

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

Anabaptist Voice

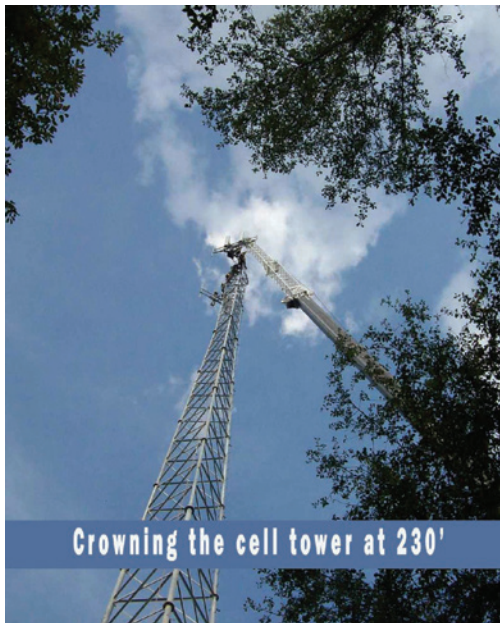
Championing a Faith that Works

In This Issue:

- "SHOULD CHRISTIANS VOTE?" - DAVE BURKHOLDER
- "LESSONS FROM LOST FATHERLAND" - CHESTER WEAVER
- "NOT A POLITICAL KINGDOM" - MENNO KNIGHT
- "GOVERNMENT JOBS" - JOSEPH VAN LOON AND OTHERS
- "MY JOURNEY TO JOY" - JUDY MARG



Letter from the Editor



Three notable events excited us during this quarter – a cell tower went up on the adjacent property, road workers resurfaced the road by our property, and I spent two days in the hospital.

In July and August we watched the building of a Verizon cell tower on the adjoining property. Extensive preparation created a solid base for the tower. We viewed with wonder the assembly of the tower in sections on the ground. Then the big day came with three men clinging to the tower as the crane hoisted the sections skyward. All seven men worked in perfect harmony as everyone expertly did his part. The whole tower is a graceful engineering feat standing tall above the surrounding trees.

During the ten years since we built our house along Georgia Highway 56, traffic increased substantially, especially truck traffic. Trucks beat the road into patches of uneven pavement that made a ride in our 2003 LeSabre Buick—known for a smooth ride—rough. With the new resurfacing of the road, our old Buick again glides happily along.

While confined in a third-story hospital room with some fever and weight loss with COVID-like symptoms, I took the opportunity to observe two “workers” perched on a ledge below. Wearing light green vests with proper helmets and tool belts, they sheltered from the scorching sun on a part of the ledge covered by shade. At quitting time the two men and the ladder vanished.

Early the next morning two men arrived with two ladders. The one man opened the only box on the ledge about 15' from where the two men sat the day before. He withdrew something from the box and soon the two men departed.

I thought, how often must God look down on workers who identify themselves as believers but who do not know what they are doing? They lack a firm sense of purpose and just put in time until quitting time. I left the hospital that day with a stronger desire to make my time count as a worker in God's Kingdom.

AV19 again calls everyone to work with purpose in building the Kingdom of God. The time is short until God will call everyone to give account.

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 counter points of view.

AV Editor

Two Kingdoms

If my memory serves me right, a few years ago when the AV publication first began, an article was released clearly defining the two-kingdom teaching. I remember it well because it so plainly listed in separate columns the distinct differences between the Kingdom of God versus the kingdom of the world.

I remember getting multiple copies to give to my mainstream Christian friends to help them understand the two kingdoms. It was very useful and many good discussions resulted because of it.

Now I wish I still had the article. I am having many discussions with Anabaptist brothers who don't understand the two-kingdom teachings. It is alarming! With all that is happening in the world, in politics and the upcoming election, I am hearing much confusion. Many Anabaptist people are in favor of voting in the next presidential election! Obviously, there is a lack of teaching in our churches about this!

I appreciate your publication. Thank you for your labors for the Kingdom of God!

T. P. | Michigan



With All Its Regulations

I am writing in response to the discussion about the "Seventh Day or First Day" (AV17, page 35).

For whatever it might be worth, modern constructs of the Seventh-day Sabbath becoming the First-day Sabbath do not have their origin in New Testament and other early Christian expressions. Many conservative Christians think of celebrating a day of rest *with all its regulations*, but just on a different day of the week. Some Protestants have promoted this switch of days from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week so heavily that Seventh-day Adventists and other Sabbath practitioners I have worked among

assume this is the default position of both Catholics and Protestants. My Seventh-day friends don't know quite where to pigeon-hole Anabaptists because they have no idea how an Anabaptist or Kingdom Christian understands the Old and New Covenants.

The following illustration may be helpful in understanding the Anabaptist position. A "First-day Sabbath" and the "Lord's Day" should not be interchangeable terms. A First-day Sabbath is like calling believer's baptism "New Covenant Circumcision" (Colossians 2:11-17; Galatians 5:1-3). Both "Lord's Day" and "New Covenant Baptism" signify a much fuller meaning than the Old Covenant terms.

G. M. | Washington State

AV Editor:

The problem you point out is that under the Old Covenant the Sabbath Day included "all the Jewish regulations" added under the Law of Moses. Christ condemned this kind of hypocritical observance which even forbade the healing of sick people on the "Sabbath Day."

The Lord's Day truly honors the "spirit" of God's hallowed seventh day under the New Covenant and not as a letter of the law under the Old Covenant.

(See more on the New Covenant under "Round Table Discussion.")



Good and Evil

I have been thinking about the article, "If Job Had Known" (AV18, page 19). I like it! It's needed. It's short, yet it gets people thinking about solid truths revealed in Scripture. But since it deals with one of the great mysteries of human experience (God's sovereignty and its relationship to Satan's malignity and human free will), we can never fully understand it. And one simply cannot possibly say it all in a short article, or even hit the right "balance."

James 1:13-18 gives direct scriptural support for some of the conclusions in the article. “God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ... When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. ... Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.”

These verses amplify what the book of Job teaches. Don’t be deceived about God’s character, about where temptation to sin comes from, or what sin’s end is. All good gifts come from our Father, nothing evil. God is all good. Satan is all evil. Sin brings forth death.

Satan tempts people to sin and he uses one’s own desires, or lusts, to commit the sin. Satan is evil, malicious, destructive—the author of death. God is benevolent, full of pure good will for His people. He never does anything evil and he never tempts people to do evil.

God can put a hedge around His people. He did around Job. He often does around us. But “bad things” still happen to righteous people.

So we still face the BIG QUESTION: “Why does God even allow Satan in the world?”

If you can tell why God allowed Satan in the Garden of Eden you will have the answer to the BIG QUESTION.

E. S. | Oklahoma



Ready Treatments

I received some interesting info last week from an interview I watched on YouTube. For the sake of those who do not have access to the internet, here are some of the interesting points Doctor Richard Bartlett and Doctor Ralph Abraham make during the interview:

1. They have cured hundreds of COVID-19 patients using inhaled steroids that are readily available.
2. Early treatment of COVID patients is vital (just as in cancer or any serious disease), but as long as there is life, treatment may be helpful.
3. We do not need another cure for COVID-19. Doctors have the science-based knowledge and medications they need to treat this disease. A vaccine is not needed. Just look at the poor record vaccines have with the flu.
4. We do not need to operate in an environment of

fear any longer. We can open our churches, schools, and businesses and get back to work.

Bro. James, I felt this information makes more sense than most things we’re hearing. I read your article today in the AV (AV18, page 32), and I appreciate the info you gave.

Blessings as you minister in this way.

D. S. | Ohio

AV Editor:

The AV point is that there are a number of common and reasonably priced drugs that are available to successfully treat COVID-19. Let’s not be sidetracked by expensive treatments or ungodly men who promote euthanasia, abortion, population control, and earth worship.



Making a Point

Some of my friends and I were discussing your response to “Take It Or Leave It?” (AV18, page 35). The question in focus was whether or not we should cash the U.S. Treasury stimulus checks. Your response made it sound like you were going to take the money.

My friends and I were disappointed, so I took it upon myself to ask you, “Did you really cash the \$2400 check or were you just making a point?”

D. L. H. | Ohio

AV Editor:

I did cash the stimulus check. To me there is a difference between applying for, or qualifying for, a government handout and receiving a tax refund. We have no control over what the government does with tax money. And the issuing of funny money with no value is a very real tax. Even though it is called a credit, it is in reality an inflation tax.

I do think that all government handouts to Christians alter their values, their judgment, and increase their dependency on government while decreasing their dependency on God and the brotherhood.



Neat Layout

I really enjoyed seeing my students' artwork in the Summer 2020 issue of *Anabaptist Voice*. I thought you did a good job of laying out the spread. Thank you! Then I got another idea. Maybe I could order ten copies of AV18 and give one to each of the students whose artwork was published.

Keep serving Him!

D. A. W. | *Pennsylvania*



Giving Comfort

I meant to give comfort at the funeral of a 100-year-old sister with fourteen surviving children by asking them the following question:

“How do you say good-bye to someone who carried you beneath her heart for most of a year, then seemed to keep you in her heart ever after?”

If it fits on the quotable quotes page, use it.

God bless you, James. I read AV from cover to cover!

P. L. M. | *Kansas*



Keeping the Torah

I am writing in response to some discussion in AV14, page 38, and AV15, page 37. The root of the discussion goes back to the question, “If a law in the Old Testament is not expressly forbidden in the New Testament, is it then okay to disregard the Old Testament law?” (For example: women wearing men’s clothing, body piercings, and tattoos.)

If we throw out the Torah—the Torah is primarily considered to be the first five books of the Bible—and twist the Epistles, we have entered a slippery slope where everything not spelled out in the New Testament is okay. The slippery slope begins when we misunderstand the law and say, “The Law of Moses was abolished.”

Where do we get this idea that the “Law of Moses” is “abolished”? Jesus fulfilled the law; He did not

do away with it (Matthew 5:17). If we “fulfill” our marriage vows (a covenant), do we “abolish” them by ripping them up and being unfaithful? Certainly not! Why then is this the picture we have of the Messiah and the Father’s law?

When Christ came to “fulfill” the law, He came to obey and demonstrate it. He modeled it for His followers, and then He commanded them, saying, “**If ye love me, keep my commandments**” (**John 14:15**). Jesus’ ministry was getting at the heart of the issue of commandment-keeping. From our regenerated heart, we have an uncanny desire to *obey the law written on our hearts*.

Consider the Ten Commandments. Some call these a “summary of the law.” Then, Jesus gave us an even shorter summary by saying, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself**” (**Matthew 22:37-39**).

N. L. M. | *Wisconsin*

AV Editor:

You have a good point that Jesus did not abolish all the commandments in the Torah; He fulfilled some of them. By His death on the cross He fulfilled the need for a priesthood, animal sacrifices, annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem, stoning of the disobedient, circumcision, and certain practices such as not sowing mixed seed in a field.

Christ’s death did not fulfill the requirements of the eternal laws in the Torah God established such as the Ten Commandments. Instead, the New Testament sets a much higher standard of obedience so that a Christian’s conduct will never violate any of God’s eternal laws found in the Torah.

You call Jesus’ statement in Matthew 22:37-39 a “summary.” I prefer to call them the basis underlying all the commands found in the Torah. The New Living Translation of Matthew 22:40 gives the meaning well: “The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

New Testament believers can learn many good things from the Old Testament law and the prophets about what is right and wrong and what pleases God and what does not please Him. But the teachings of Jesus and the laws written on the hearts of every human being will call all men to repentance and to the obedience God so desired of His people in the Old Testament.

Should Christians Vote?

by David L. Burkholder

Introduction

Once again, we are in the midst of a presidential election year. The news media is full of ads, polls, surmisings, charges and counter charges. It seems as though nearly everyone has an opinion or a prognostication regarding how they would like to see things turn out. And it's all too easy to get caught up in the hullabaloo and fervor of the campaign and promote "our candidate." But what should be our involvement as citizens of Christ's Kingdom? Let's look at this issue and its related questions and see how the Christian life and its purpose is incompatible with the realm of politics. We will examine the issues from the biblical, historical and practical perspectives.

The Biblical Perspective

The first recourse for the Christian when thinking about debating any issue must be the never-changing Word of God. The first principle we need to keep in mind is that, as Christians, our citizenship is in heaven, not on earth. Philippians 3:20-21 (NKJV) spells it out: *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."*

The ultimate desire of the Christian's life on earth should be to be eternally transformed into the image of Christ. That desire will affect all areas of life—our loyalties, our interests, our ambitions, our activities, our speech, our attitudes toward others, our involvement in the affairs of this world. As Christians we are to live "loose to this world," as strangers and pilgrims—as those who are just passing through, whose focus is on a higher level than this world. As such, we must be completely detached from involvement in this world system, its appeals, and its governing politics.

We are, however, to be responsible citizens of whatever earthly government we find ourselves living under. Such responsibilities include submission and obedience to its authority in areas which do not conflict with our primary loyalty to God. Romans 13 spells it out: pay taxes, give honor and respect to those in authority, and recognize they are fulfilling a God-ordained function.

We are also instructed to pray for those in authority.



"I promise by the grace of God and the aid of His Holy Spirit, to submit myself to Christ and his Word, and to faithfully abide in the same until death."

In I Timothy 2:1-4 we read: "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." This passage outlines our responsibility to pray for civil magistrates, and to seek the salvation of their souls.

We are to be good citizens, upright, above reproach, well-spoken of for our kindness and acts of charity toward those in need. We should be uncomplaining, honest and upright in conduct both in business and social relationships. Honesty and integrity must be hallmarks of the Christian's life. It should be clear to all who observe our lives that we live with a different motivation than that of general society. We are citizens of the heavenly kingdom, which should show in our manner of life.

Colossians 3:12 also outlines some characteristics to be exhibited by the child of God. "God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient" (CEV). These are qualities not usually found in the lives of politicians.

Our value system should outshine that of the world. I John 2:15-16 tells us that we are not to love the world—its organized system controlled by Satan. Neither should we love the things in the world. **“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world.”** The Christian is to portray primary love for the heavenly Father and things of His realm. The politician, conversely, is intent on elevating himself and calling attention to himself and his abilities, portraying himself as the one to be looked up to and followed. The politician and the Christian have two different loyalties. The sworn oath of office for the politician and the baptismal vow of the Christian should make this difference clear.

The Church's Perspective

One of the major tenets of the Anabaptist movement was the principle of separation of church and state. The Anabaptist reformers held strongly to a two-kingdom belief that ruled out participation in civil affairs by the follower of Christ. They were to be separate. And that separation was complete--no voting, no jury duty, no office holding, no participation in war or in the keeping of civil order. Many of these principles became tests of membership by various groups. Rightly so, for these issues define the line between the principles that govern the Kingdom of Christ and worldly kingdoms.

The mixing of politics with religion has often proven detrimental to the spiritual tenor of the church in that it has *tended to dilute spiritual fervor with social action*. Neither has it proven to be of significant

uplifting moral value to politics. The two stem from entirely different realms, and their policies and procedures simply do not mix. Daniel Kauffman in *Doctrines of the Bible* (page 174) says:

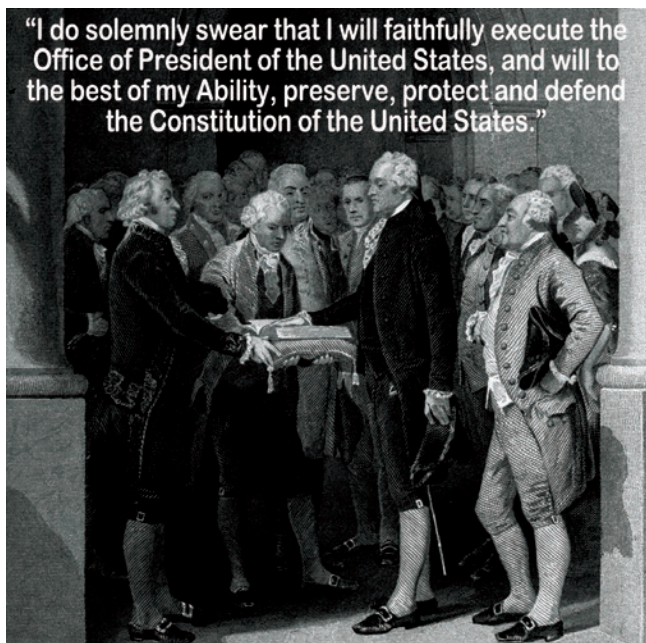
The idea that it is the duty of the Church to take hold of Government and run things for God is neither taught in Scripture nor supported by the facts of history. The place for Christian people to take hold and work is in the Church, and the place of most effective power is at the Throne. ... When Christianity was adopted as the religion of State in Rome, the result was that Rome corrupted the Church instead of the Church purifying Rome. ...

Today the average church member involved in politics is not one whit cleaner, morally or better spiritually, than is the average non-church member. Christianity and world politics do not mix. Their spheres are essentially different. Both government and church are better off if each remains in its sphere. The idea that the Christian can render substantial aid in the cause of righteousness by “mixing in politics” has often proved to be a delusion. [Emphasis added]

We do well to heed what dedicated church leaders of the past have observed and instructed. Theirs is the voice of experience and concern.

Some Practical Considerations

The political climate. In political campaigning there are many personal accusations hurled by candidates at one another. It seems nothing is off-limits to make oneself look better than the opposing candidate. All of



George Washington, 1st President of the United States, at swearing-in ceremony

Note the inconsistency of swearing with his hand on the Bible when Matthew 5:34 says “Do not swear at all.”

(continued next page)

this harshness, mud-slinging, and defamation flies in the face of Christ's command to exercise kindness and love in all human relationships. The dog-eat-dog atmosphere of political campaigning is in stark contrast to the lowliness, meekness, humility, and love that Christians are commanded to exhibit towards others. The political climate simply is not conducive to exercising these qualities. That should tell the Christian something of his priorities in an election year.

*As Christians we take
our directives from God's
holy Word.*

Biblical injunctions. Romans 13:10 says: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Is that the way it works in politics? Is love exhibited? Certainly not. Romans 12:10 tells us to "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." How far would a politician get by following the principles of kindness, love, and preferring others? It is simply opposite of what normally takes place in political campaigning. Philippians 2:3 says: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Would anyone get elected that way? Without strife? Esteeming the other candidate better than himself? Titus 3:2 tells us that we are "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." Modern day political campaigns delight in displaying the character flaws, real and supposed, of one's opponent; meekness is not evident. The atmosphere of political campaigns is simply not compatible with Christian principles.

As Christians, we take our directives from God's holy Word. The principles found therein are at cross purposes to those of politicians and civil authorities. The committed child of God will easily discern the difference between Christian motivation and the political scene of the world and shun that which is unholy and at odds with the principles of heaven. J.C. Wenger, in *Separated Unto God* (pages 251-252), comments on the two options expressed by Christian citizens in regard to voting and includes remarks from both sides of the issue.

If we cannot support the government in the maintenance of the police force or in waging war,

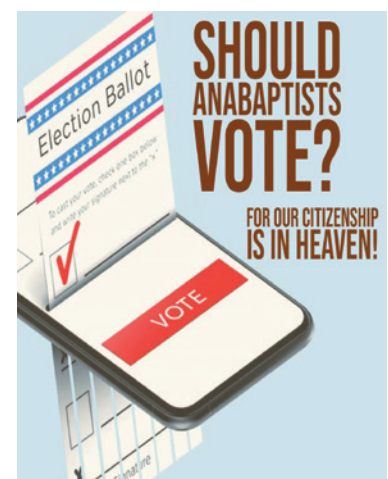
then we ought not attempt to control the policies of government by voting. ... Christians should not seek to regenerate society by employing political methods; rather, the Christian should work at the regeneration of men by individual conversion to Christian faith and life. Since the government cannot operate on the principle of nonresistance, why should nonresistant Christians attempt to help govern?

Furthermore, ... prayer to God is more powerful than the employment of any political means. The nonresistant Christian also faces the difficulty of electing a man to do what he himself cannot do as a Christian. ... The central fact remains that the central calling of the Christian is evangelism, and that the calling of the Christian is fundamentally to work on a spiritual rather than a political plane. *[This is a selected quote that does not necessarily reflect J. C. Wenger's feelings.]*

Guy F. Hershberger, in *War, Peace and Nonresistance* states:

The mission of nonresistant Christians is not a political one. It is rather a curative mission. It is to bring healing to human society; to prevent its further decay, and that through a consistent witness to the truth. The same Sermon on the Mount which commends the way of nonresistance to the disciples of Christ also says, "Ye are the salt of the earth." And if the earth is to be salted, the salt dare not lose its own savor through activities which destroy its essential nature.

It should be amply clear that the Christian's responsibility lies in an entirely different sphere than that of politics. Jesus commanded His followers to teach and instruct men in the ways of God. The Christian's primary goal, therefore, should be, first of all, to live a life that brings honor and glory to God, and in so doing to point others to His saving grace. The verbal witness of the Christian will do more to change the world than any political agenda. The realm of politics must be left to those with lesser goals than that of the Christian.



Possible Questions and Possible Answers

In an election year we may be faced with questions from associates, neighbors, and those with whom we rub shoulders on a daily basis. How should we respond? Certainly with love and in humility, leaving a positive witness for our stand, based on the unchanging Word of God. We have no reason to be apologetic when we stand on the principles of God's Word.

Question: Do you plan to vote?

Answer: No, I will not vote because I cannot be a part of two opposing kingdoms. Satan rules the kingdoms of this world while Jesus rules a spiritual kingdom that is not a kingdom of this world. I have vowed total obedience to King Jesus in His kingdom. He is the one who said, *"No man can serve two masters, for either He will hate the one and love the other, or he will cling to the one and despise the other."* By voting I would be trying to serve two masters, Satan and Christ.

Question: Wouldn't our nation be a better place if more Christians like you would get involved in politics and help raise the moral level of our society?

Answer: The longstanding idea that America is a Christian nation with high morals is an illusion. This nation, like most nations, was founded by a rebellion based on an unholy war. Participation in war has been a longstanding principle upheld throughout this nation's history. We should not refer to America as "our nation" or to its President as "our President." We dwell here as strangers and pilgrims; our citizenship is in heaven.

My observation has been that more often than not the Christian's witness is negatively impacted by political action rather than the moral level of society being raised. I believe that Satan is hard at work in this world's system and that only God's power can thwart him. I believe I can be more effective on my knees than at the ballot box.

Conclusion

So, what should a Christian do, or not do, in an election year? Anabaptists believe it is inconsistent for one to vote or be involved in politics in any way. Neither should we show overt favoritism for one candidate above another. It can be counterproductive.

In 1960, some Mennonites voted for the first time to keep a Catholic president (John F. Kennedy) out of the White House. It didn't work, and probably did more to taint their witness than it did to change the direction of the country. We should do nothing to

compromise our personal or corporate witness, and that might also bring reproach upon the name of Christ.

We should be committed, praying, concerned, and helpful individuals, ministering in the name of Christ

I believe I can be more effective on my knees than at the ballot box.

to the total needs of our sick and dying world. A consistent life, free from questionable entanglements, will go a long way to show where our supreme loyalties lie. Our lives must be lived on a higher plane than that of the bickering, name-calling, and degradation of character employed by those seeking office. And certainly, praying that all men might repent and come to the knowledge of the truth is always in order.

Let's look again at Philippians 3:20. *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."* That verse establishes our loyalties and outlines our priorities. Our citizenship is in heaven, and that is where the focus of our loyalties and interests must be centered. The attitude of eagerly waiting for our Lord's return will help keep our focus on spiritual matters and off the matters of this world and its political system. If we focus on eagerly waiting for the Saviour it will help keep our thinking and actions straight in this election year. Furthermore, it will see us through life as we live here for the honor and glory of God, and eagerly await our transport into the heavenly kingdom, our ultimate eternal home.

D.L.B. | Virginia

Study Questions:

1. Is it possible for the committed Christian to become involved in the political process without violating biblical principles?
2. Is it possible for the Christian to get involved in politics without compromising his spiritual integrity?
3. Does the involvement of Christians in politics actually raise the moral and spiritual level of society?
4. On what basis of right and wrong will U.S. government officials rule?
5. Why is it impossible for governments to implement social justice or equality?



Rubies & Diamonds

Memorable quotes that speak to the heart.



“If there is ever a disagreement between science and the Bible, it is merely a matter of science needing to catch up.”

– Clay Zimmerman at Farmington Mennonite Church, MO



“God designed marriage to be a delightful relationship, not a bargaining project to be undertaken with diligence.”

– Ray Stutzman at Faith Mission Fellowship, VA



“If our heart is divided we will worry. If our heart is single we will trust God.”

– Dathan Stoltzfus at Faith Mission Fellowship, VA



“A sanctified imagination is a priceless gem.”

– Raymond Brunk, Original Proverbs for Life, VA



“The first step to a miracle is obedience.”

– Mervin Yoder at Marrowbone Christian Brotherhood, KY



“If you ignore your conscience long enough, you can train it to be quiet. When that happens, do not mistake peace for innocence.”

– Eldon Martin at Faith Community Fellowship, PA



“Watch out for pride. Pride leaves you lonely, hurt, and embarrassed. Esteem others better than yourself.”

– Steve Shetler at Cimarron Christian Fellowship, OK



“Sin brings ever-increasing bondage for ever-decreasing pleasure.”

– Clinton Wolf, Ephrata Youth Bible School, PA



“The ultimate in life is finding God’s will and walking in it.”

– Daniel Hartzler at Burkeland Family Conference, GA



“Patriots war with the weapons of this world. Christians war with the spiritual weapons of another world.”

– John Nisley at Plainview Gospel Fellowship, PA

Share your rubies and diamonds with AV readers. Send in the quote followed by the name of the speaker and the name of the congregation or church where it was given. Just for our records, we also would like to have the name and address of the person sending in the quote.

Not a Political Kingdom

by Menno Knight

God never did want a king for the Israelites.

When all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, they made a request: **“Make for us a king to judge us like all the nations” (I Samuel 8:5).** Asking for a king greatly displeased Samuel and he prayed to the Lord about it.

God answered Samuel, **“It is not you they have rejected, they have rejected Me that I should not reign over them” (I Samuel 8:7).** God then recited to Samuel how the Israelites had forsaken Him and served other gods ever since the day He brought them up out of the land of Egypt. At Sinai God had demanded that the Israelites should not worship any other gods besides Him. Time and again, God through the prophets had warned the Israelites that they should be separate from the nations around them and not bow down to their gods. God wanted them to be a distinct and holy people who served only Him.

Yet, included in this troubling request for a king lurked the revealing statement, “like all the other nations.” The elders wanted to mix a political earthly kingdom—relating to the government or the public affairs of a country—with God’s reign and be like the other peoples around them who served other gods.

Hundreds of years earlier, Joshua had warned the Israelites in his farewell address that they could not serve God and the gods of the nations around them. In Joshua’s time, the people of Israel had seen no conflict in including the God of Israel as one of the gods they worshipped. They relegated God’s commandments and requirements to an equal status with the dead gods of other nations, gods who they believed could be appeased by sacrifices and offerings while they continued the sinful practices of heathen worship.

Joshua called them down. **“You cannot serve the Lord [and other gods] for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good” (Joshua 24:19-20).**

In Samuel’s time, by asking God for an earthly political kingdom, the elders were rejecting the reign of God over them. A singular worship of God cannot be combined with a political kingdom because it will always include the worship of other gods like all the nations around them.

God told Samuel to warn the people what a king would do to them. So Samuel repeated the words of the Lord to the people who asked for a king. One cannot read the troubling litany of services found in I Samuel 8:11-17 without agreeing with the conclusion found in verse 17, **“And you will be his slaves” (NIV).**

“Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, ‘No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations ...’.”

—I Samuel 8:19

God granted the people a king and a political kingdom; it turned out just like God had warned them. The glory of the earthly kingdom culminated in the reign of Solomon. No one can read of Solomon’s kingdom without shuddering at how literally the dire warnings of Samuel were fulfilled. Not only did Solomon amass tremendous wealth by enslaving the Israelites, but he also brought in many heathen wives for whom he built palaces and worshipped their gods (I Kings 11:9-10).

After Solomon’s time, God sent many prophets urging the people of Israel to throw out their foreign gods and worship only Him. But the political kingdom could not hold the people to a singular worship of God. Finally, God determined to destroy the political kingdoms of Israel and Judah and their temple, because they did not worship only Him.

God never did restore political independence to the Jews, even though they longed for it. By the time God sent His Son to redeem His people, the longing for a political restoration of the kingdom of David—not Solomon’s kingdom—had been firmly ingrained in the minds of the Jewish people and their leaders.

Jesus spent most of His ministry trying to teach the Israelites that God did not want another political kingdom. Rather, Jesus warned the Jews that God would completely destroy Jerusalem and the temple and give His kingdom to another people. God’s new kingdom would be one governed by heartfelt love for God and man and not a political earthly kingdom where men rule others by force. Jesus took His disciples aside and said, **“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be ... first among you must be your slave” (Matthew 20:25-27 ESV).** What a clear contrast between how the two kingdoms operate. One cannot be part of both entities because they are worlds apart.

Jesus plainly taught that His kingdom did not come from this world and that the two kingdoms had two different rulers and entirely different purposes. Romans 13 speaks of “us” and “them.” I Peter 2 speaks of how the people of God should always do good and right [by God’s standard] while governors and kings are sent by God to punish those who do wrong and commend those who do right. Again we see the clear outline of two separate kingdoms. Peter does not expect that Christians will be emperors and governors using violence, but God’s way is for His people to be holy, blameless, upright, and busy doing good.

A great gulf separates the two kingdoms; Caesar’s kingdom uses force and is controlled by men under Satan while God’s kingdom operates by peaceable men who have voluntarily surrendered themselves to God. One cannot be a part of both kingdoms any more than the rich man in hell could share the blessings and comforts of Lazarus (Luke 16:26). Abraham told the rich man in torment when he wanted to send someone from the dead to warn his brothers of what lay ahead for them if they did not repent, **“If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced” (Luke 16:31 NIV).**

Early Christians had no desire to mix it up with Caesar’s kingdom. To them, the use of physical force was simply incompatible with the Kingdom of God. Roman Caesars and governors ruled by force and fear—chains, despoiling of goods, heavy taxes, flogging, imprisonment, spears, swords, starvation, and murder—not by love.

History records Christians being fed to lions and being tarred and burned as human crosses. Christians often hid from the authorities and the mobs, but still they grew in number and, as the Jews angrily shouted in Acts 17:6, **“These are the men who have turned the world upside down.”**

The power of the state to use violence could not withstand the power of God. Despite the tremendous pressure upon the believers by Roman rulers, Paul artfully sent greetings to all God’s holy people at Philippi, **“especially from those who belong to Caesar’s household” (Philippians 4:22).**

Persecution meant open war between the political kingdoms of the world that used violence and the peaceable Kingdom of our Lord. Believers cannot serve God and be part of the government. The two kingdoms are two separate and opposing forces.

Today many Anabaptists are confused by professing Christians who mix the gods of the state and their own sinful practices with lip service and partial obedience to the commandments of God. Like the Israelites of old, they decide what scriptures to ignore and what sins they imagine God will overlook or excuse. Prominent among these sins rides a dual allegiance to the government and the Kingdom of God.

Some seem not to understand the imperative separation between the kingdoms of this world under Satan’s rule, and the Kingdom of our Lord and Christ. But the difference is easy to distinguish by one simple factor: Every kingdom of this world is built on the use of force while the Kingdom of our God is built on peace and nonresistance.

Think about this: Evil men rule by the use of force to uphold the commandments of men. It is that simple. The only way the state can rule is by having enough force to overpower any opposing rulers. God uses these rulers, men who certainly believe in the use of force, to restrain other wicked men who also use force. Therefore, government officials who rule by force cannot be part of God’s Kingdom.

God’s Kingdom was not and is not a political kingdom.

“Caesar’s kingdom uses force and is controlled by men under Satan while God’s kingdom operates by peaceable men who have voluntarily surrendered themselves to God.”

Witnesses to Separation and Nonresistance

Compiled by James Landis

Surrendered followers of Jesus who meant to put into practice the teachings of the New Testament have always understood that the use of violence defined the line between the kingdoms of the world and the Kingdom of Christ. Kingdom Christians never advocated the physical punishment of heretics or criminals or participated in wars.

This section tells of three different historic groups that witnessed to the separation of government and the church as well as the practice of nonresistance.

The Witness of the Lollards

The Lollards were followers of the 14th century English religious reformer, John Wycliffe. The Lollards believed that the church should aid people to live a life of evangelical poverty and imitate Jesus Christ.

“Lollard” was the popular derogatory nickname given to those without an academic background, educated (if at all) only in English. The translation of the Bible into English considerably energized the movement.

There was no “Head Lollard” or organizational hierarchy. Rather, Lollards were simply people tied together by a set of beliefs. In 1395, eleven years after John Wycliffe’s death, someone wrote out The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards.

Following are several selections from the Twelve Conclusions pertinent to our study:

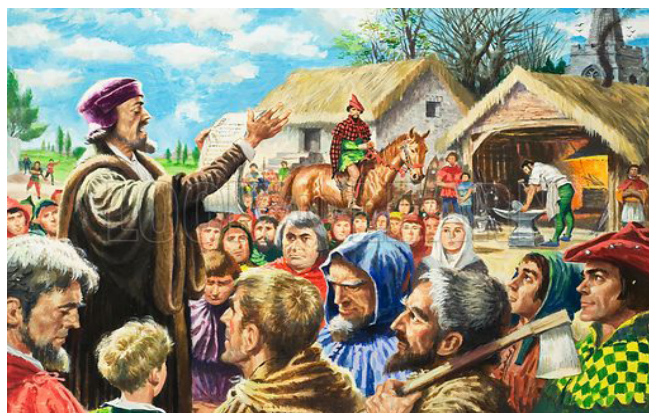
Clerics in Secular Offices

A king and a bishop, all in one person, a high church official and a justice in temporal cause, a member of the clergy and an officer in worldly service always make for bad rule in both the heavenly and the earthly realms. The conclusion is obvious: Temporal and spiritual matters do not mix. Therefore, we, agents of God think that all manner of church people, both high and low, should be fully excused of temporal office and occupy themselves with spiritual matters and naught else.

War, Battle, and Crusades

Manslaughter by battle or by law for temporal or spiritual cause is expressly contrary to the New Testament, which is a law of grace and full of mercy. The conclusion is openly proved by Christ’s preaching here on earth. He taught us to love and have mercy on his enemies, and not to slay them. The reason is this: When men fight, at the first stroke, charity is broken, and if one dies out of charity, he is on the highway to hell. But we know the law of mercy, that is the New Testament, forbade all manslaughter.

The Lollards understood that Christ’s Kingdom was not a temporal political kingdom and that violence defined the difference between the spiritual and temporal kingdoms.



John Wycliffe (c.1330-1384), an Oxford professor, developed a number of doctrines—the Bible is the supreme authority, the clergy should hold no property, there is no basis for the doctrine of transubstantiation. He also inspired the first complete translation of the Bible in the English language. Thirty-one years after Wycliffe’s death, the enemy dug up his corpse, burned it, and threw his ashes into the River Swift.

Source Note: “The Geoffrey Chaucer Page,”
<<http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/special/varia/loollards/loollards.html>>.



The Witness of the Swiss Brethren

Two hundred thirty-two years after the Lollard Conclusions in England (1527), the Swiss Brethren (Anabaptists) gathered secretly at great risk to their lives in the Swiss mountain village of Schleithem. The brothers who attended agreed on a written statement they titled *Brotherly Union of a Number of Children of God Concerning Seven Articles*. These seven articles came to be known as the *Schleithem Confession* and are still upheld by many Anabaptist churches today.

The *Schleitheim Confession* has much to say on two important points, separation and the use of the sword. Here are rearranged excerpts from the confession:

The Separation of the Saved

A separation shall be made from the evil and from the wickedness which the devil planted in the world. ... To us the command of the Lord is clear when He calls upon us to be separate from the evil. From this we should learn that everything which is not united with our God and Christ cannot be other than an abomination which we should shun and flee from. By this is meant all popish and antipopish works and church services, meetings and church attendance, drinking houses, civic affairs, the commitments made in unbelief From all these things we shall be separated and have no part with them for they are nothing but an abomination, and they are the cause of our being hated before our Christ Jesus.

It will be observed that it is not appropriate for a Christian to serve as a magistrate because of these points: The government magistracy is according to the flesh, but the Christian's is according to the Spirit. The worldlings' houses and dwellings remain in this world, but the Christians' dwellings are in heaven; their citizenship is in this world, but the Christian's citizenship is in heaven; the weapons of their conflict and war are carnal and against the flesh only, but the Christian's weapons are spiritual, against the fortification of the devil. The worldlings are armed with steel and iron, but the Christians are armed with the armor of God, with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God.



Concerning the Sword

*The sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and puts to death the wicked, and guards and protects the good. The sword is now ordained **to be used by the worldly magistrates**, but in the perfection of Christ only the ban is used to warn the*

sinner without putting the flesh to death.

Therefore, there will also unquestionably fall from us the unchristian, devilish weapons of force—such as sword, armor and the like. It does not matter if they are used to defend one's friends or against one's enemies, worldly weapons are still outside the perfection of Christ because of the virtue of the word of Christ, who said, "Resist not him that is evil."

The Swiss Brethren (Anabaptists) understood that the Kingdom of Christ was not a political, earthly kingdom. They also preached that one could not be part of both kingdoms and that one great divide between the two kingdoms was the use of physical force.

The Anabaptists paid a fearful price of confiscation of goods and lands, imprisonment, torture, and death for their dedication to the principle that they were going to live out the gospel and put into practice the teachings of Scripture. Their singular devotion to the Kingdom of God and their clear refusal to mix their practices with the commandments of men and the kingdoms of the world brought down the wrath of both the official churches and the state.



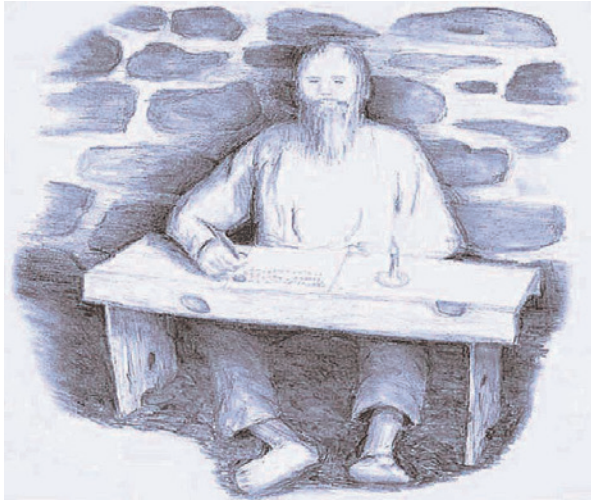
The Witness of the Hutterites

Only fifteen years after the drafting of the *Schleitheim Confession*, Peter Riedemann wrote another detailed Confession of Faith.

"Labeled a heretic before his twenty-third birthday, young Peter Riedemann (1506-1556) had a burning desire for reform. He wandered far from his native home and was constantly in danger of being captured and executed by officials suspicious and fearful of Anabaptists. During his twenties and thirties he was imprisoned for nearly nine years.

"Riedemann did not see himself as a heretic, holding beliefs rejected by others; or a sectarian, starting a group as an alternative to the state church. He believed that his vision for reform expressed the heart of Christian tradition. Riedemann was trying to recapture the essence of historical Christianity as expressed in Scripture and in the great creeds of the church. He saw himself standing in a long line of true Christian teachers, leaders calling the church back to its historical basics.

"Peter Riedemann wrote a Confession of Faith while imprisoned in Hesse, Germany (1540-42). Nine years after Peter's death, the Hutterites adopted his confession



Peter Riedemann in prison writing what became the Hutterite Confession of Faith

as their own in 1565 and today the German edition is still used by Hutterites in Western Canada and the United States as their theological guide.”

The Bruderhofs also see Riedemann as a spiritual forerunner and he is referenced in the Bruderhof’s confession of faith, *Foundations of Our Faith and Calling*. Peter Mommsen, the editor of the Bruderhof quarterly magazine, *Plough*, says this: “When I was growing up in the Bruderhof (till around 1995) we were still members of the Hutterian Church. Our Faith basically remains the same as it was then, though the affiliation ended.”

Here are some excerpts from Riedemann’s Confession of Faith on the subjects of government and the sword.

Whether Rulers Can Be Christians

The Jewish government which was present until Christ came, is a symbol of the old kingdom that comes to an end when the new kingdom begins. The Scriptures tell us, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah until Christ, the hero, comes.” The old has come to an end in Christ, who now sits on the throne of his father, David, and has become king of all true Israelites. He has established a new regime that is not like the old and is not supported by the temporal sword.

The regime of the Jews, who until then were God’s people, came to an end in Christ, and the Jews had their regime taken from them. This signifies that in Christ the old regime shall be no more, but Christ alone will rule over Christians with His spiritual sword. The power of the worldly sword has been taken from the Jew and given to the Gentiles. This change shows that God’s people are not to use the worldly sword or rule with it. Instead, they should be led and ruled by the

spirit of Christ alone. This is addressed to heathen, thus indicating that the heathen and unbelievers are not submitting themselves to the spirit of Christ and therefore will be punished and disciplined with the sword. So we see that governmental authority has its place outside Christ, not in Christ.

The full blessing of God is in Christ our King, and He himself is the blessing. Therefore, all that was given in wrath must come to an end in Christ. It has no place in Christ. Governmental authority was given in wrath, so it cannot find a place in Christ or be part of him. No Christian is a ruler, and no ruler is a Christian, for the child of blessing cannot be the servant of wrath. In Christ, temporal weapons are not used. Instead, spiritual weapons are used in such a way that people neither deserve nor need the methods of punishment or discipline used by the world.

No Christian can be a ruler in worldly society.

Warfare

Christ, the Prince of Peace, has prepared a kingdom for himself, namely the church, and has won this kingdom by shedding his own blood. Therefore, all worldly warfare in this kingdom has come to an end. ...

Some may wish to say that David, who was loved by God, went to war, and so did other saints; thus when war is justified, we may do the same. But we say no to that. David and the other saints went to war, but we ought not to, because Christ wants us to act as He did when he suffered with patience and waited upon God to requite the evil. Jesus said, “It was said to the people of old, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,’ but I tell you, do not resist evil.” Here Christ makes the distinction. There is no need for many words, for it is clear that Christians cannot take part in war or avenge themselves. Whoever does so, forsakes and denies Christ and is untrue to Christ’s nature.

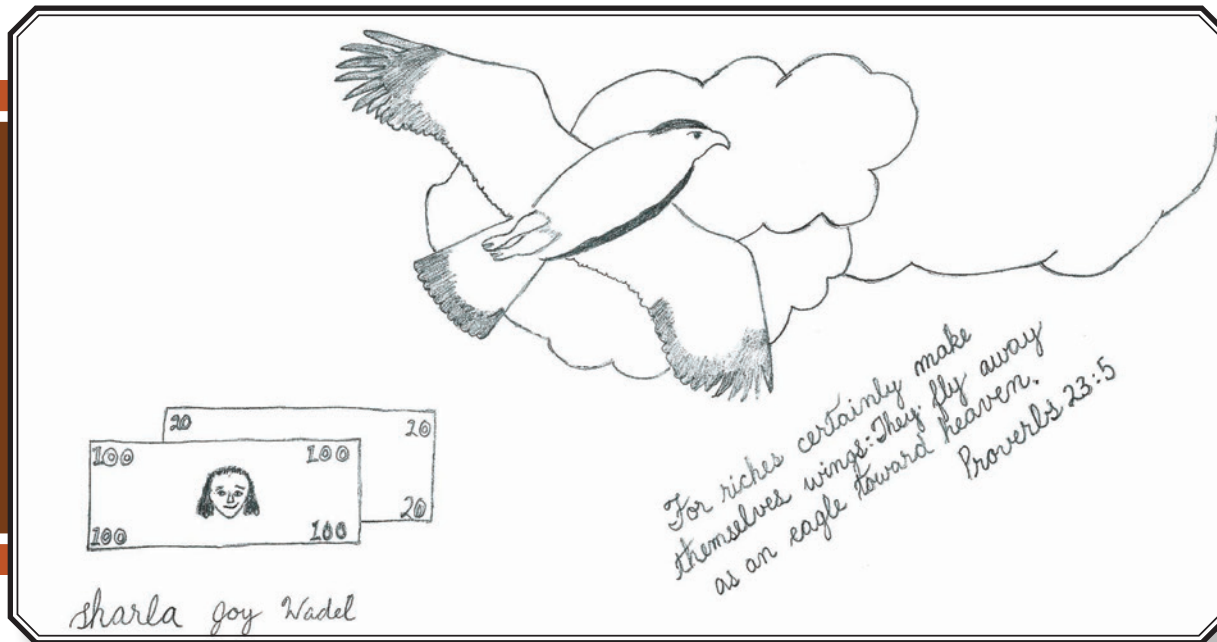
Source Note: Friesen, John J. *Peter Riedemann’s Hutterite Confession of Faith*. Herald Press, Waterloo Ontario, 1999.

Study Questions:

1. By what standard of right and wrong do governments rule?
2. What is a defining difference between the Kingdom of God and a political kingdom?
3. How can Anabaptists become entangled in the affairs of government?
4. What are some of the “other gods” government officials serve?
5. Why is it impossible for government to implement social justice or equality?
6. When is an illegal act sinful?

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.



Lessons from *Lost Fatherland*

by Chester Weaver

That the generation to come may ... arise and declare them to their children, ... that they may set their hope in God.

— Psalm 78:6-7

Recently a friend said to me, “The American Swiss Mennonites are presently standing at the same place in history as the Russian Mennonites previously stood one hundred years ago.” American Mennonites today are both peaceful and prosperous, like the Russian Mennonites were 100 years ago.

If my friend is correct, and if the present-day rhymes sufficiently with events one hundred years ago, this generation has much to learn from what happened in the Russian Mennonite colonies.

God expects human beings alive today to read history—not just read the events of the past, but to recount the history and its lessons to the present generation. Consider the message of Psalm 78. God commands the fathers to tell the children the stories of the past so their children can pass on the lessons from the past to their children.

We should not forget the experience suffered by our Dutch/Prussian/Russian Mennonite cousins in the early 1900s. Presently, a number of carefully documented records are available to interested readers. One of the more valuable records is entitled *Lost Fatherland* by John B. Toews, published in 1967 by Herald Press.

Lost Fatherland, with only two hundred pages of text and pictures, deserves our careful attention. The book documents step-by-step the unfolding Russian Mennonite tragedy of those years. The Mennonite victims did not believe tragedy was possible in light of the economic prosperity, advanced cultural development, and technological sophistication of that day. The Dutch/Russian Mennonites were economic and technological leaders in their place and time. But their world fell apart in short order and remains in shambles today.

Historical background

In 1770, Catherine the Great offered the oppressed Dutch/Prussian Mennonites free land and military exemption if they would settle in Russia. Roughly 300 families emigrated to Russia and founded Chortitza in

the first migration.

One hundred years later in the 1870s, because of the loss of military exemption, 8,000 people emigrated to Canada and 10,000 to the United States. This left about 40,000 Mennonites in Russia in 1880.

The book *Lost Fatherland* tells a small portion of what happened to the Mennonite settlements in Russia during the 1920's, less than two generations after the peaceful emigration of the 1870's to Canada and the United States. The more conscientious Mennonites had emigrated while the more financially-tied Mennonites valued the economic advantage of staying in Russia.

The Mennonite Golden Age

“By 1914 the Russian Mennonites boasted comparatively large land holdings, a number of sizable factories usually specializing in the manufacture of agricultural equipment or brick, a modern flour mill industry, and the facilities for producing such basic necessities as cloth, furniture, and processed foodstuffs. Economic growth brought with it some of the characteristic features of capitalism including hereditary factory and land ownership and the exploitation of a landless proletariat for low cost labor.

“In general the Russian Mennonites solved the economic and social tensions emerging within their settlements reasonably well. A gradual religious reawakening after 1860 probably contributed toward a positive change in the prevailing attitudes toward social justice and unfair economic practices. In the field of education the Russian Mennonites privately supported a vast educational complex, beginning on the elementary level and culminating in two teacher colleges and an eight-year business college. Hospitals, a mental institution, a school for mutes, an orphanage, and a deaconess home provided impressive evidence of a well-developed social conscience. ... Their remarkable degree of independence in matters of local government, education, religion, and economic development as well as their exemption from military service in part

LOST FATHERLAND

The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921-1927



JOHN B. TOEWS

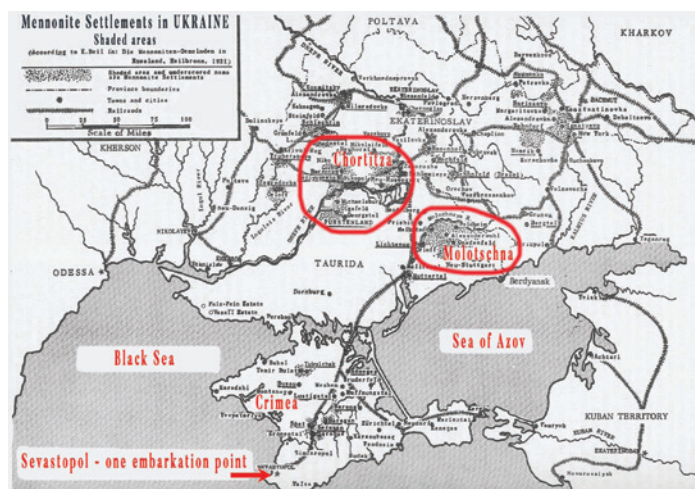
protected them from the tragic fate of economic enslavement to which the Russian peasantry and industrial proletariat had been subjected.

“Nevertheless, in 1914 the Mennonites still experienced sharp pressure to accept military conscription and Russianization. In view of the widespread opposition to direct military involvement, the Russian government had made provision for alternate service in forestry and industrial work or, in time of war, in a noncombatant medical service, later incorporated into the Red Cross and similar agencies. Russianization affected the Mennonites more directly. Schools were placed under closer state supervision, and Russian, with some exceptions, became the official language of instruction” (pp. 22, 23).

Unimaginable and Unthinkable

“In 1914, few of the inhabitants of the Mennonite colonies ever imagined that within the next two decades their settlements and way of life would come to a disastrous ... end” (p. 22).

Warning Signs



In November of 1914, the use of the German language was prohibited for use in public places as well as prohibited for the press. The next year new laws required the liquidation of property owned by Germans; they had eight months to get the job done.

The concessions the Mennonites made to cooperate with the new demands went unrecognized. Instead, anti-German smear campaigns sought to incriminate the German colonists as a whole. Local newspapers disseminated anti-Mennonite propaganda. When the Bolsheviks seized power in 1919, the Mennonite local self-government came to an abrupt end. All authority was (supposedly) turned over to the local peasants. The

local peasants were all too eager to get what they could from the previous property owners.

War and Anarchy

“As the civil war raged through the colonies, some Mennonite villages changed hands as many as twenty times. Most of the transfers were accompanied by severe fighting and artillery bombardment. ... The war completed the ruination of the settlements. ... Terror, banditry, anarchy, and civil war were accompanied by an invasion of disease and famine” (p. 40).

Roving bands of anarchists fell upon unsuspecting villages to plunder and rape. In this horrible climate when little public safety protected the villages, the Mennonites welcomed the arrival of a German occupying army. The Germans temporarily voided the Russianization and land cession programs and brought a measure of stability and order to the area.

Some Mennonite young men were no longer willing to sit peacefully by the chaos and terror and organized semi-military organizations known as *Selbstschutz* in order to provide protection and self-defense for the villages. The German army willingly trained and armed these self-defense units.

The Church Speaks Out

The *Selbstschutz* brought an outcry from Mennonite pulpit and press, calling for moderation and repentance. The warnings were disregarded.

To deal with the new public issue, a Mennonite conference was called in 1918. After much, and sometimes heated, discussion, two resolutions resulted: a) Each member had the right to privately interpret non-resistant principles, and b) traditional nonresistance was reaffirmed as the highest Christian ideal.

By leaving nonresistance up to private interpretation, the church effectively abandoned the practice of nonresistance and accepted the *Selbstschutz* among them. This temporizing position placed the majority of peace-loving Mennonites in jeopardy. The peace-loving Mennonites were held captive by the forceful minority who thought they knew best what to do in the situation.

Entrapped

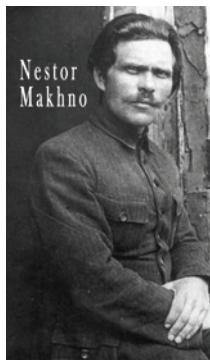
When the occupying German Army was pushed out of the Mennonite territory, they left armaments and military training behind for the *Selbstschutz*. Thus, with the threat of local anarchy, the *Selbstschutz* were ready to respond. This time no one could be conscientiously

opposed. Militarism was the order of the day.

When the White Army arrived in the Mennonite territory, the *Selbstschutz* welcomed it and cooperated with it. The watching Red Army of the Bolsheviks noticed, and the entire Mennonite constituency became implicated.

Later, when the White Army was pushed out, the bandit leader Makhno, now working with the Bolsheviks, had no mercy for the Mennonites. They heard statements like this: “You cursed renegades. For 400 years you refused to take up arms, but now for this wretched Kaiser Wilhelm you are ready to do so.” After hearing pleas for mercy for a particular village, the Red general Dovenko ordered his soldiers to “spare the village after looting it for three days; all *Selbstschutz* must be executed.”

Complete Misery



The miseries of famine, starvation, and disease epidemics followed—death and more death meant that mass graves were needed. Rape, lice, filth, and a complete breakdown of social order completed the terrible picture which is detailed in other records. In 1922, the Mennonite Central Committee was able to save thousands of these suffering Mennonites by providing food for

them. “Generally speaking, the Mennonites were not responsible for the adverse circumstances prevailing in 1922. The traditional Russian attitudes toward its minorities, the ethnic origin of the Mennonites, their prewar economic well-being, their geographic location lay directly in the path of the civil war, the German occupation, the formation of the self-defense units—all of these issues contributed to the destruction of Ukrainian Mennonitism” (p. 42).

Hopeless

By 1922 thousands of Russian Mennonites saw no future for themselves in the Soviet Union. Economically, their capitalism clashed with socialism. Religiously, their theism and nonresistance conflicted with atheism and militarism.

And they were starving. Seed wheat was often stolen or confiscated. Available food was requisitioned to feed the starving cities. Harvest taxes were assessed regardless of the condition of the harvest. All good

horses had been stolen by the armies.

When Joseph Stalin came to power in 1924, the kulaks (former business owners of whatever kind) were systematically sought out, tortured, worked to death, or shot outright. Over time, one half of all the Russian Mennonite men disappeared.

Emigration



The mass grave for the victims of the Blumenort massacre- November 1919

The only hope was to emigrate. But where could they go? How could they obtain exit visas? Who would pay for their travel to a new country? Many delays and disappointment after disappointment surrounded the answers to these questions.

Mennonite leaders in southern Russia and the Ukraine, as well as in America, worked tirelessly shuttling between various governments, railroads, shipping lines, and credit agencies. They had to obtain the needed exit visas from Russia, find a country that would accept them, arrange satisfactory health certificates, and assemble detailed lists of people planning to emigrate. To make the job harder, if a passenger crossed the border and subsequently failed the medical examination, he could not return to Russia.

Again and again, departure dates had to be mercifully extended. Thousands of passengers who had nothing left had to survive the winter without adequate food or clothing. Even then, too many names were on the lists to find passage for all of them.

One graphic story may well illustrate the emigration dilemma. In 1927, when the Soviet government practically ceased issuing passports, some seventy Mennonites from Siberia showed up in Moscow. Simply to get rid of them, the Soviet government granted these seventy their passports and permission to leave the country. The news of what happened spread like wildfire back in Siberia. Before the Moscow government knew what was happening, a thousand



Emigrants embarking at Lichtenau, Molotschna, July 13, 1924

Mennonite families, along with hundreds of Lutherans and Catholics, showed up in Moscow.

Because of this well-publicized dissatisfaction with life in the Soviet Union, the whole world took note. Immediately, the Soviet police got busy rounding up the desperate people to send them back to the places from which they had departed. In haste they loaded the people into train cars with no care about breaking families apart. Many people died along the way. When those who did survive got home, their condition was worse than when they had left. No nation in the entire world would take these desperate people!

Six thousand (including four thousand Mennonites) of those “not turned back” actually made it to Germany to await a decision about their plight. Interestingly, German President von Hindenburg donated a substantial sum out of his own personal fortune to get these people to Germany!

Better Poor and United

In his last public speech in Russia, B. B. Janz, the untiring Mennonite Brethren leader who sacrificed so much for his people, said, “In 1914 a new period began in the history of our people. Mothers, fathers, and teachers—all have acknowledged one thing. All of us were struck down; some were led into prison. But thanks to God, the Mennonite can pray in the last great crisis. Where others curse and rant and damn their fate, the Mennonite prays. The past years have shown this.”



B. B. Janz in 1963

**Leader of South Russian
Mennonites (VMSR & VBHH)**

**Left Russia in 1926 at
49 years of age**

Picture at 86 years old

Born September 25, 1877

Janz referred to the previous material abundance and then said, “This is no longer true. Previously barns were torn down and larger ones were built; today they are torn down and smaller ones built. But this is not the greatest misfortune. A question: Have we not been happier and more blessed with the small barns and the small wheat piles? Be content with what there is. ... God was able to use a wealthy Mennonite society less effectively than a poor one. ... It is not serious that we are all poor. The results will be beneficial. The greatest misfortune is to lose your hold on God. ... During the time of trouble we were all unified—one calamity, one God; despite various teachings, unified!” (pp. 193,194).

Success and Failure

From the standpoint of the Russian Mennonites themselves, the 1921-1927 emigration was both a success and a failure. It was a success in that well over 20,000 individuals emigrated from Russia, one of the few mass movements allowed by the Soviet government. However, the effort proved to be a failure to so many thousands of Mennonites who were forbidden to leave. By 1929, the door of the Iron Curtain had slammed shut. Emigration was no longer possible.

A Broken People

The Mennonite way of life in the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin’s regime and atheistic communism proved disastrous. By 1950, following another horrible world war that directly affected what was left of the Mennonite colonies, the Russian Mennonite people were completely broken.

— C. W. | *Texas*

Lessons from the Russian Mennonite Experience

No one except God knows the future, so we cannot predict the future with certainty. But Jesus said, “Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?” (Luke 12:56). So we should be studying the signs of the times, and there are some lessons we should learn from the experience of the Russian Mennonites. Consider the following lessons:

1. **Do not put your confidence in wealth.**
2. **Civil war can happen here.**
3. **Always treat servants, friends, and neighbors with Christian kindness.**
4. **Never compromise on nonresistance.**
5. **Always keep your faith in God.**
6. **Learn survival skills—hygiene, diseases, food.**
7. **Be prepared to flee.**

My Journey to Joy

by Judy Marg

I was born on January 14, 1949, in Ponca City, Oklahoma. After my birth, my mother became ill, and then spent time in two mental hospitals. So for my first six months I was cared for by my maternal grandparents. Thankfully, that grandmother remained close.



ST. PAUL LUTHERAN
SCHOOL DAYS 1958-59

I have few memories of my early years, but I can never forget watching my father pack to leave when I was six. I sensed that he was not coming back. My intuition was right; I never saw him again. I did not know then that he was unfaithful to my mother, but a divorce followed, which was very

uncommon in the mid-1950's. This left mom and me all alone.

Things changed quickly. We lost our house, our car, our television (a blessing in disguise), and much more—but not music. The piano and organ were among the few things that went with us to a small rented house within walking distance of our Lutheran church and school. Mom went to work, teaching kindergarten in the Lutheran school. She was trained and mentored there by the dear woman who had been my kindergarten teacher. I don't remember, but I was told that it was through her that I first said "yes" to Jesus. Even as a child, I can't remember not knowing Him. However, without any discipleship or life-application as I grew, my faith remained immature.

Sadly, my relationship with my mom was not close or open. In fact, it was often adversarial. I developed habits of avoidance and deception. Then, at the age of nine, when Mom did not believe my claim of innocence in the face of a neighbor's false accusation, I began outright lying.

The summer I turned 10, Mom remarried; I was excited. I really liked this man who took me into his heart and soon adopted me. What a tremendous blessing to my young heart! Dad was a farmer and cattleman, and we moved into the country about 15 miles from

the church and school. When I began fifth grade, we drove into town for school; Mom continued to teach and direct the choir.

My new Dad's father had died and his mother began staying by turn with her six children. One January night we went to town and left Mom at choir practice while Dad and I picked up his mother from one of his sisters. It was our turn to have her stay with us. I fell asleep in the back seat on the way home, but a fast entrance into our rough driveway jolted me awake. Our house was on fire!

Thankfully, friends helped Dad carry things out of the house to the front lawn as the fire was eating away at the back side. Firemen put the fire out before it completely consumed the house, but it was not livable. I spent the rest of my growing-up years terrified of fire, but I thank God that He has healed that fear.

The fire brought instant life changes. We moved into Grandma's house with her, and switched to the Lutheran Church in the tiny town nearby. For the first time I faced being bullied in public school where—it lasted clear through high school. I didn't know how to deal with this problem, but never told my parents; we did not have that kind of open relationship. School became my own separate world, disconnected from home. Church also was a separate box, although it included my family.

I graduated from high school, but not before being preyed upon by a school janitor. I also got involved in a bad boyfriend relationship. Late in my senior year, God dealt with my heart during a church youth weekend. After that I was able to break free from my boyfriend.

"That encounter with God blessed me, but it was not nearly enough for the long haul."

That encounter with God blessed me, but it was not nearly enough for the long haul. I was immature, insecure, undisciplined, and clueless about who I was, where I was headed, or what was important. Headstrong, I had determined to walk my own way.

My parents wanted me to enroll in a nearby Lutheran two-year college. I opted to move to the local residential YWCA and look for work. After two food-industry



William and Judy - California, 1974

jobs and a retail gift-wrapping position over the holidays, college looked more attractive. Since my application had been

accepted, I started college in January

that year. Without maturity, discipline, or purpose, the three semesters of college were a waste of time and money, especially after I got involved with William.

At the end of the second year, I went back to the YWCA and took whatever work I could find. William went to live with his parents in Tennessee to continue college there. After several months (at William's demand) I packed up, climbed on a bus, and moved to Tennessee to be with him.

I refused to heed my parents' warnings about William. Ignoring the red flags in our relationship, we married and set out on a long, very difficult journey. We were both immature and insecure, quite unfit to enter into marriage.

I did not perceive until later one major difference between William and I. Although my relationship with God was immature and lacking, it was real. William believed the Lutheran lie that his "baptism" as an infant gave him all he needed for eternity. As William grew more angry and abusive, I turned increasingly to God. Today Psalm 119:67 holds much meaning for me, "Before

I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word."

After we married, William quit college and went to work. That was a dead end and he soon decided to join the military. He really wanted to fly, but could not without a degree. So he enlisted in the Navy's nuclear power program and started two years of training. We lived together during those two years on various Navy bases.

When William was sent to central California for school, the Navy gave him two weeks of sea experience before classes started. My dread that he would not

return revealed the fear and anxiety I lived under. While he was gone, I read a book that God used to bring me to a point of surrendering to Him. He freed me from a lot of that fear and drew me into His Word in a new way.

After his training, William was assigned to sea duty on nuclear submarines. Rachel's birth brought the added pressures of parenting. William was at sea half the time and our already rocky marriage hit the rocks. I was dangerously close to a complete breakdown, but God graciously helped me reach out and hold on to His Hand. Then came Carl, and soon, Hannah.

William had major work trouble and left the Navy at the end of his six-year commitment. Afterward, he found it challenging to keep a job, but finally settled on working temporary jobs for contractors in nuclear power plants. He was again gone from home for weeks at a time.



Judy Marg's wedding day - April 3, 1971

I had been growing increasingly unsettled about infant baptism. When I learned about Strong's Concordance, I got one. One of the first things I did was to work through every reference to baptism. I came out of that study convinced of believer's baptism and at odds with the Lutheran Church.

I talked to the Lutheran pastor about baptism, but instead of agreeing to what the Bible taught, he preached a sermon defending infant baptism. He declared, "When you were baptized is when you were born again." When he said that I heard a voice in my heart as clearly as if it had been audible: "Why are you sitting here listening to this kind of teaching?" I left that church and never looked back.

I tried to explain to William why I was done at the Lutheran church, but he did not understand. He stayed at the Lutheran church, and I took the children to an Assemblies of God (AOG) church I had been visiting. I attended there a couple of months until I felt uncomfortable there too. Then I found a charismatic church that I made my church home for nine years. The Scripture songs that we sang there blessed me greatly. In that church I asked for and received, baptism as a believer.

God was dealing with me and helping me grow, but our marriage continued to disintegrate. William grew more angry, unreasonable, and abusive with both me and the children. He did agree to accompany me to several marriage seminars. Each one brought some immediate changes, but nothing that lasted. Each time our relationship spiraled back down and got even worse.

*“Before I was afflicted
I went astray, but now
I keep Your Word.”*

I became pregnant a fourth time, but in the seventh month, that little man, with multiple genetic defects, flew away and I faced an induced labor to deliver his little body. The day after I came home from the hospital, William left for a power-plant job, and I was left alone to grieve for our son—and our disastrous marriage. Two weeks later, with the children gone to evening classes, I collapsed in a sobbing heap on the floor before the Lord. I poured out my pain, then He put me back together to get up and go forward.

During one more pregnancy, William finally agreed to counseling together. I did get some help for my heart issues, but this only strengthened William’s stance that everything was my fault. When the counselor finally got William to admit that he was unwilling to work on our marriage, we were dismissed. At that point I saw that I could not focus on fixing the past, but needed to work to change the present and move forward. When William made it clear he was not willing to do that, I knew something had to be done for the sake of us all.

Before and after our last son was born, I spent a lot of time in my Bible, seeking the Lord for direction. Reading through Proverbs, God smacked me with chapter 17, verse 15: *“He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.”* God made it clear to me that for me to accept and live with the wicked treatment the children and I were receiving justified that treatment in William’s mind. The only remaining hope for William to find a place of repentance was for him to suffer the consequences of his behavior.

One day while visiting with a good friend, she said to me, “You know God wrote Israel a bill of divorcement, don’t you?”

“What? No, I didn’t!” Studying the Old Testament was not my strong point.

“Yes,” she assured me. “It’s in Jeremiah 3.”

I went home and camped in that chapter until it became clear to me that even God did what He hated when it became necessary because of sin. But even afterward, His heart’s cry to Israel was always, “Repent and return.” Then I turned to the New Testament where I saw the prohibition of remarriage, which now made sense. Remarriage would close the door to “Repent and return.” I understood clearly that remarriage would not be an option for me as long as William was alive, even though this was not taught in any church as far as I knew.

As God gave clarity and peace, I took steps toward a separation. I hired a lawyer who sent papers to William telling him to move out. William got a lawyer and we worked out a separation agreement. Sadly, after he moved out, William continued to make threats concerning the children and financial support, so I felt the need for more legal protection before moving from Virginia back to Oklahoma close to my parents. There was no provision for a legal separation in Virginia, so I filed for divorce to have an order for custody and support.

After settling in Oklahoma, where I still live, we made a charismatic church our church home. For most of fourteen years, it fit well. But over those years I watched people there become more worldly. God was taking me the opposite direction, and I began to long for a different, more serious church. My grown daughter and her husband were also looking for a church, and we visited several only to conclude they were not much different. Our attention turned to the Mennonites (Holdeman) often seen in town. An initial contact brought information where we discovered their exclusiveness, from which we turned away.

My daughter’s husband got a job in Wichita Falls, Texas. There she met a woman whose family was with a group whose ties were to Charity Christian Fellowship. I began getting and listening to their recorded messages, which sounded much more like what I was looking for. I sensed God’s clear direction to leave my church. But when I asked Him

“Anabaptists... a turning point”

where to go, He answered, “Go home and seek Me.”

That is what I did for four months, listening to Charity messages. I then received an invitation card for a spring weekend camp meeting from a church that got my name from Charity. I sensed God’s direction to go, and this introduction to conservative Anabaptists proved to be a turning point in my life.

That weekend I met Steve and Laverda Shetler from Perkins, Oklahoma. I found they were only

about 55 minutes away, so I started attending. I planted myself there at Cimarron Christian Fellowship. Although our fellowship has had issues, I am blessed and thankful that God has put me here where I have learned and grown much over the last fourteen years.

Back to my family story: William avoided paying child support whenever he could. Desperately needy, I applied for state aid, but this required placing my support order with the Oklahoma Child Support Enforcement office. William eluded their efforts to track him down for years, and eventually ended up owing me over \$100,000. I needed that money, but as God kept working forgiveness deeper in my heart, I began to think and pray about forgiving that debt. I was able to file official paperwork forgiving and canceling the child-support debt. This was freeing to my soul.

A few years later, my daughter Hannah reconnected with William and learned that his health was so bad that he was unable to work and was about to become homeless. She and I agreed we wanted to extend compassion. A minister here agreed we could offer William an opportunity to rent his cabin that was close to Hannah's house. He accepted, and my daughter's husband made the trip to Missouri to help William move.

Sadly, despite William's talk about changing and wanting a relationship with our daughters (who were willing to give him another chance), his behavior with them and their children quickly alienated them from him again. Eventually, he alienated even our youngest son, who had never known him, but longed for a relationship.

God used this time to cancel the remaining fear I had of William. Over the years, on my face before God, He taught me how to forgive. My heart was healing and I was much stronger. Now in a safe place, I was able to be on civil talking terms with William and do a few things to help him. That brought peace and joy.

After some time, the minister who rented the cabin to William asked that he find somewhere else to live. William moved in with a couple of college guys until he found a duplex for rent; he rented the downstairs of a little old house.

One evening the wife from the upstairs apartment came knocking on William's door, seeking refuge from a drunken and abusive husband. He kindly invited her in and listened to her story. At bedtime, she was still afraid to go back upstairs, so William called the minister who was the landlord of the cabin he had rented earlier and asked for help. The minister and his wife picked the woman up, offered her lodging for the night, and

talked to her about seeking refuge in Jesus.

While the minister and his wife were talking to the woman, her husband woke up and saw that his wife was gone. Apparently, he went downstairs to look for her, confronted William, and then murdered him.

Meanwhile, the murderer's wife, unaware of what had happened, decided she was ready to return home. She called her husband who walked away from the cold-blooded murder scene to meet his wife in a parking lot a half block from their house. The two couples sat in the minivan together while the minister preached the gospel to them. About midnight, after praying together, they shook hands, and the estranged couple walked back to the duplex while the minister and his wife returned to their home.

The murderer told his wife what had happened and they spent a day trying to figure out how to hide a 300-pound body. They had no car, no way of moving it. Early the next morning, they set the house on fire and fled. The firemen extinguished the blaze before the house collapsed, and found William's body. The police hunted down the murderer and he died in a shootout. His wife was arrested and tried for covering up arson. I pled for the court to show her mercy, but she had to serve a short sentence.

Through the very difficult time of dealing with that tragedy, we were greatly blessed by the help and support of those in our Christian fellowship.

I would like to sum up some of the outstanding experiences in my life. Through my own needy willfulness, I got myself into an abusive marriage, but GOD has been faithful and good, preserving my life, helping me grow, and healing my soul. Now 71, I find Him opening up ways for me to support and encourage others who are hurting, as I continue to learn and grow and heal. I am overwhelmingly thankful that God has brought me to a place of rejoicing with **"joy unspeakable and full of glory"** (I Peter 1:8).

J. M. | Oklahoma



Judy Marg 2020

Government Jobs

I would like to know about the “not participating in the civil government” aspect. Not serving in the army is clear to me, also the police. However, the government in the Netherlands is responsible for many things. Also we have so-called “semi-government” organizations, such as energy, public transport, health care, public parks/nature, etc. The government gives money to these organizations if they comply with certain rules. Would it therefore be unbiblical to work in these semi-government organizations?

M. S. Blom | Netherlands

AV Response

by Joseph van Loon

Dear Brother Matthijs,

I received a copy of your request to brothers and sisters of AV from James Landis, the editor of the AV who is, and has been, a dear brother in Christ for many years. He requested that I reply to you as he knows my background of migrating with my parents and four siblings from Holland in 1953 to Australia, having been brought up Catholic and eventually through the reading of Scriptures in the 1970s and 80s came to the realization that my Catholic faith was not based on biblical principles or truth. It took some years, however, in the late 1990s, before my wife and I became aware of Anabaptist teachings. After meeting a number of Anabaptist brethren from America, the Lord led us to accept the Anabaptist faith and their scriptural way of life.

We have had many struggles and, without a doubt, the ones that I battled with the most was the issue of nonconformity and nonresistance. Of necessity I have included a number of Scripture references which I have double-checked in a *Nederlandse vertaaling van de Bijbel* to make sure that the English version which I use (English Standard Version) is compatible with what you would understand in *het Nederlands*.

Whilst I am still fairly fluent in your native language—I correspond with two of my sisters in Holland—it is easier for me to express myself in English. It is my prayer that this letter may be of help to you but, of course, the greatest help to you will come if, like the brethren spoken of in Acts 17:10-12, you search the Scriptures yourself. Then the Lord through His Holy Spirit will guide you in the truth of Scripture much better than I ever can. My words only point the way.

It is interesting that the Lord has led you to the understanding that serving in the Armed Forces or the police is not what a true follower of Jesus Christ is to do. This is an area that many who have come to understand

the Anabaptist way have struggled with the most. In my own case I served in both the military and law enforcement for a number of years before heeding the Lord's call.

This call came to me when I read II Corinthians 6 and made application of that portion of Scripture to all of my interaction with the world. As one writer put it, “When I say the world, I do not mean the physical world as God makes it and means it. By the world, I mean judging, regarding, and thinking as society around us does, whether political, economic, social or individual, or even ecclesiastical. The world's way of thinking is not God's way of thinking. Instead, I mean all the ways of thinking which do not care for the truth of things but exalt the customs of society and its practices. They do not take God into account and do not set His will supreme as the one and only law of life.”

By living and applying not just II Corinthians 6, but by studying the teachings of Jesus Himself and the apostles, we can know how we should live today in relation to society in general. This includes making an informed scriptural assessment of any employment that we seek to undertake within secular society. In society today, and probably most countries, governments operate a number of departments or agencies to deliver services to their population. Additionally, governments either own outright, or partially own, various institutions such as the ones you are speaking of—energy, public transport, healthcare, public parks/nature, etc. You rightly point out that governments also provide money for those and other organizations, providing they comply with certain rules. Your question, “Would it therefore be unbiblical to work in these semi-government organizations?” is one that should be asked and examined in light of Scripture by any true follower of Jesus. May I add, it is a question we should ask no matter what organization we are considering joining, government or secular.

There is a saying, “Let your conscience be your guide.” While this may seem a reasonable and appropriate way to conduct our life as a Christian, one needs to consider what standard our conscience holds. If we look at just our present day and age, it is obvious that there are great disparities between the standards of conscience of individuals and groups.

We only have to cast our minds back to periods of war and other civil unrest to realize that to “let your conscience be your guide” brings one into conflict with others who follow the same principle, but whose conscience may have totally different standards. Hence the so-called genocide and ethnic cleansing and other atrocities carried out against others who do not conform to our standards.

The standard we need to have for our conscience is to have the mind of Christ. We can do this by applying the words of Jesus in Matthew 22:37, “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind!**” God’s mind or conscience is always right, never wrong. The book of Romans has much to say about the mind and how it should be subject to the ways of God and not the ways of man. It would be worthwhile to do a word study of the word *mind* in Scripture (*verstand* in *het Nederlands*).

The question to ask ourselves, whether we are already employed in or seeking employment in any organization, is “Does this job have any requirements contrary to God’s call to holy living by His people?” Then we should closely examine the legal and other requirements those organizations may have for those employed by them. If the answers are not clear, we should ask ourselves and others—parents, brethren, and church leaders—whether the job conforms to God’s standard: “**But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy**” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Furthermore, we need to ask ourselves the same

questions when we consider going into a personal business venture. For example, if we operate a bed & breakfast guest house or other lodging facility, what Christlike standard do we apply when unmarried couples or same-sex couples ask to book accommodation? Always remember I Thessalonians 5:22: “**Abstain from every form of evil.**” There are also many other businesses which, if we apply the “mind of Christ” standard, would also be unacceptable for Christians to operate or work in.

Some countries and governments give exemptions for religious freedom to people employed in either government or private enterprises. This assures employees that they will not be forced to act against their biblically-based beliefs. For example, employers pledge that medical staff will not be asked to participate in abortions and euthanasia, both of which are contrary to God’s will for our lives. But if one counts on these exemptions or promises when taking the job, one must be ready to suffer the loss of the job and benefits if promises and exemptions should be violated.

While I cannot possibly cover every eventuality that might arise in any organization in which a Christian may find himself employed or might seek employment in, the standard should always be, “What does the Word of God say about this?”

Most important, we should bear in mind that we must “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:27-29); it is vital to our Christian life, witness, and eternal destiny.

J.v.L. | Tasmania



Government Job Interviews

Introduction: In this section, three brothers from our local churches who have worked in government jobs share their thoughts. Each brother brings out important aspects of the question, “Should Anabaptist Christians take on government jobs that are not directly related to the military or the police?”

Building Roads

An Interview with Elmer Bontrager



missed attending church on Sundays.

AV: Tell us about your growing-up years.

EB: I grew up on a dairy farm in Hartville, Ohio. My parents were godly Mennonites, and, if at all possible, we never

Discipline learned on a family dairy farm has stuck with me throughout my 81 years.

AV: What other formative events do you remember from your youth?

EB: I distinctly remember geography classes in our Christian day school taught by either John or Joseph Overholt. We studied the kinds of houses people built and the different climates in many faraway places. Those classes greatly interested me.

Another distinct remembrance is of the time when Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) sent a truck to our community to gather up all the old horse-drawn equipment to send to the German Mennonites in Paraguay. Little did I dream that ten years later I would see that same equipment being used by the Paraguayan Mennonites.

At age 17, our family moved off the farm and I got a job running a bulldozer for a large Mennonite contractor. I came to love running heavy equipment and, like any farm boy, the bigger the better.

AV: What did you do after you left Ohio?

EB: At age 22 the Vietnam War was heating up and Uncle Sam was breathing down my neck with a draft into the armed forces. At the very same time, I learned that MCC was looking for heavy equipment operators to build a road from Asunción, the capital city of Paraguay, to the German Mennonite colonies in the Chaco. Road building! Heavy equipment operator! I signed up.

When the Mennonite refugees from World War II first went to Paraguay in the late 1940s, people referred to the Chaco as “The Green Hell.” But by 1958 the colonies had produce to transport and a need for supplies that required transportation back and forth to the markets in Asunción.

MCC made the arrangements with the Paraguayan and U.S. governments to furnish the labor and equipment to build 250 miles of road between the Mennonite colonies and the capital. The project took five years to complete and involved fifty PAX men, of which I was one, for two years and eleven months.

AV: What did you do after completing your term of service in Paraguay?

EB: I left the steaming Paraguayan jungle in the middle of their summer and landed in subzero winter temperatures of the Ohio winter. It was too much of a radical change and I soon found construction work in Puerto Rico building houses. I also worked on a large road-building crew in Florida between 1967-1971. Then we moved to Burke County, Georgia, where I farmed and got into the land-clearing business. After that I was offered a job as Burke County Road Superintendent.

AV: What was the job and why did you take it?

EB: When I considered the job, one of the first things I told those who approached me was that I wanted to

stay out of politics. The answer was, “We can hire you and we can fire you.”

For several reasons, I decided to take the job. The county wanted to build more roads and they had the money to do it. I liked road-building and it went well with my experience. The salary was quite good for that time. I also felt that by taking the job I would be doing something everybody in the county would benefit from.

AV: What problems did you encounter as a nonresistant Mennonite in this government job?

EB: Some of the problems I encountered on this job were lots of red tape, safety rules, unnecessary regulations, and employees stealing time or goods from the government. In short, much inefficiency existed.

I soon found out that many government jobs are not awarded on the basis of accomplishment and merit, but on the basis of favoritism and connections.

Likewise, I found government contracts for equipment purchases or road-building contracts are awarded on the basis of under-the-table money and/or kickbacks.

I did find that staying out of politics was an ongoing test for me. Some county supervisors continually increased the pressure to use Burke County vehicles for personal reasons. I felt I should not grant them the use of these vehicles.

AV: What opportunities did you have to witness?

EB: I soon learned that in this job, everybody was watching me. So one opportunity I had was to demonstrate a good work ethic to all the workers and to instill those values into others.

Another opportunity came when I needed to approach hitherto impossible land owners to secure a right-of-way in order to build a road across their land. People were watching to see how this Mennonite would handle these difficult situations. With God’s help I handled all these situations peaceably and obtained the needed right-of-ways. This proved to be an outstanding witness during my tenure as County Road Supervisor.

AV: Should an Anabaptist Christian take a government job if it is not connected with the military or the police force?

EB: One needs to be very selective and cautious in taking a government job. A guiding principle for me would be to “provide things honest in the sight of all

men.” Also “to live peaceably among all men” stands out in my mind in government jobs where “merit” is not based on productivity but on favors and political considerations.

I escaped from my seven years of service as County Road Supervisor by accepting a call to serve in Romania. Loretta and I loved the people in Romania and felt we were needed there because the opportunity to help them was so great. The satisfaction of serving with little pay in Paraguay and in Romania was far greater than any of the rewards of working as a highly-paid government employee.



Maintaining County Property

An Interview with Sheldon Keller



AV: Tell us about your growing-up years.

SK: I grew up in a Mennonite home where involvement in church life was a priority. Along with faithfulness to the church, our family was involved with families and neighbors in the community through homeschooling, summer

Bible schools, visits, and helping as unpaid hands. We also sang in the homes of senior citizens, at funerals, and special events in community churches.

As a youth, I participated in two years of voluntary service that included five summers of camp programs at Beaver Lake Camp under Northern Youth Programs in Ontario, Canada. My task of caring for facilities went beyond lights, pipes, and climate control; I learned to work with a staff team toward the larger goal of serving others.

After Laura and I were married in 2008, God called us back to Beaver Lake Camp where we spent six more years. I had the opportunity to provide part of the leadership for Camp as well as again oversee and develop the facilities.

AV: Describe your present government job for us.

SK: In April 2016, I hired on as Facility Maintenance Foreman for Burke County. Burke County has forty buildings totaling 400,000 square feet plus the grounds around them, to look after. I have four men to help me carry out my duties. I started employment doing hands-on work in plumbing, electrical, and

craftsmanship. Most recently my time is spent providing leadership for our team, responding to the needs of other departments, and working with contractors and vendors.

AV: What are some things you like about your present job?

SK: This job furnishes a way for me to be involved in the community and to interact with people on a daily basis; my role is one of service and not of governance. I enjoy developing and improving buildings and grounds, of improving the workspace of anyone from office staff to sheriff’s deputies, and of accommodating the general public. In this job there is also the opportunity to bring integrity to the workplace, to do work well, and to bring a job to completion in a timely way.

I receive satisfaction from the spiritual element of my work in the public square. I intend to live out the gospel in response to Jesus’ commission; I know it will not be with air conditioning units, carpet tiles, or sloan valves, but with the people who install and rely on them. These are people who have a relationship with God that they may or may not be able to define. I work alongside true, professing, disillusioned, former, and future Christians, and I have the privilege to interact with them.

This means that I have spiritual conversations about sin, lust, relationships, church, and biblical principles every week. When I respond to inquiries about the headship veiling by explaining how voluntary submission in the headship order opens the door to fulfillment and satisfaction in God’s call on one’s life, I have had people respond with, “I thought the Bible was boring, but I could listen to that kind of teaching for hours.” So I feel that in my job I am bringing God’s presence to places where He would otherwise not be represented.

AV: What are some tests of conscience you encounter on the job?

SK: It is not always easy to live out the gospel in our culture. There are challenges to consider in public work, and perhaps more in government employment. There are moments of aloneness in knowing and feeling the reality of two kingdoms. For instance, how do I explain the absence of my vote when I am tasked with mobilizing the voting machines to each precinct? What about refraining from jury duty when I work with the Clerk of Superior Court? How do I stand on the Courthouse lawn and respectfully replace a tattered flag, yet never pledge allegiance?

AV: Would you recommend an Anabaptist take on a job with the local government?

SK: Jesus' words, "My kingdom is not of this world" (**John 18:36**), should guide my perspective and expectations. I encourage involvement in the community and in serving the people around us. It is imperative that our calling is clear and our identity sure before we are drawn into the public square and stress our souls with the dynamics present there. Christians can take the gospel to the public square and impact people as individuals, but the gospel will never redeem the governments of this world. No amount of blogging, protesting, or voting will ever redeem this world's government. God's redemptive plan is intended for individual lives, and when we move into the public sector, we must be crystal clear about which kingdom we belong to.



Keeping the Jail Safe and Comfortable *An Interview with Mark Barnhart*



AV: Tell us about your youth and how you became a nonresistant believer.

MB: My parents moved from Virginia to Hephzibah, Georgia when I was seven years old. There were no other Anabaptist churches in the area, so my parents and one other family met as a house church, alternating meetings between our homes.

Our parents made it clear to us that there are things Christians do not participate in and places we do not go. Often when the public school had activities that were not suitable for us to attend, they would plan an activity for our church group, and encourage fellowship between the families. This made it easy for young people to understand the distinction between God's ways and the world's ways.

I was convicted of being a sinner, chose to follow God, and was baptized when I was fourteen years old. The U.S. Government called all eighteen-year-old men to apply for military service, so with help from my parents, and the larger church organization, I registered as a conscientious objector. Along with that request, I wrote a letter explaining my position on military service. I was called for an interview with the Selective Service Board. After being questioned

at length on my beliefs, I was granted my request and classified as a conscientious objector.

AV: Were you drafted by the Selective Service Board?

MB: When the Selective Service Board called for me to begin a term of service, I obtained a job as an orderly at Rockingham Memorial Hospital in Harrisonburg, Virginia. This was one of the places approved by the Selective Service Board as an alternative to active military service because they deemed it as contributing to the health and safety of the nation. I served two years at the hospital, which satisfied the government's requirement.

AV: Describe your work at the Burke County jail. How long did you work at this job before retiring?

MB: In 2005, I obtained a job as a Building Maintenance-Technician for the Burke County Sheriff's Department. My work was to keep up the maintenance on the jail building as well as the law enforcement office buildings. My long work history as a mechanic, and training other mechanics, had prepared me for this new job. My employment lasted almost fifteen years; I decided to retire at age 70.

At the jail, I was working for the Burke County government; I was not working in law enforcement. At some jails and prisons, the maintenance workers are law enforcement personnel, but not at Burke County. I did have some contact with the inmates, and some accused me of being law enforcement. I would tell them, "I am not law enforcement; I am building maintenance."

AV: What opportunities for a good testimony did this job present?

MB: Some of the inmates could be very disrespectful, but if I returned their accusations with respect, they would eventually treat me with more respect.

They soon learned I was a Christian and would want to talk about spiritual things, but I did not feel I could have an extended conversation with them when I was "on the clock." Occasionally, I would be able to give them some Bible truths and answer some of their questions. They would also see me when I went to the jail with our church groups, and some would ask questions the next day.

I did not have much trouble with management, but there were a few who were accustomed to the military style of dictating what they wanted done, and expected me to say "yes sir" or "yes ma'am." They

did not like it if I made any comments or questioned the timing or necessity of the job requested. As a Christian, my response was sometimes different than what they expected, but they all learned they could trust me, and treated me with respect.

AV: What problems of conscience did you struggle with on this job?

MB: The biggest difference between this government job and one in the private sector is the management style of dictating what they want done. With no questions being asked. This is not because it is a government job, but because it involves law enforcement. I did not feel this job was a violation of my conscience because I was not in a position of judging or punishing other people; I was there to maintain a comfortable and safe environment.

As a Christian, it is important that we show love and respect to others and not be judgmental toward them. If our job does not allow us to do this, then we are in the wrong job. A job as a sworn law enforcement officer or military personnel would require a person to exercise force upon others to uphold the law; it would not be scriptural to put

oneself in that position. Romans 12:10-13:7 tells us to love our neighbors and obey the government, but it does not tell God's children to enforce the law; that is a government responsibility.

AV: How is a government job different from a job in the private sector?

MB: Personally, I don't see differences between government jobs and private sector jobs. There are jobs in both areas that would be unacceptable for Christians. The job requirements would be essentially the same.

The difference is not the employer, but the job itself. Here are some job requirements that I think would make a job unsuitable for a Christian. This list certainly does not include all the possibilities.

1. Working on Sunday, except on jobs related to the health and safety of mankind.
2. Engineering and production jobs building equipment for the military.
3. Taking jobs where we handle and sell tobacco, alcohol, or other harmful substances for human consumption.
4. A Christian must avoid all jobs that require cheating or lying.



New Writing Challenge!

Imagine you were with Paul at Damascus immediately after His conversion. What arguments might Paul have used with the Jews in Damascus to prove that Jesus was the Christ?

"Immediately Paul preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God"

– Acts 9:20

"Paul confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ"

– Acts 9:22

Or imagine you were with Paul when he arrived in Jerusalem and everybody was afraid of him. What arguments might Paul have used with the Hellenistic Jews that angered them?

"Paul spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him"

– Acts 9:29



More Deadly than COVID-19

by Anthony Wadel

**WE HAVE BEEN INFECTED BY A DISEASE
MUCH MORE DEADLY THAN COVID-19!
MORTALITY RATE IS 100% FOR UNTREATED VICTIMS!**

The Disease

There is a sickness in the heart of everyone who has not been treated. We are sick of disappointments—when the things we pursue and achieve never really give us the joy and satisfaction we are looking for. We fear what may happen in the future, and we feel like we can't trust anyone. Our hearts ache for someone we can fully trust. We would love to find out what truly would take away the mysterious ache deep in our hearts, something that would truly satisfy.

Sometimes our life just hardly feels worth living. We go to work, we spend our earnings on ourselves, and we buy things to make others think more highly of us. In the end we feel the same. We long for something that will give us a love for life, something that will not let us down, someone who loves and completely understands us. But if we try to receive lasting joy and satisfaction through anything other than the Lord Jesus, we are not looking in the right place for treatment. If God and His commandments do not come before everything else in our life, we are living with the untreated, fatal disease of sin. We are guilty of disobeying God, our Maker. The Lord God is a holy God. One disobedience to Him is sin and cannot go unpunished. Sin will be punished by eternity in the lake of fire. The Bible says there is not one of us who has not sinned (Romans 3:23). Romans 6:23 says the result of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus.

The Cure

Up until 2,000 years ago, God's people had to offer their best lamb each year so God would forgive their sins (Leviticus 4:26). Then Jesus came. John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus is the perfect Lamb. He sacrificed Himself once and for all. There is no forgiveness of sins or saving power in anything or any person besides Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). If we accept in faith that Jesus is the only way we can be free from sin and death, God will forgive us and accept Jesus' death on the cross as atonement for our sins (John 3:16; 1 John 1:9). If we confess and repent of our sins and acknowledge that Jesus is our only hope in life, God will give us His power to live a life that glorifies Him. He also promises us eternal life in Heaven. God promises to be with us; He will never let us down (Hebrews 4: 15-16). This does not mean living life will be easy, but it will be rewarding (1 Peter 1:3-9). Jesus says, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). In Luke 4:18, Jesus said that God had sent Him to heal the brokenhearted. Jeremiah 17:13,14 acknowledges that God has the healing and saving power that we so desperately need. I pray, please accept God's gift of love! Life is so uncertain (look at the coronavirus!), and we have no promise of tomorrow. Jesus is the only escape from the bondage of sin. He is the complete and ultimate cure to the disease of our souls. With Him as the Lord of our lives, we have nothing to fear. Even if our lives were taken by a virus, we would be in Heaven with our King Jesus.

He is our hope, our life, our cure! Invite Him into your heart today!

"The Cure for Sin"

A. W. | Waynesboro, Georgia



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

Trust and Obedience

I am writing to answer the Round Table Question, “Can you give a specific example of how translation differences affect the way you practice your faith? (AV17, page 37).

To my knowledge and understanding, the original KJV and Martin Luther Bible are the only two Bibles that are true to God’s Word. Reading all the other Bibles will create doubt in God and His Word. This will lead to disobedience to God and His Word.

God’s true Word will lead to an obedient life in us through the trust we have in Him. Trust and obey are intertwined and cannot be parted.

R. A. M. | *Indiana*

AV Editor:

I am blessed if people link trust and obedience in their commitment to God and His Word. I believe that people who have surrendered their lives to God and are willing to obey His Word will agree with AV statements as found on page four of each issue.

If you find anything in the Luther Bible or the KJV that disagrees with Our Mission Statement or the Historic Tenets of Anabaptism on AV18, page four, please call this to my attention. We would be glad to consider any additions or deletions where you would feel our commitment to obedience to the living God and His Holy Spirit might differ with your own because of using Bible translations in addition to the KJV and the Luther Bible.



Questions on Usury?

Up to the 12th century, the Christian church was solidly, unmistakably opposed to usury or interest-taking. The early Anabaptists readopted this view. By some accounts, it appears to have been a close third in importance to them after believer’s baptism and separation of church and state. How did the Anabaptist

world move from not taking interest to where collecting interest from brethren is a common practice? What would Pilgram Marpeck or Conrad Grebel think of this?

Does an inflationary fiat-currency economy simply render such teaching irrelevant in our day? Does the abandonment of this principle have bearing on the visible prosperity of Anabaptists today? Is it possible that we have drifted on this issue?

I enjoy the discussion that AV makes possible.

S. H. | *Pennsylvania*

AV Editor:

We need some sources and examples to back up your statement, “Up to the 12th century the Christian church was solidly, unmistakably opposed to usury or interest-taking.” Some examples or explanation of Pilgram Marpeck’s and Conrad Grebel’s teaching on this subject would also be helpful.

But most of all, what do the Scriptures teach about charging usury or “rent” on the use of money?

Send us your thoughts on these good questions.



First Day Meaning

I am writing in response to your statement, “To observe the Seventh Day ... is a tacit denial of the resurrection of Jesus” (AV17, page 35; AV18, page 33).

I have never been part of a Seventh Day type of group, but I suspect that they, like all Christians, affirm the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I see no reason to regard their choice of meeting day as a tacit denial of His resurrection.

Also, I wonder, “What does ‘Israel of God’ mean?” The Israel of God of Galatians 6:16 is literally “people of Israel” according to a Bible footnote. Perhaps it is speaking of the church, but maybe it means “the believers among the people of Israel.” Either way, how is it relevant to the Sabbath?

How does the day (or age) John received the prophecy have any bearing on the Sabbath? What is “the Lord’s Day” of Revelation 1:10? I doubt it means the First Day; rather I think it corresponds to the Old Testament term, “Day of the Lord.”

R. S. L. | Maryland

AV Editor:

All of these logical questions stem from a failure to understand how the Old Testament Scriptures point to the coming of Christ and the beginning of a new age – a New Testament.

For instance, we do not refer to the communion as the Passover Feast but as the Lord’s Supper. The term “Lord’s Supper” does not deny the truth of the Old Testament Passover feast, but greatly expands the meaning with Christ as the Passover Lamb.

In the same way, if we observe the “Lord’s Day” on the First Day instead of observing the “Sabbath Day” on the Seventh Day, it greatly expands the meaning of the Sabbath Day (or day of rest) so that it includes the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.



The Revealed Mystery

I am responding to the Writing Challenge on “The Mystery of the Gospel” (AV17, page 19).

Paul mentions the “mystery” numerous times in his writings. He says it was hidden from ages and generations (Colossians 1:26), was not made known unto the sons of men (Ephesians 3:5), and was kept secret since the world began (Romans 16:25). But in those same verses Paul also says the “mystery” is now revealed, made manifest, and made known by the Spirit through the apostles and prophets to His saints. So the mystery is no longer a mystery.

We know that the mystery was not that the Messiah would die for the sins of God’s people or that the Gentiles would also be brought to God. These things were both foretold in multiple scriptures. So the mystery goes deeper than the Messiah being a sin bearer for the Jews and the Gentiles being able to participate in that salvation.

The mystery now revealed is that these converted Gentiles would become fellow-heirs and of the same body with the Jews (Ephesians 3:6). They would not have to become Jews first, but when they did come to

faith, they would be on an equal footing with the Jews. Both Jews and Gentiles would come into the body of Christ the same way.

The Jews would have to set aside their nationalism and put on the new man, in which there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but Christ is all, and in all (Colossians 3:10-11). Jews must be baptized into a spiritual, heavenly body with no superiority over the Gentiles; they must become equal heirs with the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:6). On the other side, the Gentiles that were far off are now brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13).

Because of Christ’s crucified flesh, the ceremonial and civil law of Moses was abolished. Since the middle wall of partition between them had thus been broken down, both Jew and Gentile could now be made one new man in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:14-15).

This then is the mystery that was revealed: In Christ there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile. “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him” (Romans 10:12).

P. R. | Ohio

AV Editor:

This glorious oneness in Christ Jesus was not only for the Jew and the Gentile but extended to male and female, slave and free, civilized or uncivilized. When believers put on the new self, then Christ is all and in all; former enemies of the cross can live harmoniously together (Colossians 3:11).



A Better Understanding

I am writing in response to the discussion on English Bible translations, primarily in response to P. H. from Georgia (AV18, page 35-36).

In response to the issue of using multiple versions in a church setting, I agree it is helpful if everyone can access the same version, but there are several ways to accomplish this—church bulletins, Sunday school quarterlies, hymnals, parallel Bibles. I do not carry a KJV to church. I find that reading along with the speaker in a different version deepens my understanding of the text.

I have found that reading passages in multiple translations lends to deeper understanding. While

memorizing and corporate use of Scripture are important, acquiring an accurate understanding of God's Word is much more important. This is why, while having a "main translation" is okay, we should never limit ourselves to a single translation. We must not allow traditions, fears, or sentimentalities to keep us from properly understanding God's Word.

L. M. | Virginia

AV Editor:

Any school teacher can tell you that one of the best ways to memorize a passage or verse is to write it out in your own handwriting or print it and carry the paper in your pocket every day. Then orally read over it many times, with good expression, until you can recite it without the paper.



The Israel of God

I am writing in response to Question #3 (AV18, page 34), "Who is the 'Israel of God' today?"

From the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ forward, there was a difference made between Israel after the flesh and Israel after the Spirit. The term "Israel after the flesh" is specifically used in I Corinthians 10:18.

When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to John for baptism, they met with a startling thought: "Think not to say in yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:7-9). God wanted a spiritual people.

Jesus also made a difference between a spiritual people and those after the flesh. When someone told Jesus that His mother and brothers waited outside the packed house and wanted to talk with Him, He replied, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:48-50). In other words, those who did the will of the Father are God's people. The "whosoever" would include Gentiles also. The words of Jesus also indicate that Christ-rejecting Jews are not His brethren.

In John 8:39 Jesus had strong words of condemnation for unbelieving Jews. He said, "Ye are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father ye will do." When the Jews surrounded Jesus on Solomon's porch and asked if He was the Christ, He responded, "You do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow

Me" (John 10:25-27). When Jesus said these words, the Jews were so angry with Him they took up stones again to stone Him.

Paul had harsh words to say of His own countrymen, Jews after the flesh. "Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not God, and are contrary to all men" (I Thessalonians 2:15).

Paul is very explicit about which people are the Israel after the flesh and the people who are now the children of God (spiritual Israel). He writes in Romans 2:28-29, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, ... but he is a Jew which is one inwardly."

Paul explains further in Romans 9:6-8, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel ... That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Paul says of Israel after the flesh that they are fallen, cast away, and broken off (Romans 11:12, 15, 17, 20).

Revelation holds stern warnings for those who claim to be Jews after the flesh but have rejected Christ and persecuted the Christians. The Jews after the flesh are no longer God's special or chosen people.

The angel of the Church in Smyrna received this message, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9).

And the angel of the church in Philadelphia received this message: "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee" (Revelation 3:9).

So we may conclude that when Paul wrote in Galatians 6:16, "Israel of God," he meant the spiritual Israel, the church. The church is now a people that once were not a people but are now the people of God (I Peter 2:10).

L. E. | Wisconsin

AV Editor:

Your answer to this question lies at the heart of a proper understanding of the New Testament. God's Covenant with the nation of Israel who used the sword has now been replaced by a New Covenant with a peaceful and holy people—the church.



Passover Observance

I am writing in response to your comment (AV18, page 34), “Since the Passover was always celebrated on the Sabbath or seventh day of the week” I question the accuracy of that statement for the following reasons:

1. When God through Moses instituted Passover in Exodus 12, He specified that it be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month. Leviticus 23:5 also specifies that Passover is on the fourteenth of the month. It is very unlikely that the fourteenth of the month always fell on a Sabbath, i.e. the seventh day of the week since the Jews followed a lunar calendar.

2. I Corinthians 5:7 says that Christ is our Passover lamb sacrificed for us. To be true to type, Jesus must have been crucified on the fourteenth day of Nisan. That could not have been on a Sabbath, the seventh day, or there would not have been three days and nights until his resurrection on the first day of the week.

3. My understanding of Leviticus 23 is that Pentecost was not calculated from Passover but from the Feast of Firstfruits. This may have been on the first day of the week following Passover, but not necessarily so. It depended on the time of barley harvest.

M. E. Y. | Pennsylvania

AV Editor:

The argument for the celebration of the Passover observance on some other day than the Sabbath Day may be correct. We do know that Jesus observed the Passover with His disciples. The Passover being observed on a day other than the Sabbath could explain the three days and three nights in the tomb (maybe they observed the Passover on the “High Day” that year).

The main point in this discussion was that Pentecost, without a doubt, occurred on the first day of the week. Luke 2:1 calls this special Jewish festival “Pentecost” which in Greek means “fiftieth.” According to Leviticus 23:15-16, the “Feast of Firstfruits” was the day after seven Sabbaths. So the Day of Pentecost, in the year of the resurrection, occurred fifty days after the Sabbath when Christ was in the tomb.

However one figures the Passover date, the Feast of First Fruits (Pentecost) always occurred on the first day of the week.



Knowing the Truth

Thank you so very much for the three AV magazines!

It appears to me that there is great interest in knowing

the truth about the modern versions of the Bible and how they change our beliefs and doctrines.

I am sending you probably the best source available on this issue which gives the KJV reading and the changes made by the Hort and Westcott revision committee.

It answered for me once and for all the question of the correct Bible we should be using and why. I trust it will be of great help to you in explaining this vital subject.

M.P. | Idaho

AV Editor:

Knowing the truth (meaning) of God’s Word does not depend on only one English translation or one ancient text. Knowing the meaning of God’s message in any language and any translation is closely linked to obedience to the things we do understand and the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

The heart of Anabaptism is that simple faithful people can hear, read, and understand the Word of God and put His Word into practice. It is often the learned ones who can reason away the need for obedience and faithfulness to God and His Word.

We do not find life in the technicalities of translation or the authenticity of texts. We find life by being obedient to Jesus. Jesus said, “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).



Matthew Commentary (Chapters 1-13)

Abridged preface by David Bercot

This commentary is designed to help readers see the Gospel of Matthew through the eyes of the Christians who lived in the early centuries after Christ. It brings the book of Matthew to life—not by garbing it in twenty-first century clothes—but by clothing it in ancient garments like people wore in Bible times. As a result, the reader is certain to find new insights (really, ancient ones) in this commentary that confirm and enlarge Bible truths.

The objective of this commentary may sound exciting, but let us briefly think about the famous Renaissance paintings of biblical scenes. When Europeans of the Renaissance era (1300-1600 A.D.) viewed those paintings, they saw nothing strange about the clothes on the biblical characters. They thought they were seeing an accurate representation of life in the ancient world. In fact, if the Renaissance artists had painted their biblical subjects in a manner that was historically accurate, people would have objected to the strange clothing.

The same principle is true regarding Bible commentaries. We Christians living in the twenty-first century prefer to hear explanations of Scripture that resonate with our worldview and theology. That is only natural. Yet, what we need to be seeking are explanations that resonated with Christians who lived close to the time of the apostles. And those explanations may not always be what we want to hear. Yet, we are wise to humble ourselves and learn from those who lived close to the time of the apostles. They not only had the advantage of living in the same culture and speaking the same language as the apostles, but they received the commendation of the last living apostle, John.

A.D. 100: The State of Christianity

The apostle John lived until the dawn of the second century. What did he have to say about the state of Christianity at that time? Just a few years before his death, he wrote a general letter to the whole church, saying, “I have written to you fathers because you have known him who is from the beginning. I have written to you young men because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:14). So just before the beginning of the second century, both the fathers in the faith and the young men were holding steadfastly to the apostles’ teaching. The word of God remained in them, and they had overcome Satan. In other words, they were holding

to the historic faith.

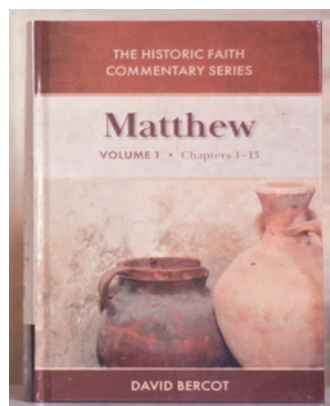
The fact that Christ’s church was strong at the beginning of the second century should come as no surprise. Jesus had commissioned His apostles to make disciples of all nations, “teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). The apostles were not failures. They accomplished the task Jesus had given them. Jesus never abandoned them. Revelation describes the apostles as the twelve foundation stones of New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14). They were not the foundation stones of a church that crumbled as soon the apostles died.

When John spoke of those who were fathers in the faith, he may have been referring to Ignatius, Polycarp, and Clement of Rome, among others. Those men were leaders in various churches at the time he wrote his letter. They were not “fathers” in the sense of having authority or inspiration like the apostles. Rather, they were fathers simply in the sense of being older men who were holding steadfastly to the historic faith. Those three men wrote letters that we still have, letters that bear witness to the faith they held. After them, other faithful men left writings that testify to the historic faith.

All these men were not only close to the era of the apostles, but they lived long before the rise of church councils, theological systems, and state churches. They represent a fresh, primitive Christianity untainted by the corruptions of later ages. But they remained faithful against both the persecution of Rome and the heresy of the Gnostics whom John called the antichrists.

Of course, the early Christians were not infallible. They surely made mistakes. We are free to agree

or disagree with their understanding of any given passage of Scripture. Furthermore, they are not a source of authority in themselves apart from Scripture. However, they provide us with a witness as to how Christians understood the Scriptures when the church was still young. That witness is priceless.



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D. B. | Pennsylvania

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.

Legal Help

by Stum Bling



I read with interest the two articles “Midwife in the Crosshairs” and “Amish Under Fire” (AV18, pages 40-41).

I see a difference in these two reports. In “Amish Under Fire” the Amish are plaintiffs (aggressors) in suits at law. In the case of “Midwife in the Crosshairs,” Susan Wilson and her clinic, “A Mother’s Heart”, are defendants. To be a defendant in a court of law is biblically acceptable—Paul made his defense before Agrippa (Acts 24:10). It is never scriptural to be an aggressor in a suit of law, but Christians are instructed to “settle with an adversary quickly” before we are drug into court (Matthew 5:25).

I am basing my comments on cases where Christians are defendants rather than plaintiffs. If we study the Scripture we find two prohibitions against using the state law system. We are not to use the courts to settle disputes with others or as a means of taking other people to task such as in collecting a debt or in righting a wrong.

However, when a person is summoned to court for

his faith or some other infraction of the law, I believe the Bible teaches us to humbly comply. We should be willing to share the hope that is in our heart, share our faith, and be willing to suffer persecution for it.

I am now seventy years old and the father of eighteen children. Over the years we have been very active in supporting midwives and the privilege of not having to go to the hospital to give birth to our babies. This has not always been a taken-for-granted privilege in Ohio.

Another struggle we had with unconstitutional law had to do with selling raw milk. When our son was summoned into court, he took his Bible along and read I John 3:17 to the court. “*But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*”

Our son had strong support in the courtroom from many families who preferred to avoid adulterated food and wanted to buy food directly from the farmer. Many people gave some remarkable testimonies; still, more than once, our son did not know whether he would be going home with the family or end up in jail.

(Continued next page)

It came to the place where I said that if people have a medical problem, we go to a specialist. We want someone who has been trained to understand the problem and expect that his experience in treating patients with similar problems to ours can be helpful.

When we have a problem in the courtroom, we are totally unfamiliar with court proceedings and wind up frustrating the judge; in this way we become our own worst enemy. So in this case, a lawyer and two assistants became involved—in hindsight it was a very wise move.

The conclusion was that the jury found the defendant “not guilty” on all but one of the five counts filed against him. After the trial, when the jury got all the information the judge and prosecuting attorney had blacked out, the jurors were upset. Some of them said, “If we had had all the vital evidence, we would have acquitted the defendant on all five counts.”

Looking at all three issues—education, midwifery, raw milk—where the Amish in Ohio have had difficulty with state laws, officials, and public opinion, what should we learn? In some cases midwives and parents went to jail, children were taken from their parents and placed in foster care. These people willingly suffered for their faith.

The really sad part of the story is that some persecution came from within, from brethren who felt it was wrong to seek legal advice. This is why I feel it would be good to take another close look at what people went through for their faith and what the outcome was. What would the outcome have been if the defendants had refused legal counsel?

As it is today, we can have our own schools. Most of us can freely have our babies as we believe is best without government interference. All honor and glory goes to God, but let us remember God usually sends a man to help us and that man may be a lawyer.



Amish Under Fire (from AV 18, page 41)

by A. Stoun Dead



First of all, I am not Amish, so I cannot fully relate nor answer logically from their perspective. However, several issues stand out which I feel apply to all Anabaptist believers.

I was astounded to read that “Amish residents in

Michigan are *suing* (emphasis added) the Lenawee County Health Department . . .” I assume that these Amish adhere to the Dordrecht Confession of Faith as their spiritually-guiding document. While the Confession does not speak directly to the matter of suing at law, its tenor certainly would seem to forbid such legal action. That raised a red flag. I also noted with dismay that the ACLU and an Ohio law firm were involved in the suit. Again, I find this out of keeping with a biblical profession—Christians are not to be aggressors but to be forgiving and peaceable.

I noted in the article that Lenawee County officials had offered alternative options to the sewage disposal problem which, to my thinking, should have satisfied the Amish community. I noted with dismay that “None of the property owners has agreed to a compromise.” That was disheartening.

On the other hand, I found the last paragraph of the report heartening from the standpoint of the county officials and applaud their willingness to work with the Amish to find a satisfactory solution to the dilemma. This raises the question of whether the cultural trappings of their tradition may at times override or becloud their spiritual expression. Sad, if true.

I do not want to paint the Amish with the wrong brush. I respect them in many ways, but I feel strongly that too often tradition overrides better judgment.

Here are some of my observations. I personally do not see the issue as one of religious oppression. I see it as a community/health issue that could and should have been solved by mutual agreement and give and take by both parties. It seems to me that the Amish, instead of affirming their position, have actually hurt their position and supposed reputation as “the quiet in the land” by turning this into a highly-publicized and divisive legal issue.

I recognize that at times the civil authorities (whom God has instructed us to obey – Romans 13) do overstretch their authority in attempting to corral everyone under sometimes meaningless and burdensome restrictions. But do we have the right to disobey or ignore as long as they do not restrict our relationship to God? I think not. Again, see Romans 13.

It seems here that it is simply the Amish group’s way of life that is the issue and not a spiritual one. It would seem to me that compromise would have solved the issue, enhanced the standing of the Amish in their community, and not compromised their spiritual integrity. As it now stands (at the time of the writing of the article), unnecessary tensions and divisions have arisen, community relationships damaged, and

perhaps suspicion and distrust thrust upon these otherwise well-meaning people.

There are indeed times when Christ's followers must take a stand, and suffer the consequences that ensue. This does not seem to be such a situation. I would hope

that we as Christ's followers could be discerning of the things wherein we must take a stand regardless of the outcome, learn to live at peace with our fellowmen, and not blight our witness before a watching, needy world by focusing on peripheral and selfish issues.



The Practical Side: Rest of the Story

What really happened in conclusion to stories from previous issues.

Midwife in the Crosshairs *(from AV 18, page 40)*

by Ree Porter



This two-and-one-half year court struggle was over whether midwife Susan Wilson needed a proper license to operate "A Mother's Heart" birthing center.

In this case Cole County Circuit Judge Jon Beetem ruled that the state had failed to prove that Susan Wilson needed a license to operate her birthing center. Judge Beetem found the Department of Health & Senior Services was using a department definition of an "ambulatory center" rather than the state law. Therefore, Susan Wilson could continue to operate her birthing center without meeting all the requirements of an ambulatory center and without a license.

According to Susan Wilson's lawyer, Gaylin Carver, "This case decided if people have the option to deliver a baby where they want and can get the services they want."

Judge Beetem also ruled that the state must pay reasonable legal fees incurred by Wilson in defending herself in this case.



Amish Under Fire *(from AV 18, page 41)*

by Ree Porter



Fifteen Amish families involved in the dispute with the Lenawee County health authorities came to Lenawee County from adjoining Hillsdale County in 2015. They

report that they never had any problems with the health authorities in Hillsdale County where they practiced the same simple lifestyle they were using in Lenawee

County—no electricity, indoor plumbing, electricity, telephones, or hydraulic power—a life completely off the grid.

They do use outhouses and hand water pumps and windmills to supply their water. Therein lies the rub. The Amish system does not comply with Lenawee County health codes that require running water in the kitchen and septic systems that must be pumped occasionally. The county can offer no evidence that the waste disposal system or the drinking water the Amish use, offers any hazard to the health of the children or the community.

Yet the County posted signs on the doors of fifteen Amish houses declaring them "UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION" and "ORDER TO VACATE." An accompanying letter warned that the county could seize their homes if they failed to comply with county codes for sewage disposal and household wastewater.

The Amish have many good arguments in their favor. They appear to be a healthy and flourishing community. There is no reason to think that their relatively small farms and their peaceful lifestyle are a health hazard or a threat to their neighbors. They live much like their ancestors and the ancestors of their neighbors lived for hundreds of years, without modern "conveniences."

So it seems the Amish do have a good point; it is a matter of religious freedom. Can they live an honest and simple life as "the quiet in the land," or must they conform to accepting the modern ways and the disregard for religion that permeates modern American society? Where is the starting and stopping place in bowing to unfounded government regulations?

It appears as though neither the Amish nor the county officials want the publicity of the courtroom, so the matter is being settled outside the glare of the public eye.



Upcoming Events

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

Southern Mennonite Fellowship Meetings

Date: November 6-8, 2020 | 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:

Jared L. Weaver from Bainbridge, Pennsylvania:

- “Need for Vision/Hindrances of Vision”
- “Vision for Local and Foreign Missions”
- “Vision in the Communication Gap”
- “Vision for Church”

Levi Mast from Fair Play, South Carolina

- “Looking Forward by Looking Back”
- “Willing to Be a Watchman”

Talks by:

Kendall Myers from Waynesboro, Georgia

- “Vision for Education”

Nelson Kurtz from Hartwell, Georgia

- “History of the Hartwell Mennonite Center”



Christian Aid Ministries' Open House

Notice: This year the usual CAM Open House event will be replaced by a slide program shown at various locations. During November 2020 the program will be hosted at various locations in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and surrounding areas.

Future Programs: In early 2021, CAM will announce dates for when and where the slide program will be shown in Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, and several other locations. CAM is available to bring the Open House Slide Program to churches and communities in other parts of the United States. If you have interest in organizing such an event, contact Jon Stoltzfus at 717.575.7361.

Open House Slide Presentation:

At each location the presentation will begin with singing and a devotional.

- **Nicaragua-Adopt-A-Family** by Kevin Steiner, *Nicaragua*
- **SALT Microfinance Solutions** by Trent Eikenberry, *Nigeria*
- **War in Yemen** by CAM Staff Member
- **Coronavirus Crisis Care: Demand for Food** by Weston Showalter, *Ohio*
- **International Crisis Projects** by David Leid, *Ohio*
- **Disaster Response Services: Rebuilding** by Jay Martin, *Missouri*
- **Family Self-Support** by Yan Chornenkiy, *Ukraine*
- **Children's Story Time** by Johnny Miller, *Ohio*
- **Life for Children in Waslala, Nicaragua** by Jolene Miller, *Ohio*
- **Opportunities in the Wake of COVID-19** by Gary Miller, *Idaho*

- **Adopt-A-Family** by Aaron Amstutz, *Ukraine*
- **Save-A-Life** by Paul Yoder, *Liberia*
- **Middle East Refugee Crisis: Overview** by Brent Boll, *Pennsylvania*
- **Middle East Refugee Crisis: Opportunities** by CAM staff, *Iraq*
- **Rapid Response Services: Hurricane Laura** by Weston Showalter, *Ohio*
- **Medicines-for-Multitudes: Balm of Gilead Clinic** by Jolene Miller, *Ohio*
- **Billboard Evangelism** by Jay Stoltzfus, *Ohio*
- **Coronavirus Crisis Care: USA Projects** by Jon Stoltzfus, *Pennsylvania*
- **Clothing Bundle Project** by Ellis Schrock, *Romania*
- **Bibles for Restricted Countries** by CAM Staff Member



Circulation & Financial Statement

Income & Expense Report

July thru September 2020

1 July 2020 Beginning Balance	\$1,775.50
Income	
Donations	\$3,545.00
Local Support*	\$8,000.00
Total Income	\$11,545.00
Expenses	
Handling & Packaging	\$608.00
Postage	\$3,063.62
Printing	\$5,071.00
Staff Expenses	\$1,329.00
Total Expense	\$10,071.62
30 September 2020 Ending Balance	\$3,248.88

Circulation Report

September 2020

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: \$9,195.55

Cost Per Copy: \$1.90/ea.

ISSUE #15 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$9,614.29

Cost Per Copy: \$1.98/ea.

ISSUE #16 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$10,236.26

Cost Per Copy: \$2.18/ea.

ISSUE #17 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$9,898.99

Cost Per Copy: \$2.04 /ea.

ISSUE #18 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$10,071.62

Cost Per Copy: \$2.08/ea.

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



— Creator unknown

Write down any additional ways you think of to show your love for your home church.

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“If a wicked person turns away from their sin and does what is just and right...

“If they follow the decrees that give life and do no evil, that person will surely live, they will not die.”

- Ezekiel 33:14-15 (NIV modified)



Fall scenery country side, USA