore finger rings. The two were on an annual pilgrimage to take a cruise ship—including all its worldly entertainment and sinful environment—to the Bahamas with the Chuck Wagon Gang and other similar singing groups.

In our discussion, Tom tried to point out what he thought were inconsistencies in the Bible and commented, “I do not understand them.”

My question for Tom was, “Do you want to understand them?”

Tom went on, “I do not experience persecution.” I suggested he start preaching that a soldier in the army is going to hell, then see if the persecution does not soon come. He replied, “I would not say that.”

Then I asked, “What sin would you say will send a man to hell?” My friend gave me no answer.

Partly because of that discussion, I understood a truth more clearly. Tom and I have the same Bible in English. There is no doctrinal difference involved between the English Bibles he uses and the English Bibles I use. Yet Tom and I arrive at very different practices while using the same Scripture.

At stake is the plain teaching in the verse above. If I practice—do, keep, obey, live out—and teach the commands of Jesus, I will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven, but if I do NOT put these commands into practice and live a righteous life, I will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. So regardless of what all the Bible-thumping and Bible-believing, faith-only Christians say, the people of God will put His Word into practice.

The difference between Tom and I is not in what translation of the Bible we are using; it is the scriptures which are neglected, ignored, explained away, or are relegated to a future age. The Anabaptist wants to

understand what the Bible means and how the commands of Jesus should be applied to one’s life. That heart desire brings us to very different lifestyles and practices, all out of the same book.

For instance, “Love your enemies” is a simple statement that is found in every translation, but to put it into practice is what is required if we are to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet many professing Christians will glorify entering the armed forces and “serving their country” above the plain teaching of Scripture. They have army chaplains to guide them who pray that God will help the soldiers kill the enemy and protect them in battle. The simple truth is that murdering people is not loving one’s enemies.

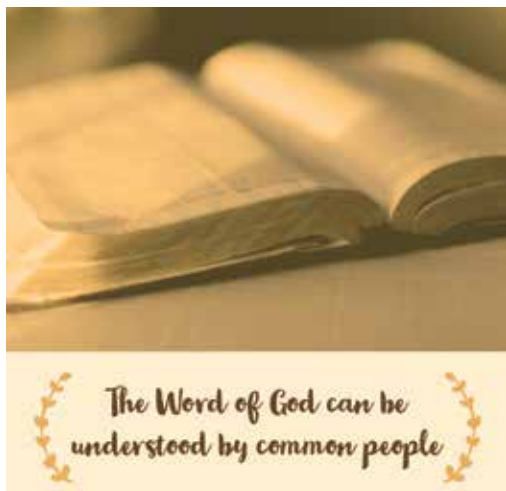
In the Just War Debate that took place in Boston on 20 April 2014, two highly educated and able scholars, one Catholic and one Protestant, tried to defend “just war.” These men do not base their defense of mass murder on certain groups of textual manuscripts or on correct Hebrew or Greek renderings of those texts, nor do they appeal to certain translations—English (King James Version), Spanish (Casiodoro de Reina), German (Luther), or Latin (Jerome). No, their defense is based on human reasoning, an appeal to Old Testament examples, and a loyalty to earthly rulers and kingdoms rather than loyalty to the Kingdom of God as portrayed in the New Testament.

So we may observe that getting the meaning of New Testament teaching is not found by adhering to a certain translation or to a Greek or Hebrew text; it is in our hearts and minds. The first question is, “Are we willing to put the meaning of a passage into practice?” If we are not willing to put a text into practice, we will never understand what the real meaning is.

The whole premise of true faith and repentance is that when people read or hear the Word of God preached, they can understand it and know enough to get right with God.

This was the core argument that started the Anabaptist movement: “The Word of God can be understood by common people.” They did not need scholars or clerics to interpret the Bible for them. And on the basis of applying the Scripture’s truth to their lives, they challenged their rulers’ authority and called them to holy living.

We need not quibble over discrepancies in translations: “Should the Lord’s Prayer say ‘on earth’ or ‘in earth’?” Nor should we dispute doctrinal matters that do not affect how we put our faith into practice: “Is the Trinity three persons or three in one?” What we need to discuss is how



we ought to put our faith into practice in today's world. So the difference between true followers of "The Way" and those who follow in name only is how we live out the teachings of the New Testament.

The understanding that a willing heart can know what the Bible means agrees with what the apostle Paul said on Mars Hill, "**So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us**" (**Acts 17:27**). In Acts 17, Paul cemented to heathen worshipers how to find the true God by talking about four things: a creator God, repentance, the coming judgment, and the resurrection.

It is not hard to find God if one believes in Him and is willing to obey His Word. But if one is not willing to obey, the truth in God's Word remains hidden behind blinded eyes. Jesus said, "**For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind**" (**John 9:39**).

Rightly dividing, interpreting, or handling the Word of God is more than just a mechanical arrangement of words, phrases, and paragraphs into a beautiful faith puzzle. If we are going to correctly understand the Word of God, we must be born again. We must know Jesus in our hearts. Sometimes we must obey what God reveals to us, whether we understand it or not. Obedience must sometimes come before understanding; God's blessing can follow after obedience.

We are not told that Noah understood the catastrophe that would follow God's command to build the ark. If Noah had told God, "Please explain why I should build such a giant boat and be the laughing stock of everyone," most likely he would never have built the ark. But Noah goes on record as a preacher of righteousness and one who obeyed God by building an ark that saved him and his family.

Abraham obeyed God and left his homeland even though he didn't know where he was going. If Abraham had said to God, "Show me where I am to go and then I will pack up and leave home," he might have stayed in Ur the rest of his days.

So it must be with us. Obedience to the commands of God must come before His blessings will follow. There are those who start with the end result of what obedience to God's command might require of them and then try to reason backwards to understanding. For instance, a sister might consider that her veiling should cover all her hair. If she is willing to cover all her hair if that is what the Scripture teaches, she may study the passage and come to the knowledge of the truth. But if she thinks in her heart, "That would look ridiculous and I am not going to do that," she will never understand the Scripture to teach otherwise. She will believe, "The Scripture cannot possibly teach that a woman should cover all her hair."

There are other examples of where obedience to God's commands precede a full understanding of what would please God: military service, divorce and remarriage, suing in court, and retirement funds, to name a few.

The basic truth is: We must have a want-to in our hearts before we will understand the Scripture and its true meaning. It is imperative that we obey the truth God has already revealed to us before he will reveal more truth. Jesus said, "**Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him**" (**Luke 8:18**).

A willing heart and obedience to the commands of the New Testament scriptures are the difference between pleasing God and not pleasing God.

If we are going to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, we must put into practice the commands of Jesus.

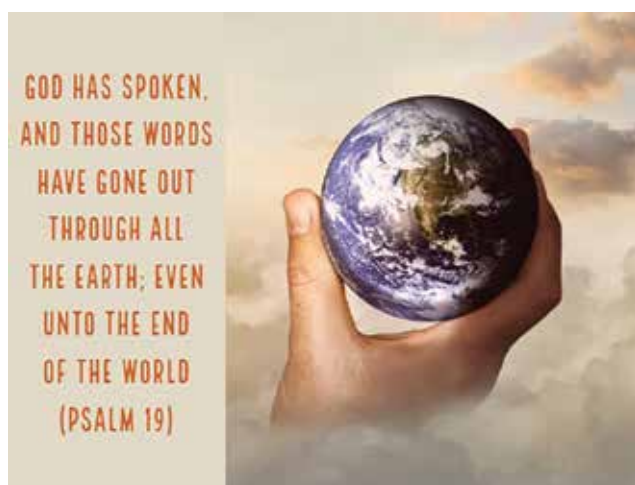


Translation Nuances

by Dale Heisey

God Is a Translator

The God of the Bible is a translator. His global plans from the beginning intended for the gospel to reach “all nations.” In the Psalms alone there are 175 references to Gentile peoples. The blessing upon Abraham was pronounced upon “all the families of the earth” (**Genesis 12:3**), and upon “all kindreds” as Acts 3:25 states it. God gave this promise to Abraham at least five times. Apart from translation, the testimony of Revelation 5:9 would never have been possible: “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” God has spoken, and those words have gone out through all the earth, even unto the end of the world (Psalm 19).



Babel Reversed

In a very real sense, Pentecost was a reversal of Babel. On that memorable day “every man” was able to understand “the wonderful works of God” in his own tongue (Acts 2:8, 11). There must be, and there is a way to express the truth of the Scripture in every language on earth. This is what is included in the task of “making disciples of all nations.” This work in fulfilling the Great Commission still remains to be completed.

The purpose of translation is communication. To facilitate the gift of expression in another tongue, we must understand how the speakers of this target language think. A little story may help us visualize this.

At the end of a school day, a visiting set of parents who were not patrons of the school came to present a request. They had a bi-racial son who was born with

a psycho-linguistic limitation. He could hear sounds, but his mind did not enable him to turn those sounds into meaning. Even though he heard someone say “D-O-G,” he did not know that this was a “word” for the friendly animal that he played with each day. He responded for years the same way we would if we would hear the word for “dog” in Chinese for the first time. After a bit of exposure to this new word, we would come to understand it, be able to use it and thus increase our Chinese vocabulary. But this boy’s mind did not function this way. His parents wondered if their son could be enrolled in the school; they were hoping to find help for their child so he could begin to learn.

The public school system had worked with the boy for about two years. They allowed the teachers from the Christian school to observe their sessions with this special boy through a one-way viewing window. The room had toys—a collection of TV characters, Walt Disney figures, and action models—all of which were foreign to this child’s meaningful vocabulary. He was raised in a Mennonite home and these toys were a “foreign language” to him. There was no communication.

The teachers of the Christian school visited this boy’s home, and noted the objects, the toys, and the familiar surroundings in which the child daily lived. They devised a plan intended to teach him 300 words during one year of classes. They brought to school little objects (small toys) representing the things that were a meaningful part of his life. He learned to place a card with the word “Bible” on it beside the little Bible on his desk top. He learned to pick up the small dog when his teacher said, “dog,” and eventually learned to locate the card with “dog” written on it when he heard that word. That precious child learned his 300 words and went on to live a quite normal life. In order to translate into another language, we must understand how people think.

Learning How Natives Think

We have possibly heard that a native Cakchiquel speaker in Guatemala challenged Cameron Townsend with this question, “Why, if your God is so smart, hasn’t he learned our language?” Cameron Townsend accepted the challenge and spent the next 13 years learning the intricacies and “nuances” of this tribal tongue.

Then a professional advisor suggested that instead of forcing Cakchiquel into the mold of Latin grammar,



A Cakchiquel Family
The Cakchiquel are one of the indigenous Maya peoples of the midwestern highlands in Guatemala

Townsend should find the logical linguistic pattern of this native language. Townsend needed to learn how these indigenous people “thought” in their language. This revolutionized his study and gave birth, in 1934, to what we now know as the Summer Institute of Linguistics and also the Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Communication results when we “think” as others do and then find words to express those thoughts. Is it not true that we frequently overlook this truth even as we “speak” to each other in English? We often take turns talking but come short of true communication. The apostle Paul understood this principle when he preached at Mars’ Hill in Athens, Greece. He began with something they knew, “an altar to an UNKNOWN GOD,” and introduced them to the Lord God of heaven and earth. A translator needs to know not only the words of another language, but also the way people think with the words they have.

Translators Decide What Method to Use

– **Formal equivalence** is an attempt to be as literal as possible. It seeks to find words in one language that have nearly the exact same meaning as those of the other. So this system tries to “say” in the target language the same thing in the same way as the original language. This can hardly be done. For instance, to be “embarrassed” in English means to be ashamed or disconcerted. In Spanish the same word means to be pregnant. So there can be no literal translation in this instance.

– **Dynamic equivalence** seeks to transmit the meaning into the target language even though the exact words are not used. Yet there must be a careful and an honest attempt to present the message as originally given. This translation concept is usually easier for the native speakers to follow and to understand.

– **Optimal equivalence** is a combination of the above methods. The goal is linguistic precision but with a presentation that is readable and readily understandable in the target language.

What method a translator decides to use is very important because perfect translation into any language is never possible. To be totally equivalent, the target language would need the exact vocabulary of the original, and those words would need to have the same meaning in both languages. But this is not the case for several reasons.

Translation Considerations

A perfect translation is not possible because:

– **Some languages have more words than others.**

The English language has many more words than what most other languages have.

– **Idioms, colloquialisms and figures of speech** that are familiar in one language may be completely unknown in another. Here is an example: A local brother was translating a message from an English preacher into Spanish. The preacher emphatically said, “When we do not deal with sin in our lives, it has a snowballing effect.” How do you translate that for someone who never saw a snowball and who has no idea how one can “grow”? A snowball means nothing to an Amazonian just like “*ayni*” (a Quechua term meaning “mutual sharing”) has virtually no meaning in a capitalistic and individualistic culture. Let us take this a bit further:



– **Words can be transliterated** from one language to another. The transliterated word may then take on a different meaning than it held in the original language.

When the Bible was translated into English, first from Latin and later from the original languages of Hebrew and Greek, equivalence was not always possible. This is why “baptism” found its way into our Bibles. The translators anglicized the Greek term, “*baptisma*,” and it is now an understood English word with different shades of meaning to different people.

Likewise, in English, it might have been better to have retained the Greek “*Logos*” instead of translating it to “Word,” and the Greek word “*Parakletos*” conveys meaning beyond what “Comforter” provides for an

Englishman.

The same thing happened in Spanish with the word “church.” “*Iglesia*” is a Latinized version of the Greek “*ekklesia*.”

– **Some languages do not have equivalent words.** In Spanish there is really no word for “righteousness.” The only term is “*justicia*” which is also the word for “justice.” Now, justice and righteousness are not the same thing. So we have to find a dynamic equivalent for this very important Bible concept. This kind of situation happens time and time again in translating.

Language Learning

Language learning is different from language study. Translating requires that we be very familiar with the target language. This brings us to the idea of “language learning” instead of “language study.” What is the difference? If you are an English speaker born into an English-speaking home with an English-speaking mother, you learned English without studying it. So you learned to say, “Columbus discovered the Americas in fourteen ninety-two” instead of saying, “Columbus discovered the Americas in the year one thousand four hundred and ninety-two,” as an English student might say it.

“Language learning” happens in the presence of native speakers. You can learn virtually any language if you choose to live in a native-speaking community with a native-speaking family for three months. Your experience will be more effective if you have limited or no contact with English during that time—being with another English speaker will cancel the effectiveness of the native language learning. One’s mother tongue is the easiest for a translator to translate into. Rarely do Bible translators have this opportunity.



But Casiodoro de Reina did. He was a trained Spanish speaker, his own native language, yet had access to national Hebrew speakers and to Greek scholarship. He provided for the Spanish world an excellent translation of the Bible.

More Than Human Learning

Divine enablement is another dynamic in translation that contributes to effective communication. Translation is more than an academic exercise. The gift of language is a spiritual one, given by the Holy Spirit. By divine enablement many translators have experienced results that were far beyond their own capacity. Some have come upon a solution for their difficulty in translating that human ingenuity could not have designed. A translator must be in communion with God. We can communicate with anyone whom we love, even if we have no words.

Heart Communication

Communication transmits a message with more than mere linguistics. Someone said, “Preach at all times, and when necessary, use words.” As Christians, we can “translate” a message to the hearts and minds of others using no words at all.

We were waiting in line before the counter in preparation for an international flight. Behind us in the line was a group of indigenous people, perhaps eight or ten of them. They were wearing shirts that indicated they were part of a group. One lady was holding a child, a little girl. I wanted to visit with these passengers but soon discovered they could neither hear nor speak.

Nevertheless, I found out they were returning to their home country, Ecuador, from a deaf institute in Atlanta, Georgia. Although not a “word” passed between us, I had an interesting “visit” with the mother of the little girl. From her we learned the information written above. She also “told” us that the little one, two years old, was perfectly normal. She could both hear and speak. She “said” that the child rarely ever cries, as she has learned that Mother does not hear her when she cries, so crying does not “communicate.” Amazing!

Driven to Translate

When hearts understand one another, thoughts can be communicated, and a message “translated” with no words at all. But to communicate God’s message without words requires supernatural power. Thankfully, God gave us His message in writing and we are ordered to share it with the rest of mankind. When we possess love for others in our hearts, the blessing of God upon us, and know that we own the most important message the world will ever hear, we are driven to translate God’s message into a language that waiting hearts will understand.

D.E.H | *Costa Rica*

Bible Translations

by Larry S. Weaver

Introduction by AV editor: *I have no other explanation for how I found the following article than that the Lord led me to it. On the preliminary outline for AV15 I had written, “Bible Translations by (to be supplied).” At the time, I had no idea who would write the article.*

My wife, Doris, wanted to go to Rocky Cedars Enterprises at Dayton, Virginia, to pursue some sewing interests. I readily agreed to go with her because in that place I like to browse through the many books on display by Anabaptist authors. While glancing hurriedly over the titles, I picked up the book, “When Salt Loses Its Saltiness,” to see what it was about. At the top of the “Table of Contents” was the statement, “Bible Versions.” I quickly read the four pages on Bible versions and bought the book.

I have added the verse and the subheadings, but here is what Larry Weaver wrote.

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.”

- Isaiah 40:8

I have used a few newer Bible translations to help me convey my message more clearly. The KJV is a great translation, but there are some verses that the newer versions simply do a better job of translating from the original languages and bringing out the meaning.

False Claims Against Modern Versions

And yes, I’m aware of the false claims against modern translations and I can assure you they are just that—false. I have studied Bible translating and modern translations such as the ESV and the NIV. They are very well translated from the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic languages. There is no heresy found in them as some have falsely claimed.

But if you are unwilling to take my word for it, I would recommend you read, *The King James Only Controversy*, by James R. White. I do not recommend reading just any book on the subject though, since some try to prove there is only one true translation. Their arguments, upon close inspection, are found to be groundless.

However, I’m not saying every translation under the sun is reliable. There are some groups who try to translate the Bible in a way that it says whatever they want it to, and we want to stay away from such translations.

But the following translations are trustworthy and reliable:

The English Standard Version (ESV) [which is probably my foremost recommendation to anyone interested in reading a newer translation], the New King

James Version (NKJV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB), and the New International Version (NIV).

Comparing Different Versions

Some people compare a modern translation with the KJV, and when they see different words or a different paragraph structure where the word order isn’t exactly the same, they immediately conclude that the modern translators are tampering with the Word. Tell me, if you were to translate a German word to English, is there only one word usable? No, there are usually many words with different shades of meaning, so you decide which one you think best conveys the meaning behind the German word.

In the same way, when translating the New Testament from Greek to English, there are multiple words that can be used, therefore translations will differ in words but not in meaning. This is actually to our advantage. When we compare multiple translations, we can get a much better understanding of the meaning behind the Greek word.

And if you translate a paragraph from German to English, is there only one way to structure it? No, there are many ways to structure a sentence without changing the meaning. Any writer will understand this. And again, by comparing translations we can get a much better understanding of what God is telling us than if we only use one translation.

Comparing Manuscripts

Nor do translators only have one copy of the Greek New Testament to go by. There are thousands of manuscripts from different parts of the Bible that have been hand copied over the centuries. Anyone who ever did much copying by hand knows how easy it is to make mistakes.

These manuscripts have many minor differences such as punctuation, word order, spelling, and verses that were skipped as well as those that were added. Modern translators have the advantage of using many older manuscripts that have been discovered since the KJV translation was made. The older Greek and Hebrew manuscripts are more reliable since they have not been recopied as often; therefore, if anything, the modern versions are even more reliable than the KJV.

All these things have to be taken into consideration. There is no such thing as simply taking the Greek or Hebrew word and finding the English word for it. It is for good reason that translations have minor differences, and because no translation is perfect, we would do well to compare them.

Fortunately, none of these differences affect any major doctrines, therefore, it is not as if we have to read multiple versions. But by only reading one, we miss the opportunity to get a better understanding of the Bible.

Studying the Bible in Different Languages

Studying and comparing the Bible in different languages, such as German and English, is also very beneficial, and we who understand German should consider it a privilege and should strive to learn it well.

Languages Change Over Time

The English language has gone through quite a bit of change since 1611, and it is good to have an occasional

revision to keep pace with the changes in our language. Our English versions are man-made translations of the inspired Word, therefore, they can always be improved. The KJV itself is a revision of the Bishops' Bible of 1568. The KJV translators said their goal was to make a good translation better, and that is the ongoing work of modern translators.

Another reason we would do well to occasionally read a different translation; when we read only one, we get so used to it that we begin to skim over the words that are so familiar, thinking we already know what it says, thus we often miss the full meaning. But it has a much larger impact on us when we read God's Holy Word in new, fresh ways.

However, some people prefer the KJV for its poetic style and have become attached to the older English used therein. Therefore, they have no desire to read the Bible in any other way than they have read it for so many years. That is totally fine and there is nothing wrong with that.

Just Understanding the Bible Is Useless

I should add that simply understanding the Word is useless if we do not obey it. With knowledge comes a responsibility to do what we know is right and to live up to that knowledge. It is not good for the soul to be without knowledge, but do not read the Bible simply for head knowledge, but to change your life and to conform your ways after God's instructions.

L.S.W. | Ohio



NEW Writing Challenge!

In 300 words or less, explain what this verse means to you.

"If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'move from here to there' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you"
Matthew 17:20



Proverbs Illustrated

The book of Proverbs teaches many memorable lessons with word pictures. *Anabaptist Voice* would like to include in “Proverbs Illustrated” your original sketch illustrating some of the great truths found in this book of wisdom.



Erica Wadel



Proverbs Paraphrased

One day of humble service is better than 1,000 days of enjoying the pleasures of sin (Psalm 84:10).

A tossed salad with loving friends is better than a steak dinner with nitpickers (Proverbs 15:17).

Seeking to gain wisdom and understanding is better than striving for the almighty dollar (Proverbs 16:16).

A piece of bread without butter or jelly in a peaceful setting is better than a seven-course dinner where there is argument and bickering (Proverbs 17:1).

It is better to be poor, but truthful and honest, rather than demonstrating one's folly by lying and dishonesty (Proverbs 19:1).

Better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away (Proverbs 27:10).

It is better not to make a promise than to make a promise and not keep it (Ecclesiastes 5:5).

It is better to hear the rebuke for a wise man than for one to hear the song of fools (Ecclesiastes 7:5).

It is better to loosen a nut using some WD 40 than twisting the bolt off with sheer strength (Ecclesiastes 9:16).

— Marvin E. Yoder | *Pennsylvania*
(Courtesy of *Calvary Messenger*, September 2019)

Translation Journey

by Luke Martin

“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life.”

— John 5:39 NLT

My wife and I both grew up with the King James Version. We appreciated the cadences of the archaic English that had become familiar and dear to us. But after discussing it at great length before we were married, we decided to use a more modern version in our home for family devotions. Why?

While we believed the KJV was an excellent translation in its time, it contains much outdated language. We planned to live in a Spanish-speaking country and thought of our children growing up and hearing the KJV read only during family devotions. If our children grew up in a bilingual setting, they would have two languages continuously thrown at them. Why add the third one (archaic English)? We reasoned that it was unnecessary to teach our children the archaic KJV English.

Of course, we did not want our children to miss simple truth. We strongly believed that the Bible needs to be understood by the common people, including small children. This conviction is deeply rooted in history—over the centuries many Christians dedicated their lives to translating the Bible, from languages the people did not understand, into the vernacular. The English scholar, William Tyndale, was one who in the mid-1520's told one of the English church lords, “If God spare my lyfe, ere many yeares I wyl cause a boye that dryveth the plough, shall knowe more of the scripture than thou doest.”

Most of us would agree with Tyndale's conviction that an untrained plowboy should be able to read the Bible, but perhaps we think the KJV still meets this criterion. Here are some thoughts Grace and I considered: Language is alive and grows and changes with time. At some point, the KJV (and other old English literature) will no longer be understood by most of the population.

How about the plowboy of North America in 2019—the college student flipping burgers at McDonald's, the immigrant from Mexico, the gas station attendant at Speedway, or the UPS delivery man? Would he understand the reading of the Scriptures if he was to attend our church service?

How about ourselves? Do we really understand what we are reading? I remember sitting through a sermon where the preacher—he had been a conservative Mennonite all his life—was emphatically teaching on being moderate, as in “not too extreme.” His text was Philippians 4:5, “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” In this verse, moderation has more the idea of gentleness, forbearance, or graciousness.

Living in a Spanish country has taught us to love our Spanish Bible, although, of course, Spanish isn't God's special language. He talks in whatever language a person understands. We must remember that the original texts were not written in any of the common languages of today. Any of the versions or languages of the Bible that you or I have read, have been translated.

Translation is difficult work, as I have discovered in working with English and Spanish. Many times there is no way to perfectly translate from the original language into the target language. Each language has its unique idioms and cultural expressions. Inevitably, some shades of meaning will get lost through a translation. Different translators may word the same verse differently, focusing on different aspects of the original meaning.

Consider a very well-known verse—Proverbs 29:18.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” (KJV)

Now look at it in Spanish:

“Sin profecía el pueblo se desenfrena” (Spanish Reina-Valera 1960)

Here is the English translation: “Without prophecy the people lose all self-control” or, “disengage the brakes.”

Ponder the meaning of them both. There is no conflict between the two. Rather the one beautifully complements and adds to the meaning of the other. By reading and comparing different versions, we will likely capture a more complete view of what the original said.

Our lives have been blessed and our understanding of the Scripture has been enriched as we read the Bible in different languages and versions. May God bless us all as we read and study the Scriptures to better understand His heart and will for His people.

L.G.M | Peru



The Christ I See In Christmas

"That which is conceived in Mary is of the Holy Spirit."

"Name him Jesus. He will save His people from their sins."

"They shall call His name 'Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us.'"

"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

"Out of Judah shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel."

- Matthew

*"Jesus will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest;
and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David."*

*"And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,
and of His kingdom there will be no end."*

*"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed
His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation
for us in the house of His Servant David."*

"To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins."

*"To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

*"There is born to you this day
in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."*

*"For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared
before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation
to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel."*

*"This child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel,
and for a sign which will be spoken against that the
thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."*

- Luke

*"That was the true Light which gives light
to every man who comes into the world."*

*"As many as received Jesus, to them He gave the right to become
children of God, even to those who believe in His name."*

- John

"The gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God."

- Mark

Our Spiritual Pilgrimage

by Josh Scott

Our Background

We are the Josh & Kristy Scott family and we hope telling a little bit about our spiritual pilgrimage will glorify God and encourage fellow travelers. There is nothing particularly interesting about us or our lives that is worth publishing, except what God has done for us. If we have anything worthwhile to share today, it is only because of Him.

Kristy and I are both originally from the Los Angeles, California area. We were both raised in the Baptist church and were baptized when we were quite young (10 and 8).

Kristy grew in her commitment to Christ. She was very involved in her church youth group and served in various capacities as a young adult.

I strayed in my youth and lived an immoral life far from God, abandoning church and my childhood Christian profession. At age 24, I converted to Christ and experienced a radical life change as a result. After conversion, I felt led to study the Bible to find out how its teachings should affect my life. In Evangelical circles, if one is serious about his or her faith, he is encouraged to attend Bible college.

Kristy had already graduated from Biola University, an Evangelical Christian college in Southern California, and was working there when I enrolled in the Biblical Studies program (2001). We met at Biola University and were married in 2006. We just celebrated 13 years of marriage and are currently living in Payette, Idaho with our three (soon to be four, Lord willing) children where we attend the Payette Mennonite Church which is part of the Western Fellowship. What follows is the story of how the Lord led us from Evangelicalism to Anabaptism.

What Led Us to Anabaptism

God and His providential leading in our lives is ultimately what has led us to Anabaptism (Psalm 37:23; Proverbs 3:6; Jeremiah 10:23; Matthew 7:7-8). As we have responded in faith and obedience to Him, He has been faithful to reveal more of himself and His will to us. Naturally, we have sensed an increasing responsibility to live up to the things He has shown us. This has led us to seek out more like-minded fellowship in a conservative Anabaptist church. Through Bible study at college, I began to develop convictions about its various teachings.



Josh and Kristy Scott with
Drew (4), Patience (3), Mallory (1)

But I found that as I began to discuss these things with others, or tried to put them into practice, when it came to certain subjects I was sometimes met with suspicion or even opposition. Some considered me a fundamentalist (a derogatory term in that setting) or legalistic for believing that certain Bible principles were meant to be applied. For example, I discovered that the Bible teaches modesty and forbids things like gold and pearls (Isaiah 3:16-24; 1 Timothy 2:9-10).

While many Evangelical churches have some standard of modesty, many do not, and none that I know of prohibit the wearing of gold or pearls. The Bible also calls for nonconformity to the world, rather than seeking to be relevant to it as some Evangelical churches do (Romans 12:1-2). And I wondered, where is the separation from the world that we read about in passages like II Corinthians 6:14-18?

Through study and research I came to understand that there are historical events and decisions that have shaped how the various churches view and interpret some of these things. I will mention some writings that were inspirational to me.

Many years ago, the late Mennonite scholar Harold Bender gave a talk called “The Anabaptist Vision” in which he explained that the Reformation left us with three main theological traditions of Christianity: Catholic (or sacramental Christianity in general), Protestant or Reformed, and Anabaptist. Of the three, Anabaptism alone conceived of Christianity primarily in terms of discipleship to Jesus Christ, and of the church as a separate, accountable brotherhood of disciples. While the other traditions are not completely devoid of these concepts, their view of these things finally places the main emphasis elsewhere.

Bender stated that churches in the Protestant or Reformed tradition tend to view the Church primarily as a pulpit or a place where God’s Word is expounded, and Christianity as consisting essentially in the experiencing of God’s grace in the heart of the individual believer. This helped explain why I was experiencing opposition to some of my ideas.

Another inspirational writing was Menno Simons’ treatise on *The True Christian Faith*, particularly the section regarding The Lutheran Belief. In this writing, Menno helps the reader make a connection between the Lutheran theology behind the Reformation and the low moral state of the Church’s adherents at the time. In addition, I found that even various modern evangelical writers basically confirm these conclusions about the theology of Evangelicalism and its effects.

By this time it was becoming clear that I was in the wrong theological tradition of Christianity altogether. I began to evaluate what I believed about other Bible doctrines. One after the other, I discovered that my beliefs aligned more consistently with historic Anabaptist beliefs, touching subjects such as the Kingdom of God, the headcovering, gender roles, nonresistance, holiness and moral purity, divorce and remarriage, and even Arminianism vs. Calvinism. As I looked at church history, I discovered that I identified with the Anabaptists in their beliefs about things such as the separation of church and state, believer’s baptism, separation from the world, and church discipline.

Our Journey

While still studying the Bible at college, I began commuting 100 miles one way each Sunday to the nearest conservative Anabaptist church at the time, Southern California Bible Fellowship in Gorman, California. Here I found the spiritual fellowship for which I was looking. I also made use of electronic discussion forums at the time and through one of those

a man named Richard Mummau reached out to me. He was a member of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church and offered to sponsor me for one term at the Numidia Mennonite Bible School, in Pennsylvania. I gladly accepted his kind offer.

Upon returning to California, I lived and worked in Gorman, California for two years and married my wife Kristy. Kristy was not from a Mennonite background so we joined Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California—John MacArthur is the pastor—and began studying the Bible together as a married couple. We looked at many Bible doctrines together in our devotional time. I prayed that God would lead her to see the things that He had been showing me and He answered my prayer. Kristy began to cover her head. We threw out our television and movies. We began to seek God about where to go.

In 2007, we moved to Idaho and began attending a Charity-type fellowship where we worshiped for about a year-and-a-half, after which the Lord led us to the Payette Mennonite Church. We joined the Payette Church and were members there for five years. During this time, I began assisting a Mennonite publishing ministry in Kentucky. Eventually, we moved there to work with that ministry full-time. We were there for a year and decided to move back to Idaho.

Due to various struggles and discouragements we were facing at the time, we joined a Baptist church in Idaho for a season while we sought the Lord about what to do. Eventually, the Lord led us to return to the Payette Church. We did, and this time we were able to bring some adopted children with us.

Conclusion

Our journey has been joyful beyond words, yet it has not been without struggles. Perhaps someone else will write about potential struggles that exist and how we can deal with them in a way that brings glory to God. For us, we have had to face internal church struggles, vocational issues, temptations to backslide, and struggles giving certain things up such as instrumental music. We have not “solved” all of these struggles yet today, but God has helped us to accept them as part of the cost of following Jesus Christ more faithfully in our lives.

J.S. | Idaho



Technology and Anabaptism

by Georges Gawinowski

When we talk about Kingdom Christians, we are talking about Christians who are following the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ: love, simplicity, nonresistance, humility, and separation from the world.

New-technology electronics such as smartphones and the internet are tools that can become idols (Merriam-Webster defines an idol as an object of extreme devotion). A tool is an instrument we use for a specific job; then when the job is done, the tool goes back on the shelf. We may sometimes use technology devices as disguised work tools for entertainment purposes; the difference is subtle.

In this article I will share what our Lord has put in my heart and show the differences between using technology as a tool or for entertainment. Then I want to give some warnings about these dangerous tools. And lastly, I want to say how Kingdom Christians should live while we sojourn on the earth.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

New Technology Versus Old Technology

Generation after generation of humankind has developed a survival instinct since the beginning of time. In the last century we have seen the coming of automobiles, electricity, telephones, and computers; the list is pretty extensive. When trains used to travel 30 miles an hour, people in that era thought that going at such a high speed was too fast and dangerous. That was indeed a big difference if people were only used to traveling by horse and carriage. Now, traveling at 30 miles an hour no longer seems fast because we have gotten used to traveling at 70 miles in one hour or even 600 miles in one hour. So we get used to new technology and it no longer seems dangerous to us.



For a few minutes, I would like to focus on a new technology that has invaded our schools, our churches, and our homes. Is the use of this new technology to make the lives of Kingdom Christians easier and more pleasing to God? I want to mention a number of different aspects of this new technology to answer that question.

“For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand” (Revelation 19:2).

Only ten years ago cell phones were a big thing in modern society. I, personally, think it is a tool that can be used for work or as a safety device when traveling. And for people working away from the office, such as farmers, cell phones are a great aid to the workers and managers to keep them in touch with the latest instructions.

It is reassuring when we are able to talk to our family or friends whenever we wish, to communicate with them. Talking is important in a Christian’s life as discussion helps to pass a message on to a brother or a sister; we want to feel and see his or her concerns and joys. Unfortunately, the new devices are leading to the easy way out as their users have a tendency to text more than to talk.

Smartphones are part of this new technology. They enable us to text a message or use applications to remain in constant touch with the world. We should pay attention to these tools as they are often referred to as “devices used for work.” We hear statements such as, “this is where the world is going, and we must use these tools for our work.”

I believe this is a mistake. These devices, made by the world, are made for worldly people. Yet, we know that people have been working without these electronic tools for thousands of years. Merchants have been selling goods for ages without the need of these tools. Ministers have touched the heart of brothers and sisters without them.

Warning and Dangers

Seekers today have traveled long distances to find a true religion based on the teachings of the Lord. Ever since the days of the apostles, the early church fathers, and other sects like the Waldensians, and Anabaptists —followers of Jesus have been resisting the world. Some believers and churches no longer resist the world and, instead, have fallen into it. Seekers are seeing what happens in churches when people no longer resist another of the Devil’s tactics.

I know my words may sound harsh, but I really believe that the Devil may be using new technology devices to help him disperse Kingdom Christians instead of gathering them. It is the same lie the Devil used in the beginning. **“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 1:3-4).**

When mankind wants to replace God with technology or make of himself a god, he is in trouble. This is happening now. The distraction of technology can move us away from the Holy Scripture, meditation, and God. Little by little, technology can change the way we think and the way we see things.

Some scientists are describing the dangers of using these new technologies, especially smartphones, because they give us the feeling of being in control. But this is not true. Instead of being in control, scientists are telling us we become addicted to these devices.

For instance, “Researchers have found an imbalance in the brain chemistry of young people addicted to smartphones and the internet. According to a study presented today at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) and according to a recent Pew Research Center study, 46 percent of Americans say they could not live without their smartphones.”

The addiction to smartphones and electronics is harming the brain by altering cognitive neurotransmitter cells, which “hook” one’s body in the same way an alcoholic or druggie is addicted. Other studies have shown that these devices disrupt melatonin production, and therefore affect how well we sleep. To me, it looks as though we, as Christians, are struggling to keep from being addicted to the world’s tools. It may surprise us that the inventors of these devices recognize the dangers of addiction and other harm that can come by using smartphones and the internet. Many of those inventors do not send their children to schools where their tools can be found because they know the dangers and the

outcome of using them.

For instance, from Los Altos, California comes this astounding news:

“The chief technology officer of eBay sends his children to a nine-classroom school here [The Waldorf School of the Peninsula]. So do employees of Silicon Valley giants like Google, Apple, Yahoo and Hewlett-Packard. But the school’s chief teaching tools are anything but high-tech: pens and paper, knitting needles and, occasionally, mud. Not a computer to be found. No screens at all. Computers are not allowed in the classroom, and the school even frowns on their use at home ... Some education experts say that the push

to equip classrooms with computers is unwarranted because studies do not clearly show that this leads to better test scores or other measurable gains ... some parents and educators have a message: computers and schools don’t mix.... The Waldorf School of the Peninsula, is one of around 160 Waldorf schools in the country that subscribe to a teaching philosophy focused on physical activity and learning through creative, hands-on tasks. Those who endorse this approach say computers inhibit creative thinking, movement, human interaction and attention spans. The Waldorf method

is nearly a century old, but its foothold here among the digerati puts into sharp relief an intensifying debate about the role of computers in education. “I fundamentally reject the notion you need technology aids in grammar school,” said Alan Eagle, 50, whose daughter, Andie, is one of the 196 children at the Waldorf elementary school; his son William, 13, is at the nearby middle school. “The idea that an app on an iPad can better teach my children to read or do arithmetic is ridiculous.”

Some could argue that technology will help students to accomplish their goals faster. [Paul Thomas argues otherwise.] “Personally, I have noticed that students who learn text through computer only, have less knowledge retention on the long-term period. Teaching is a human experience ...”



The distraction of technology can move us away from the Holy Scriptures

“Technology is a distraction when we need literacy, numeracy and critical thinking” (Paul Thomas, former teacher and associate professor of education at Furman University, author of twelve books about public educational methods).

For thousands of years, humans have been working in God’s creation. Christians must honor Him and strive to fulfill His mandate to fill and replenish the earth. We dare not think we can become gods and build technology towers where we disregard God and His commandments. As with Adam and Eve, God always allows us to choose the route we wish to take, even if, like any other addiction, it is going to lead us into sin. Technology tools can distract us from God’s narrow way and, instead, attract us into the broad way that can harm us.

Kingdom Christians Are the Light of the World

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Dear brothers and sisters, I pray that we all react and show how we are to be the light of the world and followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be an example in everything we speak and do by all our actions.

The world is watching and the world is looking at us; they start to think we are not so different after all! We use the same cars and trucks they use; we dress almost the same as they do, except for our women who are showing a greater example of simplicity and humility in clothing than us men. God bless their hearts!

If we spend our days with our eyes constantly stuck on our smartphones, the people of the world will think we are no different from them. Instead, we should be talking to the people around us; we should have compassion and be gentle with all living creatures. We should pay attention to people in the airports, on the streets, in our workplaces, and in our homes. We must not be so addicted to smartphones and the internet that we have no time for face-to-face time with people.

My humble advice about using the internet is the following:

- **Dedicate some time** to connect for work and research. Use restricted internet with one computer for the house or at work.

- **Forbid social media** within our plain communities.

- **Use a regular cellphone** instead of a smartphone.

- **Smartphones are costly**; save the money and invest in a charitable purpose instead.

- **Do not have a phone connected** to the internet; you are carrying a TV, radio, and the whole world with you all the time. It is very controversial behavior to adopt it when church standards strictly warn against the TV and radio.

- **Instead of constantly looking at your phone** when traveling, read the Bible, meditate, communicate with the people around you; it could be your best opportunity to witness in the name of Jesus.

Everything God Created is Good

Let the work of the Spirit grow in us. Be receptive to His still small voice. Meditate on the Scripture. Rejoice in doing good. Work with the things created by our God and shun all things that lead us away from God.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him” (1 John 2:15).

G.G. | Florida



From Heartache to Hope

by Karen Raber

Genocide, war, school shooting—these are no longer new words in our vocabulary. Do these hopeless acts of evil have no explanations? Does God care? I don't have solutions, but I have come to look at these happenings as dark splotches of paint defiantly hurled at the magnificent canvas on which God is painting the history of time. These sinister smears of paint are the desperate actions of one who has withstood the Almighty from the beginning. But God, the master painter, is not hindered by these interruptions on the canvas. He is able to turn these awful happenings into something that amplifies His glory. Join me as we review some history and see the compassion and supremacy of the God we serve.

It was the late 1980s. The place was one of the northern provinces of Iraq, called Kurdistan; the people were the Kurdish residents. Saddam Hussein, the dictator of Iraq, had one goal in mind—to exterminate the Kurds. Compassion wasn't a characteristic of Saddam Hussein, and the plans for accomplishing his purpose were ruthless. He ordered crop-dusting planes, loaded with chemicals, to fly over Kurdish villages, dousing the residents with a substance that literally ate their flesh away. People were killed by the thousands, and entire villages were wiped out. It was one of those dark splotches of paint hurled at the master canvas.

Nearly twenty years later on our side of the globe, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, another black splotch was in the making. It was a bright, lovely October forenoon, but inside a small, white schoolhouse, the atmosphere was dark and ominous. Ten young girls lay in a row, facing grave danger. A gunman ordered all boys and adults to leave while he lowered the window shades and nailed barricades across the doors. Authorities had been alerted and were pouring into the schoolyard. They commanded Mr. Roberts to come out, but he was spurred to action instead. Several minutes later, five young girls lay lifeless, five were wounded, and the gunman himself lay silent and unmoving. It was the Nickel Mines School shooting. What do these incidents have in common? At first glance, nothing. In fact, there is a huge disparity in the

aftermath of these two happenings. The Kurds who had survived the onslaught of cruelty were, years later, still struggling with depression, anger, and frustration. In contrast, the Amish community of Nickel Mines chose to forgive. They believed that because God had forgiven them, they would, by His grace, forgive Mr. Roberts. To demonstrate their forgiveness, they showed compassion and care to Mrs. Roberts and her children.

No one knows how it came about, but a documentary written about the Nickel Mines incident found its way across the world to Kurdistan. By this time, the Kurdish people were desperate for something different. They recognized that by taking the path of retaliation

and fighting, they were only causing more anger and frustration. The Nickel Mines story amazed them. They realized that if they could embody the principles portrayed in this documentary, they could change their nation for good.

The Kurds approached an American who was working to help them rebuild their villages and requested that he find these Amish people and bring them to Kurdistan to teach them this philosophy of forgiveness. At first, this seemed like an impossible feat. But after some research, the American contacted some Amish people from Lancaster who agreed to fly to Kurdistan.

This group flew over, prayed for the people, and taught them the words of Jesus. It's hard to estimate the extent of this influence, but it was after this introduction to the Gospel of Jesus that Kurdistan turned a corner.

Why are we looking at this segment of history? It's because, out of these dark tragedies, a mission opportunity was recognized. God enabled believers to carry the light of the Gospel to people who were completely closed to Christianity before. The stories of Kurdistan and Nickel Mines form the backdrop to this mission's beginnings, and the next few stories reveal how God orchestrated events for His own purpose. Several years later, the



people of Lancaster provided aid for a disaster that occurred near Kurdistan.

The roof of a missionary training school blew off in a storm. This school is located in Armenia, to the north of Kurdistan, and works with the ministry, Back To Jerusalem. The pastor in charge of the school reached out to Back To Jerusalem for help. They told him, “We are only sheep and rice farmers and know very little about construction, but we know some carpenters from Pennsylvania who could help.”

Shortly after, a group from Pennsylvania flew to Armenia to repair the roof. When they got there, they looked at the disaster and marveled. Was God showing



them something? The roof had folded over neatly in the storm and landed in the courtyard, which was barely as big as the roof! Neither the building nor the courtyard had sustained any damage. This was more than coincidence. When the volunteers arrived back in the States, they started praying that the Lord would show them what He wanted them to learn from this experience. What was it they felt He was asking of them?

Soon, another message came. It was an email asking if they could come once more. This time, a group of 9,000 refugees had flooded into a village in Kurdistan and had moved into concrete houses with no windows or doors; some of the houses had hardly any roofs. Could they provide plastic coverings and twelve men for about two weeks? The difference this time was that the ISIS crisis was in full swing. Nearly everyone in America had heard of ISIS, and the word sent shivers down their spines. Nevertheless, when the Lancaster people received the message, they prepared to go.

The group had been there only a short time when they discovered that this was a much larger project than anticipated. It was September, and winter was coming.

Cold winds blew through these unfinished shelters while rain and snow found their way inside, further chilling the occupants. Not only did these refugees have inadequate housing, but they were also sick, both physically and emotionally.

They had just fled some of the most horrific scenes of bloodshed and violence, and thousands of their people had been killed or kidnapped. Many had no idea if their family members were still alive, and if they were, they had no idea where they were.

The team sent a message back home saying, “We need more people, more money, and we won’t be done in two weeks.”

One day, as Ramon Stoltz was making his way through the village, a woman came running up to him. In broken English, she stated that her baby was sick and needed a doctor. The fact that she approached a man, a man she didn’t even know—which is unthinkable in her culture—portrayed her desperation. Ramon stopped, considered her dilemma, and then told her, “We didn’t bring doctors, but I will pray.” Disappointed, she said they’d already prayed, and it hadn’t helped. “But,” Ramon said, “I can pray to Jesus.” She finally agreed, desperate for anything that might help.

Ramon prayed for the child, then found his way back to the rest of the team. During lunch, he related



the incident and said, “We all need to pray. That baby won’t make it through the night unless the Lord performs a miracle, and what’s more, I just put Jesus’ name on the line. This lady believes that Jesus is only a dead prophet, and if He doesn’t heal this child, it will only confirm her beliefs.” The entire team prayed and also

sent messages back to the States asking people to pray. The next morning, the girls from the team paid a visit to the lady. The baby showed no traces of having been sick. The Lord had performed a miracle!

As the days went by, more and more people came for help. When the team members were out walking, people would come running, asking for doctors. The answer was always that they had no doctors, but they could pray. While they prayed, more would line up with the same requests. Seeing the people healed was most amazing! The refugees kept asking, “Why do you come? Don’t you know that ISIS is going to kill you if they catch you? Don’t you care?” They replied, “Yes, we know, but we are here because we serve a God who reigns with love, and in turn, we love and care about you.” To the refugees, it was inconceivable. All they knew was serving a god who reigned with fear.

It didn’t take long to realize that these disasters and tragedies had swung the door open wide for the church in Iraq. There, the opportunities were endless. Back home, people were giving money faster than the budding mission could put it to use.

People wanted to know more about the ISIS crisis and ways they could help. Mike Stoltzfus returned home and helped to organize what is now Plain Compassion Crisis Response; a non-profit organization operated by conservative Anabaptists and Mennonites. Mike said, “We hadn’t planned on organizing a mission. We didn’t even know how. We only knew there was a need and the Lord was providing for it. As Henry Blackaby said, ‘God is always working somewhere, and it’s our job to find out where and partner with Him.’ We really feel we simply stepped into what God was already doing.” Mike and his family spent many hours traveling about the country visiting churches who were interested in the work, and God kept connecting the dots.

In Iraq, the missionaries realized that the only thing that would stem the tide of the ISIS violence was the Gospel of Christ. They prayed for ways to reach the ISIS soldiers. It was at this time that Mike and some others from PCCR were shown drones that had the capability of being programmed to fly to a specified location and

drop things from the air. When Mike saw them, he knew they were exactly what they needed.

The mission smuggled several drones into Iraq and then tried to formulate a plan. If they tried to send messages to ISIS, they reasoned, it would look terribly suspicious, and the Kurds would think they were spies. That would turn the Kurdish army, with whom they had great favor, against them as well. That was no option. Finally, they decided to be up-front with the Kurds, and showed them what they wanted to do. They showed them the drones, the audio Bible players with small solar panels on the back, and the earbuds. These would be put into small tubes, fastened to the bottom of the

drones, and then dropped on ISIS outposts. They told the Kurds, “The Gospel of Jesus on these players will make ISIS stop fighting.”

The Kurdish soldiers responded with, “That’s the most ridiculous thing we ever heard. You are crazy!” One soldier, however, asked for a player and walked away, holding it to his ears. He was gone for a long time, and when he returned, he looked at them squarely and said, “This is not only good for ISIS; it’s good for my people, too.” The soldiers gave the mission the GPS coordinates to the villages where the Bible drops could be done. It was ironic. Iraq

was closed to evangelizing, yet here were soldiers who were helping them do so!

This went well for several months until the news leaked out to the wrong people and the mission was thrust out of the country. They were threatened that if they ever set foot in Iraq again, they would be killed. Within one week, the team was back in Iraq. Mike said, “If God tells you to go, you just go.”

This time, they settled in a village that desperately needed help but was decidedly closed to the Gospel. During their work there, they met a young Iraqi army general whose nickname was “ISIS slayer.” His looks belied his nickname; his soft face projected an agreeable disposition which discredited the fact he was a hardened killer. The team repeatedly invited him over for an evening meal on the rooftop of their mission outpost.



He finally accepted and came with two of his bodyguards. When the general turned to leave, he stepped into the little room where the project coordinator kept his table. He pointed to the Bible lying on the table and asked if he could have one in his language. The project coordinator's jaw sagged. He would be delighted to find one! Hadn't he been praying for this?

It took two weeks to procure a Bible in the right language, but then the coordinator hastened to give it. The general then told him why he had requested a Bible. He had heard of an ISIS general in Syria who had found a Bible, and after he had finished it, told his soldiers to lay down their weapons and go home. He told them they had been fighting the wrong fight; they'd been deceived and they had to stop following their way and follow Jesus. This story had caused the Iraqi general to think. How could such a small thing do more to stop an army than a whole truckload of bombs? He was forced to compare their cultural way of fighting in which, for every man killed, three more are honor-bound to take his place, with

the Gospel, where not only does one man stop fighting, but all his followers stop as well. It's sad that PCCR was forced out of this town soon afterward, and contact with the general was lost.

Is God able to use the world's darkest moments for his glory? I know He can. I also know that the Deceiver will one day be thwarted and there will be no more dark splotches on the canvas of our lives. But in the meantime, the canvas is in God's hands. It is in good hands, don't you think?

K.R. | *Pennsylvania*

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Interpretive Reading from Hebrews 11

by James G. Landis

What the Scripture Means to Me

An Interpretive Reading of Hebrews 11:1-13

Writing down what the Scripture means to you forces you to put into words what God is telling you. It is proven that writing something down is one of the best ways to imprint it on your heart and memory.

This kind of Bible study is hard work, but can prove a great blessing to those who put forth the effort. Below is an example of a personal reading that has blessed my life.

To me, Hebrews 11 is one of the most exciting chapters in the Bible because it tells how men pleased God by their faith.

Hebrews 11:1-13

Verse 1 – Faith gives us confidence that the things we hope for are real and assures us the things we cannot see with our eyes are true.

Verse 2 – Because of their faith men of old pleased God.

Verse 3 – Our faith helps us understand the worlds were made at God's command and that they were made out of things we cannot see with our eyes.

Verse 4 tells us three things about the faith of Abel:

1. Because of Abel's faith in God, he brought a better sacrifice than Cain did.
2. Because of Abel's faith, God was pleased with him and his offering.
3. Because of Abel's faith, he still speaks today even though he is dead.

Verse 5 – Enoch had faith and did not die. Because of Enoch's faith, God was so pleased with how Enoch lived his life on earth that God took him directly to heaven. That is why his body was never found.

Verse 6 – Before anyone can please God, he must believe that God is real and that He rewards everyone who searches for Him.

Verse 7 tells us about the faith of Noah. Because of his faith, God warned Noah about an incredible event that had not yet happened. Noah obeyed God and built a giant boat that saved him and his family. In this way, God judged the people of the world, but Noah was given the blessings that come to everyone who pleases God.

Verses 8-10 tell us about the faith of Abraham. Because of his faith in God, Abraham obeyed God when God told him to leave his home and go to another land that He would give him as his inheritance. Abraham went out not even knowing where he was going.

And even when he reached the land God promised him, because of his faith, Abraham lived there like a foreigner, dwelling in tents instead of building houses, for Abraham understood that the land he was to inherit was not on the earth. Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise as Abraham, also dwelled in tents. They lived in tents because, like Abraham, they were confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

Verse 11 – Because of Sarah’s faith, she was enabled to bear a child after she was 90-years-old and well past the age when she could have a child, for she believed God who had promised her she would bear a son one year later.

Verse 12 – So because of the faith of Sarah and Abraham, even though Abraham was 100 years old and as good as dead, God gave them Isaac.

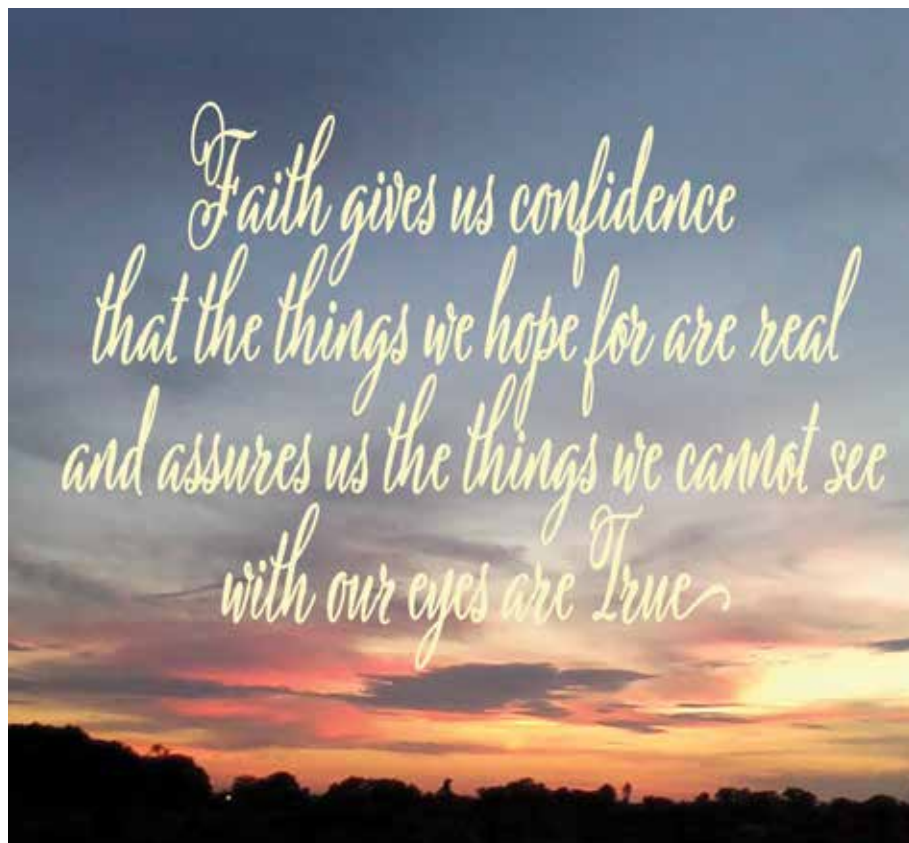
And thus through Isaac, God gave Abraham so many descendants they were like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore; they could not be counted.

So it is, because of our faith in God, we also are counted as some of Abraham’s descendants.

Verse 13 – All these people mentioned, from Abel to Isaac and Jacob were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things God promised them while living on the earth, but through their eyes of faith they viewed a heavenly city that could not be seen with their bodily eyes. By faith, these men of old rejoiced and set their hearts on the heavenly city. This made them realize they were only foreigners and strangers while they lived on the earth.

Application: We also should live on earth with the heavenly city foremost in our minds. This kind of life pleases God.

J.G.L. | Georgia



Michael Sattler Still Speaks

by Andrew V. Ste. Marie

“They are true Christians who practice in deed the teaching of Christ.”

– Michael Sattler to the Protestant reformers

His enemies could cut out his tongue and burn his body, but nothing could keep Michael Sattler and the truth he had spoken and written from echoing down through the centuries to the present day.

When a young man, Michael Sattler became a Roman Catholic monk. In time he came to see monasticism as corrupt and unscriptural. Consequently, he left the monastery. Eventually he came into contact with Anabaptists, made his own confession of faith, and was baptized by them in the summer of 1526. During the ten months remaining to him before his martyrdom he evangelized, wrote letters, and ably defended Anabaptist teachings. His most significant contribution to the Anabaptist movement was his role in the Schleithem Conference that helped bring the Swiss Brethren to unity around a scriptural vision.

Here are some excerpts from Michael’s writings which still speak to us today.

Background: This quote is from the beginning of the Schleithem Confession, which explained why the Schleithem gathering and agreement was necessary. Disintegration threatened the Anabaptist movement due to “false brethren” who introduced various errors, among them the idea that those who had “faith and love” could live however they pleased. Sattler answered that Christ’s people “have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts.”

M.S.: *“A very great offense has been introduced by certain false brethren among us, so that some have turned aside from the faith, in the way they intend to practice and observe the freedom of the Spirit and of Christ. But such have missed the truth and to their condemnation are given over to the lasciviousness and self-indulgence of the flesh. They think faith and love may do and permit everything, and nothing will harm them nor condemn them, since they are believers. ...*

“But you are not that way. For they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts.”

Background: The Schleithem Confession explained who would be accepted for baptism. It laid out a number of beliefs and conditions that must be met before baptism would be “given.”

M.S.: *“Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ, and to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with Him in death, so that they may be resurrected with Him, and to all those who with this significance request it [baptism] of us and demand it for themselves.”*

Background: The Schleithem Confession calls for separation from the world, a central concept in Michael Sattler’s theology. The reason for separation is because the world is divided into two kingdoms—the kingdoms of God and Satan, the kingdoms of light and darkness. A person can only be a member of one kingdom and must shun and flee from the works of the other.

M.S.: *“A separation shall be made from the evil and from the wickedness which the devil planted in the world; in this manner, simply that we shall not have fellowship with them [the wicked] and not run with them in the multitude of their abominations. This is the way it is: Since all who do not walk in the obedience of faith, and have not united themselves with God so that they wish to do His will, are a great abomination before God, it is not possible for anything to grow or issue from them except abominable things. For truly all creatures are in but two classes, good and bad, believing and unbelieving, darkness and light, the world and those who [have come] out of the world, God’s temple and idols, Christ and Belial; and none can have part with the other.*

“To us then the command of the Lord is clear when He calls upon us to be separate from the evil and thus He will be our God and we shall be His sons and daughters. ... Therefore there will also unquestionably fall from us the unchristian, devilish weapons of force—such as sword, armor and the like, and all their use [either] for friends or against one’s enemies—by virtue of the word of Christ, ‘I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also’ (Matthew 5:39).”

Background: Following his arrest, sitting in prison, Michael Sattler wrote to the congregation at Horb, where he had likely been accepted as a “shepherd” or pastor. He encourages them to persevere in following the Lord in spite of persecution and his own impending martyrdom.

M.S.: “Dear brothers, note what I write, whether it is of the Lord, and apply yourselves to walk accordingly. Let no one shift your goal, as has hitherto happened to some, but go right on, firm and undeviating, in all patience, that you might not of yourselves make void and set aside the cross which God has laid upon you, which would be counter to the honor and praise of God, and furthermore would break and dissolve His eternal, veritable, righteous and life-giving commandments.”

Background: In his letter to the believers at Horb, Sattler reminds them that although church discipline is necessary to preserve purity, that goal should not keep them from acting—even disciplining—out of love. “Without love for each other,” Sattler says, “it is impossible to be a truly Christian congregation.”

M.S.: “Further, dear fellow members in Christ, you should be admonished not to forget love, without which it is not possible that you be a Christian congregation. You know what love is through the testimony of Paul our fellow brother; he says: ‘Love is patient and kind, not jealous, not puffed up, not ambitious, seeks not its own, thinks no evil, rejoices not in iniquity, rejoices in the truth, suffers everything, endures everything, believes everything, hopes everything.’

“If you understand this text, you will find the love of God and of your neighbor...”

“If you love the neighbor, you will not scold or ban zealously, will not seek your own, will not remember evil, will not be ambitious or puffed up, but kind, righteous, generous in all gifts, humble and sympathetic with the weak and imperfect.”

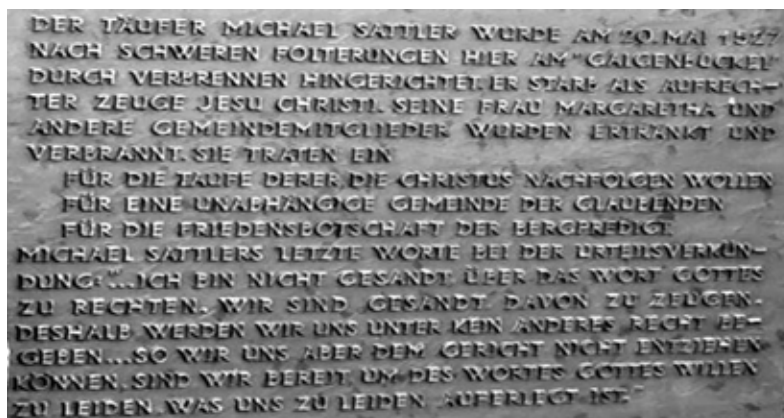
Background: An anonymous early Anabaptist tract, attributed by some to Michael Sattler, titled “Two Kinds of Obedience,” explains the difference between “servile” or “slavish” and “filial” or “son-like” obedience. While filial obedience is what God desires, those who find themselves to be under servile obedience can be led to filial obedience, just as Moses and the Law led to Christ and the Gospel.

M.S.: “Obedience is of two kinds, servile and filial. The filial has its source in the love of the Father, even though no other reward should follow, ... the servile has its source in a love of reward or of oneself. The filial ever does as much as possible, apart from any command; the servile does as little as possible, yea nothing except by command. The servile is Moses and produces Pharisees and scribes; the filial is Christ and makes children of God.”

A.V.S. | Michigan

I Appeal to Scripture, a biography of Michael Sattler by Andrew V. Ste. Marie, can be ordered from Sermon on the Mount Publishing, P.O. Box 246, Manchester, MI 48158. (734) 428-0488.

This text appears on the stone where German authorities tortured and killed Michael Sattler just out of Rottenburg am Neckar in Württemberg.



—Courtesy of Peter Hoover and Wolfgang Krauß

“The Anabaptist, Michael Sattler, was burned at the stake on this spot, the ‘Galgenbuckel’ (hill of the gallows), after severe torture, on the 20th of May, 1527. He died as an upright witness of Jesus Christ. His wife, Margarethe, and other members of the church, also lost their lives through drowning and fire. They stood for the baptism of those who wanted to follow Christ, for an autonomous church of believers, and for the gospel of peace as taught

in the Sermon on the Mount. Michael Sattler’s last words when the judgement was read to him were, ‘I was not sent to fight for the the Word of God in front of a court. We are sent to be witnesses of the Word. For this reason we will not operate under any other authority. Since we cannot avoid this court (of justice), we are ready to suffer for the sake of the Word of God whatever suffering is inflicted upon us.’”

Round Table Discussion

by AV Readers

The following pages are meant to encourage interaction between Anabaptist Voice and our readers. If you have questions or thoughts and would like to hear a response from AV, this section is for you. Write to us.
AV Editor

Separate Word and Scripture

You wrote in AV14, page 37: “And how do we distinguish good from evil? By the Word of God. There is no other standard we can use.” I suppose you are referring to the Holy Scriptures. When reading it, I thought of what one brother said, “There is no place in Scripture that the Bible is called the ‘Word of God.’ But over and over Christ is called the ‘Word of God.’”

I’ve been thinking about that. Maybe AV should always use “Word of God” when it refers to Christ because using biblical terminology and giving it a new definition is a primary way that Christianity gets distorted.

I have come to understand that Christians use the Scriptures in many ways that distort Christianity because they don’t see Scripture through the Word of God, Christ Himself. We don’t take His example and teaching as the starting point. We don’t make Him the Alpha and the Omega of our theology. We don’t give Him the preeminence in all things.

I am convinced that keeping the distinction clear between the Word of God and the Word (Christ) makes a difference in how we live, a huge difference. We cannot be Christians if we do not know the living Christ (John 17:3), and we know Him through the Scriptures. Many men are students, even “doctors” of the Scriptures, but they do not know Christ Jesus, the Man Who is the eternal Son. Jesus said to such men, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:39-40). We do not want to be lawyers who know the Scripture in our personal lives or in *Anabaptist Voice*, but who do not know the Living Word.

E.S. | Oklahoma

AV Editor: Many words have two different meanings and we do well to make the distinction clear when using “Word” (Scripture) and “Word” (Christ).



Scriptures Reveal Christ

If I said that “Word” always unambiguously refers to Jesus, I overstated the case. The point I make is that the Holy Scriptures are a means to an end, not an end in themselves (John 5:39). Scriptures are intended to reveal Christ, not to be used for theological gymnastics that result in conclusions foreign to Jesus’ example and teachings.

My position does not diminish a high regard for the Scriptures as some would think. The Scriptures are indispensable to a knowledge of Jesus, but God never intended for us to get stuck in the text. He wanted us to use the text as a revelation of Jesus.

The Anabaptists had it right. Somewhere in their writings they say something like this: “No interpretation of the Scriptures is a proper interpretation if it contradicts anything Jesus said or did.”

The focus must always be on the “Person” of Jesus Christ, with the text used as a means to understanding that “Person.” The final goal is not to just be “scriptural,” but to be Christlike, with the Scriptures regarded as an indispensable means to that end.

J.D.M. | Pennsylvania

AV Editor: To be Christlike while living in obedience to God and His Word is always good and right. However, God has revealed more to man in His Word (the Bible) than just the example and teaching of Jesus. The Bible is more than the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The “Word of God” reveals to mankind what pleases God, and as such, we ought to reverence it (hold it in deep respect).



Seeing Through a Glass Darkly

I wish to add to the Round Table Discussion by proposing answers to some of the questions on AV14, page 14.

#1. Where did God take Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (II Kings 2:1, 11) when they left the earth? I will say right up front that I cannot speak with authority

on this subject, because no one but Jesus has ever gone to heaven and come back. “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13). It is hard to find a clearer Scripture on this subject.

I doubt whether Moses, Elijah or Enoch received any special privileges that Abraham, Job, Joseph, or the rest of the OT saints received. It does seem, according to the account on the Mount of Transfiguration, that Moses and Elijah both existed in a state of consciousness (Matthew 17:3). Likewise, Abraham appears to be in conscious bliss in Jesus’ story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:22).

We must realize that when we look beyond this life into the next, we are seeing through a glass, darkly. Of the final judgment and two eternal destinies we are certain, but from the time of death to that final judgment there is some obscurity.

#5. How much of Acts 2:17-21 was fulfilled at Pentecost?

Though I believe many prophecies are shrouded in symbols (beasts, horses, dragons, locusts), these particular signs could have literally happened. During the tumultuous and spiritually upsetting time period from Christ’s death to Pentecost and even later at the destruction of Jerusalem strange things did happen. The sun was literally darkened, earthquakes literally shook the earth, and some of the things that occurred may not have been recorded by the apostles. Josephus, a Jewish historian living in this time period, listed some very astonishing signs that occurred during this time, especially just before the destruction of Jerusalem.

#7. What is meant by the saying, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54)?

Those who experience the first death (crucifixion of the flesh) will participate in the resurrection and have a new glorious body; the second death (physical death) will have no power over them. Thus, death liberates the believer from the body of sin and corruption. “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

J. B. | Chile

AV Editor: All seven questions have one focal point: Heaven and being in the presence of God existed from earliest time.

Heaven and hell are real and in existence. One thing is certain: Jesus is coming for the soul of each one of us at death.



KJV Only

When someone says, “Other translations say,” it has little relevance with me. This is because I know that the newer translations are not just different interpretations of the same manuscripts; they use different manuscripts altogether. It should be no wonder that they do not say things the same way as the KJV! Essentially, we are comparing two different books (the Greek/Hebrew foundation translated into the KJV, and the [different] Greek/Hebrew foundation of the newer translations).

We have so many study tools available today that we really don’t need the newer versions. Could we not just dig deeper into the meaning of the Greek words that underlie the KJV New Testament instead?

Why would we turn from what has worked for generations and has borne good fruit for us? I have seen the slide that has happened in the evangelical movement over the last 30-40 years. It has paralleled the introduction of these newer translations. Maybe it is coincidental, but maybe not.

I would like to bring this matter into the light to be honestly and prayerfully examined. My prayer is that the topic would be considered, prayed about, researched, and discussed to find God’s will in the matter.

While we should avoid contention and division, there are times to really examine things and seek God’s will on a matter; this happened over a polarizing issue that was escalating in Acts 15. I trust that if we put the desire to know and do God’s will as the primary factor, we can discuss any important matter and be led of His Spirit to a godly conclusion.

S.M. | Virginia

AV Editor: You have expressed some beliefs held by a good many people. In this issue of AV, godly men address many of your concerns from several different perspectives. These brethren have done what you have prayed for—honestly and prayerfully they have examined translation and how it affects our understanding of the Bible. All of these brethren believe in the authority and reliability of the Scripture in various languages and versions.

The KJV has had a broad influence on the English language. The KJV contains many beautiful phrases and truths that resonate with us. We have not said the KJV is a bad or unreliable translation; we say it is not perfect or the only right one in English. If KJV blesses you, use it and live by its precepts.



The Salvation Process

I am writing to add to the discussion question in AV14, page 36, “Are there contradictions between the KJV and other English translations that affect how we put our faith into practice?”

John Bunyan wrote an allegory called Pilgrim’s Progress. In it Christian left the City of Destruction and traveled to the Celestial City. His salvation was a process with many events.

When the rich man came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life, he was looking for a one-time event. After that event, he wanted to continue living as he had previously done. Instead, Jesus gave him a process, saying, “Come and follow me.” The man rejected the way of the cross and went away sorrowful (Mark 10:21, Luke 18:23).

Translations can make a difference in our understanding of salvation. The KJV of Ephesians 2:8 says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith.” The Amplified Bible, Classic Edition (AMPC) says, “For it is by free grace (God’s unmerited favor) that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ’s salvation) through [your] faith.

Whereas the English Standard Version (ESV) and the New International Version (NIV) say, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...”

Changing the tense makes a big difference. Past tense indicates it is a done deal and nothing else is required. Present tense indicates it is now an ongoing process.

I need God’s grace every day. One time in the past isn’t enough.

B.I.H. | Pennsylvania

AV Editor: Undoubtedly we need God’s grace every day. But I do not follow how that is part of an ongoing salvation process. When we repent of our sin and commit to follow Christ and enter God’s Kingdom, we become new creatures that have experienced a change of life, not just a change of heart. From now on, we do not knowingly sin every day, but continually strive to please God in all of life.



Pants and Tattoos

I am writing in response to “Good Reasons” AV14, page 38.

Even though the Law of Moses was abolished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it does not mean that everything forbidden therein is now allowed.

The matter of sex distinction is not a Law-of-Moses matter. It was already brought into existence in the Garden of Eden where God pointed out the different roles of both male and female. It was a gross sin for Sodom to step out of this order which was hundreds of years before the time of Moses.

It is quite interesting that the writer makes the point that men’s clothing on women or vice-versa and tattoos and body piercings are not forbidden in the New Testament. In I Corinthians 6:9 Paul mentions, “**Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.**” Then the apostle Paul mentions “effeminate” which means men making themselves womanish and could perhaps apply to women trying to appear as men. This could definitely be done with clothing.

The New Testament scriptures we have on mode of dress—modest apparel, shamefacedness, no jewelry, not conforming to the world—would surely include tattoos and body piercings. And the admonition in I Corinthians 6:19 certainly covers both clothing and tattoos: “**Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body**” (ESV).

D.H. | Ohio

AV Editor: It is hard to imagine how a Christian could think that body piercings and tattoos would be a way of glorifying God. These things are done by those who know not God and are associated with Satan and his kingdom.





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 Responses**—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: Reader Responses

Reader responses to stories from previous issues.

Three Pledges *(from AV 14, page 41)*

by Hart Bound



A Christian should not pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. It is a ritual carried out across the United States in schools and other public places every day. It is a national sacrament—a pledging of loyalties to the values, ideals, and authority

of the American State.

Neither should a Christian pledge his allegiance to the flag of any nation. Our allegiance cannot go to two entities; we cannot serve two masters. Jesus calls us to a life of nonresistance and separation from the world, its evil ways, and its political systems (*Matthew 20:25-27*). While the United States is a good country to live in, in many ways it fails to incarnate Jesus’ values. Our allegiance must go to Jesus and His kingdom alone; while we submit to the government as Scripture teaches, it must not have our allegiance.

Should Christians say pledges to the Christian flag or to the Bible? Our ultimate allegiance is not to the Bible, but to the God who inspired the Bible. If a public affirmation of our allegiance and loyalty to Christianity is desired, maybe we could offer to recite the Apostles’ Creed instead.

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
 Maker of heaven and earth:
 And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord,
 Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
 Born of the Virgin Mary,
 Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 Was crucified, dead, and buried:
 He descended into Hades;
 The third day he rose again from the dead;
 He ascended into heaven,
 And sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
 From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost;
 The holy Catholic [universal] Church;
 The Communion of Saints;
 The Forgiveness of sins;
 The Resurrection of the body,
 And the Life everlasting.
 Amen.





Three Pledges (from AV 14, page 41)

by Torne A. Part



In 2005, I got a job teaching at a Christian school connected to the church denomination I am a part of. I have many fond memories there! Unfortunately, this school starts every day with the students and staff placing their hands on their hearts and pledging allegiance to the American flag. I was not comfortable with this, so I did not participate. I taught there nine years without a problem, but in 2015, the leader of our church, not the school, discovered I was not saying the pledge. He was upset.

On March 18, 2015, he called me into his office and told me to start saying the pledge. I was taken off guard. I didn't know what to say, so he gave me time to think about it. My conviction did not change. I was torn. I did not want to disobey my church leader, but I could not pledge my allegiance to the flag. I didn't know what to do. I begged my church leader to understand. He would not. I begged the school board to understand. They would not. The school year finished in May and I did not know what the future held. A few weeks later, June 16, 2015, the president of the school board came to my house to inform me I was fired.

Practical Questions:

1. Why was the *church* upset that the teacher did not say the pledge of allegiance?
2. Should the teacher have bowed to the church leader?
3. What is the right thing for the teacher to do after being fired?



Three Pledges (from AV 14, page 41)

by Single Eye



To pledge allegiance to some person or thing means to solemnly promise to be loyal. So it is a serious commitment, not one to be taken lightly.

I would say there is definitely a conflict between the pledges. We dare not mix the two kingdoms, namely the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. We cannot pledge allegiance to both God and Caesar; it must be either one or the other.

No Kingdom Christian who is heavenly-minded will pledge allegiance to any country and government on

this earth because, as a pilgrim on earth, he seeks a far greater country, namely Heaven. He has pledged his allegiance to King Jesus and it is his desire to serve and love Him with all his heart, soul, mind and strength to the praise and glory of the Father.

“If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”

– Matthew 6:23



The Parable of the Herd (from AV 14, page 41)

by Stay C. Cured



Psalm 118 warns us against putting our confidence in man and tells us to place it in the Lord instead. However, the Lord established the church as a safe place for His people to dwell in His light and His salvation.

Having had experience with unstable church situations, I greatly appreciate the stability which my Mennonite conference church provides. Churches or individuals which go off on their own without strong accountability to others often lack the insight to see the consequences of their actions. With the help, prayers, wisdom, and spiritual insight of others, I can benefit from their input into my life, and my congregation can benefit from the input of other leaders and congregations.

On September 13, 2006, about three hundred ordained Amish brethren gathered to decide what to do about an Amish leader who would not work with the “herd.” He had founded his own community and excommunicated those who refused to submit to his ideas. Because of his continual abuse of his authority and excommunicating people without scriptural cause, the three hundred ordained Amish men decided not to honor his excommunications—tantamount to saying that Sam Mullet, the leader of the Bergholz Amish community, was no longer a recognized Amish leader.

When the Bergholz community renounced Christianity and turned violent, the state stepped in, there was a high-profile trial, and the world gawked at the “violent Amish” who had to serve prison sentences.

What does Anabaptist history teach us about “following the herd”? Many lessons could be drawn, but perhaps one of them is that failing to submit to a scriptural church can put one in extreme spiritual danger.

“You should not stay away from the church meetings, as some are doing.”

– Hebrews 10:25 (ICB)

The Practical Side: The Rest of the Story

What really happened in conclusion to stories from previous issues.

The Parable of the Herd

by Al Together



1. What are the blessings of being part of the herd (I Corinthians 12:7)?

Answer: I Corinthians 12:7 says, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man for the profit of all.” In this verse we see that the Spirit

profits the entire church through each individual. How are we supposed to benefit anyone if we roam around on our own? The only one we benefit is ourselves, and that is selfish and not very Christlike.

2. When is it not safe to be part of the herd (Acts 6:13-14; Revelation 2 & 3)?

Answer: Acts 6:13-14 says, “They also set up false witnesses, who said, ‘This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered us.’” To be part of a “herd” where evil and lies are set above the truth of Jesus Christ is incredibly dangerous. If you would have been a Christian in this type of church, these members would be considered wolves in sheep clothing. Or rather, just plain wolves because they made no effort in trying to fool the shepherd, but rather crucified Him openly.

3. When is it not safe to stray from the herd (III John 1:9-11)?

Answer: Ephesians 2:21-22 says, “In whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.” It is never safe to stray from the true herd of Jesus Christ. When I told a friend “The Parable of the Herd,” he replied, “My God is greater than any lion or wolf.” That is true, but remember, the church of Jesus is built with people. These verses teach that the Holy Spirit works through the church. “Lone Ranger Christianity” is never safe. Remember, we are flesh and the Devil roams around seeking whom he may devour.

4. Who commissioned the Old Testament prophets?

Answer: The Old Testament prophets were always commissioned directly by God. Many times, such as in the birth of John the Baptist, it was made

known to the mother before the child was even born. But it was always, always God who appointed the prophets to speak. In this day and age, God calls and commissions His spokesmen through the church. His true people, and those loyal to Him, are the ones He uses to go preach and teach people to follow Christ.

5. What does Anabaptist history tell us about following the herd?

Answer: The herd of buffalo are like the righteous who stay together and flourish in the presence and joy of the Lord and in the strength of fellowship. A building is not a building if the bricks are spread out. We need each other, brothers and sisters, to grow together as a holy temple of the Lord. Our history shows us that staying together helps us to grow and remain steadfast even into death. To make a disciple requires people to work and be together. Jesus did not only tell us to preach, but also to teach.



Three Pledges

by Manny Masters



Here is the rationale used by one parent for saying the three conflicting pledges. “I want my children to go to that school. It is a Christian school and much better for them than to attend the public school or another private school in the area.”

In Matthew 6:25, Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters.” Although Jesus said this in relation to money, the principle is just as true when pledging allegiance to any flag and the things they stand for. Neither children nor adults ought to be confused by such pledges and should not make this kind of oath.

Let us be plain. The pledge of allegiance to any national flag represents a willingness to support the government on the battlefield, whether one makes mental reservations against it or not. Total government support is what the pledge means to others around us.



The Practical Side: New Stories

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists

Pot Customers

by Dove Fairly



Nine of us work together in a retail nursery and landscape business. We buy and sell, as well as grow, many varieties of plants, trees, and shrubs. We also keep some basic supplies in stock such as

growing medium, containers, pesticides, fertilizers, and other supplies for our retail garden center and our greenhouse operations. We often sell these supplies to other growers who want to grow plants in their own landscape or vegetable gardens. Many times, we are asked for advice on how to grow particular plants or how to deal with specific problems our customers encounter.

In June of 2018 our state legalized what they dubbed as “medical marijuana.” This law made it legal for a licensed person with medical needs to possess up to six mature marijuana plants as well as six additional seedlings for personal “medical use.” In addition, the law opened up the growing field for commercial production of marijuana and hemp. Regardless of the state relaxing marijuana laws, marijuana remains federally illegal.

State officials contacted us ahead of the official date when the law would become effective and advised us to prepare for its advent. They saw it as advantageous for us to stock specific items used in growing cannabis. While we had little objection to hemp which is largely used for products such as hemp seed, rope, and CBD oil, we had no interest in encouraging the pot industry.

When the marijuana law went into effect, we began to experience what state officials advised us would happen. Our phones were “ringing off the hook” and growers began to flood our nursery seeking advice and supplies.

Some were straightforward about what they were growing while others were reluctant to give us that information. We were quite sure from their questions that they wanted advice and products to help them grow marijuana. In many cases we began to wonder if they were operating illegally; for example, teenagers seeking advice about their plant that “grew white stuff overnight” or supposed commercial growers that appeared to actually be end users.

While we already had reservations helping these people, this created new concerns. Could we be legally liable if we unwittingly helped or supplied an illegal growing operation? After consulting with state officials, they freely admitted there was no way they could enforce that the plants were being used legally, nor did they seem to care. They indicated we had nothing to worry about and everything to gain!

The majority of these growers were markedly of the baser sort, many showing clinical signs of marijuana influence. Their erratic moods proved to be frightening to some of our employees. In fact, as an employer, I began ordering the women to migrate to the back of the building when these growers came in and let the men deal with them. These prospective customers often quickly get mad if we do not supply what they want or they sense we are hesitant to help them. On the telephone they are equally hard to deal with in a gentle Christian manner. We are hard pressed to know what to do with these needy people and still preserve our Christian testimony. What should we do?

Practical Questions:

1. Tell them we are unable to help them?
2. Do some research so we can help them grow marijuana?
3. Sell them whatever supplies we have on hand but refuse to order in specific supplies for growing marijuana?
4. Do more research to find out exactly what is legal?
5. Hang up the phone when they want specific information on how to grow marijuana?
6. Hang up the phone if they use foul language or listen to their tirades until they hang up?





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.

Southern Mennonite Fellowship Meetings

Date: November 1-3, 2019 | Friday @ 7:00 p.m. through Sunday @ 3:00 p.m.

Location: Hartwell Mennonite Center; 3214 Royston Hwy, Hartwell, Georgia

Type of Meeting: A family-oriented fellowship meeting!

Program: Interspersed with congregational singing, prayer, devotionals, meals, fellowship, children's lessons, and children's activities.

Sermons by:

Robert Stauffer from Pennington, Minnesota:

- “First Love,” “Laying a Godly Foundation for Marriage”
- “Training for the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus”
- “Possess Your Vessel in Honor”

John Schlabach from Cedar, Michigan

- “A Twofold Premise for Parents”
- “The Hindrance of Misplaced Emphasis”
- “Biblical Directives” I
- “Biblical Directives” II



Christian Aid Ministries' Open House

Date: Thursday, October 31, 2019 to November 2, 2019

Location: Christian Aid Ministries Ephrata Warehouse
2412 Division Highway, Ephrata, PA 17522



Type of Meeting: Exhibit areas, slide presentations, breakout sessions, children story times, and opportunities to talk with people active in CAM's work are all designed to inform and inspire so that everyone can be part of the CAM ministry

Program: Slide presentations will take place at different times for various age groups. The slide presentations tell of CAM's work in various places in the world and are narrated by people active on the field as well as by CAM staff members.

Four breakout sessions on Saturday allow one to follow particular interests in different aspects of CAM's ministries.

- “The effect of the Soviet era and how we are helping the present generation”
- “India's suffering widows”
- “Chaplain Ministry Program—How God speaks through disasters”
- “Reaching the unreached in northwest Kenya”
- “From military to microfinance”
- “Life for children in Liberia” (Children's session)
- “Introducing the Kingdom Way to refugees in Greece”
- “Billboard Evangelism: Walking with my callers”
- “Gaza through the eyes of a child”
- “Country in Crisis: Reaching out to desperate Venezuelans”
- “Estate plan and gifting tools”
- “Up and out of Syria's Rubble”



Circulation & Financial Statements

Income & Expense Report

July thru September 2019

1 July 2019 Beginning Balance	\$9,956.56
Income	
Donations	\$1,990.00
Local Support*	\$1,000.00
Total Income	\$12,946.56
Expenses	
Handling & Packaging	\$594.00
Postage	\$2,899.95
Printing	\$5,044.00
Staff Expenses	\$657.60
Total Expense	\$9,195.55
30 September 2019 Ending Balance	\$3,751.01

Circulation Report

September 2019

ISSUE #10 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,600 | Operating Cost: \$8,488

Cost Per Copy: \$1.84/ea.

ISSUE #11 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,500 | Operating Cost: \$9,150

Cost Per Copy: \$2.03/ea.

ISSUE #12 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,600 | Operating Cost: \$8,464

Cost Per Copy: \$1.84/ea..

ISSUE #13 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$8,868

Cost Per Copy: \$1.83/ea.

ISSUE #14 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$9,195

Cost Per Copy: \$1.90/ea.

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



Signing Off

We are again humbled as we bring another issue of *Anabaptist Voice* to completion. I will tell you some of the ways in which I have been assured that God had His hand in it.

I was literally terrified when our super-duper layout man said AV14 was his last issue. Within one week after the ad was published in AV14, God called Lucie-Claire Gawinowski from Florida to volunteer. She had the needed experience with computers and programs and a creative bent to do the job without putting a great strain on me.

Then we had to find a replacement for treasurer and taking care of the mailing list. Danny and Benita Hege from South Carolina have agreed to take on that job. Please notice the change in the mailing address for the Production Team. Please send address changes, new subscriptions, and donations to this address.

Andrew V. Ste. Marie has pitched in on this issue with contacts and suggestions that have matured into good

stories and articles. And he has also come through with a worthy story from Michael Sattler's writings.

In this issue we have 18 first-time writers and artists and also numerous writers who have written for us before. For an editor who wants mostly original material to fill 44 pages in six weeks, this can be scary. God has His hand in moving people to write to and for AV.

When putting together an issue, we put forth great effort to secure the blessing of writers whose names are attached to their article or story. That has not been difficult in this issue.

And then there are behind-the-scenes contributors who God moves to "keep the axles greased" so we can keep publishing a magazine without the burden of subscription fees or government reports.

All these participants are under God's direction and we are so blessed to be a part of this work. May each line in AV15 bring glory to our Father in heaven. Amen.

J.G.L. | Georgia

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“AND LET US NOT BE WEARY IN WELL DOING: FOR IN DUE SEASON WE SHALL REAP, IF WE FAINT NOT.

“AS WE HAVE THEREFORE OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD UNTO ALL MEN, ESPECIALLY UNTO THEM WHO ARE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.”

GALATIANS 6:9-10

