

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

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

In This Issue:

"CONSECRATED TO GOD" - GORDON AMSTUTZ

"THE DANGERS OF WEALTH" - CHRIS WYAN

"THE PROMISED REST" - EVER RESTFUL

"MY HEAVENLY FATHER" - ADELLE MYERS

"GOD'S WOUNDOUS CARBON" - JAMES G. LANDIS



Letter from the Editor



Doris planted a small vegetable garden this spring. She weeded it, watered it and watched it ... and then worked to pick, pickle, and pack the cucumbers. The green beans likewise had to be picked, snapped, canned or frozen. I helped a little, but was impressed with the total amount of tiring work involved in growing and preserving our daily food. We must daily give thanks.

This month Doris reached back into her family heritage and prepared a gallon of mustard pickle. The open jar tempted me and I snatched one as I went by. She caught me at it and said, "That gallon is supposed to last till Christmas." Six months? ... no way! A peanut butter sandwich with mustard pickle ... yum!

Doris and I like to read books together. After being challenged by Philippians 4:8, "Whatever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, ... meditate on these things," we abandoned reading a current Christian biography filled with violence, and started reading the great English Christian classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*.

The edition we are reading, published in 1893, fills our minds with good things, things we need to meditate on. And the fantastic artwork, superbly illustrates the characters—Christian, Evangelist, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Despair, Formalist, Hypocrisy, Mistrust, Timorous, Watchful, Discretion, Piety, Charity, Prudence, Faithful, Talkative, Pride, Arrogancy, Self-Conceit, Worldly-Glory, Lord Hate-Good I could go on telling of these memorable characters emblazoned on my mind.

Last week, June 6-10, I suffered from a cold with a thick throat and general malaise. A hitherto unknown brother from another state stopped by to make our acquaintance and to encourage us in the work of *Anabaptist Voice*. What a lift for my spirit!

Yesterday, 22 June 2023, God again set up an appointment with a hitherto unknown couple from Washington State in a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania hotel. It was not a chance encounter, but arranged by Almighty God. As God leads, you will hear more of the brother's spiritual journey in a future issue of *Anabaptist Voice*.

Peace,

James G. Landis

Send all responses, articles, and questions to:

AV Editor


5282 Highway 56 South
Waynesboro, GA 30830
editor@anabaptistvoice.com
www.anabaptistvoice.com








Send donations and/or subscription info to:

AV Production Team

243 Partridge Road
Olar, SC 29843
subscriptions@anabaptistvoice.com
www.anabaptistvoice.com

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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 contains 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

God is Still in Control

Thank you so much for your email sent to me concerning the article I had written back in 2013 pertaining to the ancient pyramids of Egypt. Thanks also for sharing the additional information you found on the subject.

Truly everything in the natural world and in history testify to the reality of an all-wise Creator God who is STILL in control of the universe and who rules in the affairs of men.

And then to think that He "so loved the [rebellious] world that He gave His only begotten Son ..." to redeem those who would receive Him! Oh, that millions more would turn to Him with all their hearts during these chaotic and desperate times in which we live.

No, Brother, I would not have anything to add to what you sent; what you added wonderfully enlarges on my original article. I forwarded all that you sent me to several friends.

N. W. | *Georgia*



Not What Jesus Meant

I am writing in response to the question, "Am I Rich or Poor?" (AV28, "Community of Goods," Round Table Discussion, page 34).

I assume the author of the poem is of the Hutterite faith. While I agree we are commanded not to accumulate wealth on earth, I do not think pooling all our finances together is really what Jesus meant.

In reality, does not each member own a part of the kitty? Jesus said to give and expect nothing in return.

Jesus' words were meant for all mankind and I do not think it would work for all the Christians in the world to operate with the Hutterite system?

D. B. | *Pennsylvania*



Inclusion Theology

Ted Byler did a good job with his article!

Inclusion theology, not replacement theology.

Inclusion is such a "great" word nowadays, so it should make everyone happy!

A. R. | *South Carolina*



A Kiss Is a Sign of Love

"Encouraging Brotherhood" by Menno Knight [AV Issue 28, pages 13-14] covered well the practice of greeting the brethren with a holy kiss.

That admonition is needed now because the government earlier pressured us to "social distance" due to the "covid pandemic." My church canceled services for two and one-half months, but we still kept in touch by electronic means. When in-church services resumed, we gradually practiced more intimacy. The holy kiss is most difficult.

When I was a teenager, we were instructed not to dance, hug or kiss. That was a good standard. Now we will certainly not bless giving a kiss to church members of the other gender. We married people should rightfully be jealous over our spouses.

I have noticed that when some people exchange kisses, one person turns a cheek and kisses the air. I assume that it is for sanitary reasons. I heard that many years ago, some brothers chewed tobacco. Other brothers would not greet them with a kiss; because of this some in the congregation started another church.

We naturally are closer to people like ourselves and distance ourselves from people with whom we disagree. Giving a kiss to a disagreeable person is difficult. Since a kiss is a sign of love, refusing to give a kiss is a sign of broken fellowship. It reflects a condition in the heart.

"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:20-21).

B. H. | *Pennsylvania*

Take Good Care

I like the 170 Allis. When I was growing up, my dad had one similar to what you pictured. Although he quit farming in 1977 when I was 11—Dad held on to his land and rented it out—he kept the 170 Allis. We used it for many projects in the following decades.

I really have no need for a tractor these days, but on occasion, one would come in handy. I have often thought a 170 Allis with a front-end loader would be nice! If you want to leave yours to me in your will when you die, I would take good care of it.

But most of all may we "take good care" of the gospel of Jesus, that cleanses sin from the heart and sets men free to love God and others rather than just ourselves. All the 170 Allis-Chalmers will rust or melt away some day.

M. A. | *Ohio*



It Works Too Well

Christian greetings in the precious name of Jesus—our only hope beyond the grave. First, I want to thank you for your efforts in publishing *Anabaptist Voice* and for all the sound and edifying articles. I especially am interested in more teaching on NON-accumulation.

I am thankful that God has allowed me to be part of a highly structured Christian community, with laboring together and high accountability. Many brethren working together on a regular basis is such a blessing.

However, I have an increasing concern—it works too well. There is a monetary blessing beyond our actual needs. What should we do with the excess? Could someone out there in AV land give us more teaching on how to use our Lord's goods?

E. R.. | *Tennessee*



Brothers Meeting

I deeply appreciate the article you wrote and printed on the plain suit in the recent *Anabaptist Voice*.

We have a brothers meeting coming up in several weeks, and I'm wondering if it would be okay to print copies of it for our men to consider prior to the meeting?

Would you be able to email me an electronic copy of the article?

Thanks very much!

B. S. | *Pennsylvania*



An Avid Reader

I would like to express my appreciation for the article in AV 28 by Ted Byler, "The Israel of God." It expresses very well the belief I had earlier come to from my study of the Word of God.

I have been an avid reader of the Word from a very young age—I did not have access to plentiful reading material at the time. At age 11, I read the New Testament through for the first time in approximately three months time and the whole Bible through during my early teens. Before I was 20, I had read the *Martyrs Mirror* from cover to cover.

Soon after, a pamphlet found its way to my hands about a thousand-year reign. My parents were pretty concerned when they realized what I was reading. I assured them I wouldn't be deceived through it for I knew my Bible well. Well, over the years the teaching came back to at least put doubts in my spiritual journey.

In the last four years I've been receiving a messianic Jewish publication. At first I was impressed how sound it seemed to be in the important teachings of the Word. But then one of the last issues I received confirmed that it was a false teaching.

I see the same thing happening now as happened at the first coming of Christ. People were looking for a messiah that would make them famous in this world. The same expectation is alive again. But the real thing is spiritual.

Ted Byler's article again settled in my mind that the Israel of God, the church, is the true Messianic Kingdom.

D. M. | *Tennessee*



The Dangers of Wealth

by Chris Wyan

Editor's Note: This is designed to be a personal Bible study. We recommend reading out loud the entire passages listed, and then writing your own comments on each passage. Reading the passages in two or three versions and in another language could be helpful. This article could also be used as a passage-by-passage study in prayer meeting or a Sunday school class.

The main thing that drew me to Anabaptism was the fact that what I was being taught and hearing from the pulpit in the Protestant churches did not match what I was reading in the scriptures. There were some things that I grew up believing that I had to rethink and eventually give up if I wanted to follow Jesus the Christ. Some of those things were not easy to give up like patriotism, the right to self-defense and my pride, but I realized that if I truly wanted to follow Christ and if He really was my Lord, then I had to do what He said and taught.

So, I started on a personal journey to find the truth of the scriptures in all things, including the dangers of wealth. The scriptures I studied about wealth and my comments/understanding of them are below.



Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, ... Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Matthew 6:19-24

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that my treasure will be in earthly things rather than in heavenly things.

Jesus says that wherever my treasure is my heart will be there as well. Jesus is also saying that the way I look at things will determine how I behave and how I think of and treat others. Whether I look at wealth as something to covet or something to be careful of, impacts the way I think about God.

Jesus then goes on to explain that I cannot serve two masters. He is telling me that wealth is in competition to be my master. Instead of me having wealth, wealth can have me. It will consume my thoughts, my actions,

my time, and my desires; all the while making me believe I am the master of my wealth. Jesus ends the teaching by stating very decisively that I cannot serve God and money.



When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ...

Matthew 25:31:46

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that I am so busy holding onto the resources God has entrusted me with that I fail to notice the plight of those around me.

If I am not careful I fail to follow the second greatest commandment because my focus is on myself and not on others. Jesus is letting me know that it is not a matter of whether I call Him "Lord" or not; what matters is that my actions and my attitudes prove that I am a follower of Him.



And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury:
- Mark 12:43

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that my focus lies on how much I give away of my excess and never consider how much in total I am keeping for myself. It also points out the danger of wealth leading me to no longer trust in God because I trust in my wealth instead.



And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. ... But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. ... And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? ... Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

- Luke 6:20-36

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that if I am wealthy, I have received my consolation, so I can expect nothing in heaven. Jesus also points out that my focus on wealth can cause my motives and/or actions to be no different than that of non-believers.



And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. ... God said unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be?"

- Luke 12:15-23

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that wealth will cause me to focus on my own comforts and pleasures, not just in the present, but also in the future. Wealth can easily cause me to ignore the needs around me when I focus on myself.

Right after Jesus says to be wary of covetousness, he tells a parable of a man who had a bountiful harvest and

then did not have enough storeroom, so he determined to tear down his barns and build bigger ones. I must always consider the question God asks the man, "When my soul is required of me, who gets all the things I have held onto?" I do not believe God will look favorably on me if I withhold the resources He trusted to me until I am done with them, instead of sharing them when I have the opportunity?"



If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ... So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

- Luke 14:26-33

Comment: Jesus wanted His followers to understand they must forsake everything if they decided to follow Him; He did not want them to give up later if they discovered the cost of following Him was too high. The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is the fact that God has called me to give up everything I have. If I retain my wealth, or seek it, I have failed to give up everything.



He that is faithful in that which is least ... For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

- Luke 16:10-15

Comment: The dangers of wealth portrayed in this passage are that God has entrusted me with earthly resources as a test of my faithfulness; if I prove unfaithful with earthly things, God will not trust me with heavenly resources. Jesus also warns me against trying to serve two masters because I will be dedicated to one and not the other. He also points out that wealth can be a master that will take over and cause me to reject Christ and His teachings.



**HATH NOT GOD CHOSEN THE
POOR OF THIS WORLD TO BE
RICH IN FAITH? JAMES 2:5**

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; ... But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, "He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack."

- II Corinthians 8:1-5

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that wealth will cause me to consider myself better than others and instead of making myself equal with them, I will look down on them and consider myself blessed. Instead of helping others during my time of abundance, they cannot now help me in my time of want. I squandered my abundance on myself and they have never recovered from their lack.



Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

- Ephesians 4:28

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that the desire for wealth can lead to covetousness, where I take what does not belong to me. Notice the thief is told to work so that he will have to give to those in need. Though I am not a thief I am also to work so that I have to give to those in need, not to store up or squander on myself.



Of course, godliness with contentment is great gain. ... Those who want to be rich, however, fall into temptation and become ensnared by many foolish and harmful desires ... By craving money some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

- 1 Timothy 6:6-12

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that just the desire to be rich will lead to many temptations, which might cause me to walk away from my faith.



Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in

uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

- 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that wealth might cause me to become conceited and depend on my wealth instead of depending on God. I must always remember that all my wealth could disappear in an instant; so I should put my trust in God, instead of depending on wealth, as the foundation my faith is built upon.



Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

- Hebrews 13:5

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that I am not content with what I have and instead desire more. There is also a danger that I will not lean on or trust the Lord, but will, instead, lean on and trust in my own abilities.



Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath

promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?
- James 2:5-7

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in these passages is that my wealth will lead me away from God and the mercies He calls me to. Instead I will act more like the world and I will treat those who have less with contempt. I might even oppress them.



Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. ... Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.
- James 5:1-6

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that I will store up treasures here on earth, living in luxury and self-indulgence and some day that will all be gone. When I stand before the Lord to give an account of my life, all those things will testify against me.



Hereby perceive we the love of God But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need ... how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us love ... in deed and in truth. ... And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.
- 1 John 3:16-24

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is the danger of having the resources to help someone but withholding that help. How can the love of God reside in me if I have the means to relieve someone's hunger or thirst or provide the needed medicine or whatever the need and I refuse to do so because that may not leave me enough for some future need of my own?



Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;.... I anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.
- Revelation 3:17-18

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that because of my earthly wealth I won't see my true heavenly status of being poor, naked and sick, but will instead believe that I am heaven bound.



And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.
- Revelation 20:12

Comment: The danger of wealth portrayed in this passage is that by keeping my wealth for myself I will miss the many heavenly works that God has planned for me to do. This means that when I stand before the Great White Throne for judgment where I will be judged based on my works, I will have none written down.

WEALTH will usually lead us
to **TRUST MORE** in
ourselves than in **GOD.**

My Final Comment: At the end of time for me, I know that I will stand before the Great White Throne for judgment. As these scriptures point out, all of my works, both good and bad, will have been written in the books and I will be judged by what is written inside. I am not saying that it will be a comparison to see if I did more good works than bad, but I believe it will be more in line with which ones I was doing toward the end. Did my relationship with Christ lead me to love others and use His resources to do works honoring Him or did I do works honoring myself?

Summary of the Dangers of Wealth:

1. Wealth will usually lead us to trust more in our selves than in God.
2. My wealth will be where my focus is.
3. Wealth will prevent me from loving others as I love myself.

Practical Applications:

So, how has my understanding of the dangers presented in these scriptures impacted my life and how my wife and I use our resources? Below are our goals and while we may not be there yet on some of them, we are working toward them.

1. Our goal is to give away more than we spend on ourselves. Currently we have medical bills we are taking care of, but that is our goal.

2. We have cut down on how often we eat out and what we buy. This is a work in progress, but our goal is to rarely, if ever, eat out and to only buy what is absolutely necessary.

3. I have desired to buy something and have walked around for up to 30 minutes trying to decide if I really needed it and if I could truly justify buying it, only to put it back and walk out empty-handed.

4. We have determined that instead of remodeling/upgrading our 1930's home, we will only make the necessary repairs when needed.

C. W. | Kansas

Editor's Note:

It can be very easy to shunt uncomfortable questions about wealth off to one side. But what do warnings about the dangers of wealth really mean? As in a general revival meeting we can give verbal assent to the teachings of Scripture as the Word of God and then totally fail to put its teaching into practice. We pray this Bible study will challenge you to scrutinize how well you are handling the Master's wealth.

Practical Questions:

1. What is your interpretation of each Scripture selection?
2. Write comments as Brother Wyan did that put yourself in the meaning.
3. What changes will you make in order to please your Master?

*How well
are you*

handling the Master's Wealth?

Consecrated to God

by Gordon Amstutz

In 1875, the well-known song writer, Fanny Crosby, began the second stanza of the song, "I Am Thine O Lord" by penning the words, "Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord, by the power of grace divine." Someone recently asked me what it means to be consecrated, and if it was a relevant concept for Christians today. In this article, we will look at consecration in its historical scriptural context and make some applications for our current time.

Consecration in the Old Testament

The dictionary defines consecration as the act of being separated, set apart, or dedicated to specific religious duties. Consecration played a very prominent role in the lives of God's people in the Old Testament, both for the leaders of Israel and for the general population.

One example of this is when God was preparing to give His people the Law. In Exodus 19:10,11 we read these words:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mt. Sinai in the sight of all the people."

A similar occurrence happened when the children of Israel were preparing to cross the Jordan River and enter the Land of Canaan. God commanded Joshua to direct the people to sanctify themselves; to wash and put on clean clothes in preparation for the historic event.

In Exodus 13, God gave instructions concerning the firstborn of both man and animals; they were to

be dedicated and offered to Him. This was a regular reminder that God wanted their best, not just of their crops, flocks, and children, but their best devotion, loyalty, and love.

Consecration was the underlying principle for much of the ceremonial law. The dietary restrictions, regulations for clean and unclean activities, and regular purification ceremonies served as constant reminders to all the people that they were to be holy and dedicated to God. God wanted to use the people of Israel to showcase His glory to the world. Whenever God was about to display His power in some way, it was important that the people were physically, mentally, and spiritually prepared for the event.

In addition to the regular acts of consecration that were incumbent upon all of God's people, the leaders of the Israelites had special ceremonies of consecration to designate them for leadership. Leviticus 8:1-13 details the process of God choosing Aaron and his sons to be the priests and thus the spiritual leaders of the nation. He also designated the entire tribe of Levi to minister in the tabernacle and assist the priests in the execution of the religious ceremonies and worship services. These divine designations were signified by the priests wearing special clothing, being anointed with oil, and sacrificing a bull as a burnt offering to God.

Years later, when Israel wanted to be more like the surrounding nations, the practice of anointing with oil to designate leadership carried over to the kings, as well as to the prophets, anointing a successor to take his place as God's voice to the people. These anointings were either public or private, sometimes both, but always signified that the person was being called or set apart for a particular duty or service.

Consecration in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the most prominent example of consecration can be found in Jesus himself. He was clearly designated by God to complete specific



assignments and we know that Jesus was dedicated and committed to doing His Father's will. Jesus' three years of ministry had definite, specific purpose. His consecration is evident as we read of His service to mankind in teaching, preaching, healing the sick, raising the dead, providing food for the hungry, and announcing the arrival of the Kingdom of God. Certainly, His death and resurrection exemplified consecration, as did the training and commissioning of the apostles to build the church, and He continues in consecration to be our intercessor and advocate before God himself.

Consecration of the Believers

Consecration has some implications for New Testament believers, too. In I Peter 2:5-12 we find that God is calling us to be a chosen generation of priests; we to be God's own special people for the purpose of broadcasting the praises of the One who has called us from darkness to light.

Romans 12:1,2 instructs us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God as the only reasonable act of service that we can offer.

Consecration is the standard expectation for all true believers. It is not optional or only for a select few. No one should dare delight in God's salvation without also willingly dedicating himself to God's service. We are to be His ambassadors, His agents, His living sacrifices, to declare His goodness and glory.

Like the Old Testament practice, the early church and we today still utilize ceremonies of consecration when people are called to special or long-term responsibility. Our practice of ordination is a consecration ceremony and is patterned after the example of the early church choosing an apostle to replace Judas and the ordination of seven deacons to assist with the physical needs of the church.

A commissioning service for mission workers is another example of a ceremony of consecration that we practice from time to time. Again, it has biblical precedent in Acts 13 where the church at Antioch commissioned Saul and Barnabas to go on a church-planting mission trip.

These public ceremonies are important mental "stakes in the ground" for those being consecrated for a specific task as well as for those who observe the ceremony. While the ceremony may be carried out by humans, it is simply an affirmation of God's call of special consecration on an individual's life.

We might also subject ourselves to personal acts of consecration that may include fasting, solitude or other spiritual disciplines. These may be helpful as we self-evaluate and realize that some habit, attitude, or seed of carnality is limiting our effectiveness in service to God. This is not to say that we attempt to wash our hands of the responsibility for the area of need and "just let God handle it" as consecration is sometimes portrayed. God works within us, but we must yield to his cleansing and pruning. We limit our usefulness in God's service when we succumb to fleshly indulgence and self-gratification.

There may be some questions, for some people, about the appropriateness of dedicating babies, buildings, or other inanimate objects. There is biblical precedent for dedicating places of worship, at least in the Old Testament. I believe that these sorts of dedications may still have some merit, but we should recognize that there is no magic in the ceremony. The dedication of a church building is effective so long as its parishioners are themselves dedicated to the worship and service of God. No dedication service will prevent the church from being turned into a dance hall if the people abandon their own principles of being consecrated to God.

Likewise, a prayer of dedication for an infant does not remove the possibility of that child choosing to deny God and live a life of rebellion and self-centeredness. It may serve as an added reminder to the parents to be diligent and consecrated themselves, and to encourage and nudge their children toward a life of consecration, but the child will still need to make his own choices.

Conclusion

As we have considered what it meant for the Old Testament saints to be consecrated to God, how it was put into practice in the early New Testament church, and what God through His Word is calling us to, it is clear that consecration to God is still a needful "setting apart" for God's people.

The object lessons that God wanted to use to teach the children of Israel are still relevant for us. Are we physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually prepared to showcase the power and glory of God? Is our best love, loyalty, and devotion assigned to Him? Are we presented as living sacrifices to be used in His service?

May our goal be as Fanny Crosby's was, "*Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, and my will be lost in Thine.*"

G. A. | South Carolina

The Promised Rest

by E. T. Restful

“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” Hebrews 4:9

The rest spoken of in this verse is a future rest for the people of God. If the writer spoke of a present rest that we enjoy because of Jesus’ atoning work on Calvary, he would not address it to the people of God, because that people already has rest in their hearts. He must have been speaking of another rest. The verse also says, “there remains.” It cannot be referring to a rest to be experienced in this life; otherwise it would not be “remaining,” but could be experienced while we still go about our works in this life.

The Scripture says, “**For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His**” (**Hebrews 4:10**). Does this mean that we should stop doing the works of God while we yet live? Not hardly. Hebrews 3:6 says we must “**hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.**” This cannot mean anything other than the end of life here on earth.

Hebrews 3:14 emphasizes the same point: “**For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.**” Again, “stedfast

unto the end” can only mean to the end of our life here on earth. At death is when our works will cease.

James 2:17 clinches the point, “**Faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead.**” As long as the people of God are alive, they must have works in order to prove their faith. But when death comes, we can then cease from our works and enter into the glorious rest promised us.

The people of God can enter that promised rest, only if they do not harden their hearts in unbelief while they live. “**Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it**” (**Hebrews 4:1**). The writer of Hebrews addresses the people of Israel—the Hebrews or the Jews. This people knew the history of how God delivered them from slavery in Egypt and of how their ancestors disobeyed Him ten times in the wilderness. “**Because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected me see it**” (**Numbers 14:22-23**). Ten times the Israelites rejected God’s miraculous hand to bring them into the promised land. Here is a possible list of those provocations:

1. **When Israel lay trapped between Pharaoh’s army and the Red Sea** (Exodus 14:12).
2. **When the water the Israelites found at Marah was undrinkable, just three days after crossing the Red Sea** (Exodus 15:22-24).
3. **When the Israelites grew hungry in the Wilderness of Sin** (Exodus 16:1-2).
4. **When some left the manna till morning – Wilderness of Sin** (Exodus 16:19-20).
5. **When some went out to gather manna on the Sabbath – Wilderness of Sin** (Exodus 16:26-27).
6. **When there was no water at Rephidim – left the Wilderness of Sin** (Exodus 17:1-4).
7. **When Israel made a golden calf and worshipped it** (Exodus 32:1-6).

When death comes, we
can then cease from
our works and enter
into the glorious
rest promised us!

8. **When the people complained against the Lord at Taberah** (Numbers 11:1-3).
9. **When the Israelites complained about not having meat to eat** (Numbers 11:4-6).
10. **When the 12 spies returned from spying out the land** (Numbers 14:1-4).

These ten times, the Israelites wallowed in unbelief! “But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord—because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it” **(Numbers 14:21-23)**.

Now returning to Hebrews 4:5 we find a lesson from the warning to the Israelites and to us. “**They shall not enter My rest.**” Notice that the objects of God’s wrath, because of disobedience, now had their punishment clarified from not entering the promised “land” to not entering God’s “rest.” The rest spoken of here was the eternal rest after death.

The writer of Hebrews spells it out when he says, “**If Joshua had given the Israelites rest [after they entered the land of Canaan,] God would not have spoken of another day**” **(Hebrews 4:7)**. The time spoken of here is the eternal day after man has ceased from his labor as God did from His.

Then comes the warning to the people of God: “**Let us therefore, be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience**” **(Hebrews 4:11)**. This is the warning and direction for us today.

Not everyone will enter God’s rest. There are those who have heard the Gospel preached, but it was not mixed with faith. It does not profit them anything (Hebrews 4:2). Hebrews 4:3 speaks again of the future rest

for the Christian and should be understood as, *For we which have believed shall enter into rest...* (This is not speaking of believers having rest now, but in the future).

While we live on this earth, we have not entered the eternal rest promised to the faithful. Rest follows a time of work. God himself worked six days, then rested (Hebrews 4:4). We must work here on earth before we can experience that rest.

Not all will enter that rest, only to the faithful will it be given. The verses from Psalm 95 related to the wilderness provocation clearly stand as the proof that not all will enter His rest. “**It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways. So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’**”

Some (many) have already entered that rest. Their life is over and they no longer “work” as they have passed from this world. Their earthly bodies have been put in a grave and they have ceased from their labors, as God did from His on the seventh day (Hebrews 4:10). We, too, long for the day when we can enter that rest and our life’s work is over. Until then, we have work to do (labor) in order to enter in. The admonition in Hebrews 4:11 is similar to what Jesus said in John 6:27 “**Labour not for the meat which perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.**” Hebrews 4:11 is proof again that the Christian’s reward is not from just knowing and believing the right things, *it is from knowing, believing and living the right things* (our works).

This does not mean we try to earn our salvation by works. Still, the Christian will need to exert effort to enter the promised rest. Those who live in unbelief and hardness of heart stand in danger of failing to enter that eternal, promised rest.

Let us be faithful and obedient servants of the Lord our God, so that when we draw our last breath, we may enter with joy into the eternal promised rest.

*Let us therefore,
be diligent to
enter that rest.*

- Hebrews 4:11



Rubies & Diamonds

Memorable quotes that speak to the heart.



“One doesn’t have to know evil to understand good.”

– David Yoder at Kootenai Valley Mennonite Church, ID



“The natural man focuses on things of this life. The spiritual man focuses on the next life.”

– Duane Strite at Burkeland Mennonite Church, GA



“We, as individuals have been given some authority through the Holy Spirit to make decisions, but not ALL.”

– Bryce Geiser at Brownsville Christian Community, KY



“Remember, God sees through you in the same way He sees through your neighbor.”

– Austin Hege at Burkeland Mennonite Church, GA



“If you are alive, you are a teacher ... people are being influenced by you.”

– Nathan Yoder at Faith Mission Fellowship, VA



“God does not take a casual view of those with a casual mentality.”

– John Hartzler at Rowe Mennonite Church, PA



“Vision is like a steering wheel. It helps guide us and get us to our destination”

– Daniel Shrock at Shekinah Mennonite Church, MO



“The shrine that I kneel to has control of my life.”

– Nate Nissley at Farmington Mennonite Church, MO



“Wedding vows are not a declaration of your present love.”

– Steve Swartzentruber at Cold Spring Mennonite Church, SC



“Do we give up when we ask and do not receive? Or do we go deeper and seek? And if need be, are we desperate enough to knock?”

– Joseph Yoder at Pelkie Mennonite Church, MI

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.

More Funny Money

By Menno Knight

By request we are printing an update of an article first published in the 2020 spring issue of [Anabaptist Voice](#).



Where does money come from?

A 19th century French magician's trick became so famous that the expression, "he can pull a rabbit out of a hat," became an ordinary part of our everyday language. My understanding of this trick, like most other tricks, is that the magician gets the audience to focus their attention on some outstanding diversion, and the audience completely misses how the rabbit goes in the hat.

People have madly fallen into the hype that governments have unlimited power to do anything necessary to combat inflation and the money supply. The masses and the media are focused on momentous court decisions, war, elections, and climate change instead of watching what U.S. leaders are unethically and unconstitutionally doing with the money supply ... in broad daylight.

Here is a news item showing how Congress and the President were magically pulling a rabbit out of a hat back in 2020.

"On 27 March, 2020 President Trump signed a 2.2 trillion dollar economic rescue package into law, following a near-unanimous approval vote by the House of Representatives" (Associated Press News).

This 2.2 trillion dollars (\$2,200,000,000,000) was in addition to the 1 trillion dollars of overspending already projected in the U.S. budget for this fiscal year. This means there was 3.2 trillion dollars of virtual money—money by decree and backed by nothing of value—added to the number of U.S. dollars in circulation.

The magic continues. In 2020 the national debt had soared to almost 27 trillion dollars. On May 16, 2023, the national debt stands at 31.46 trillion dollars. This means that in a little over three years, the national debt has increased by the gigantic sum of \$4.5 trillion. There will be consequences.

Let us try to understand how this money magic works and then we want to look at the implications of it for Anabaptists.

In 2020 the U.S. government decreed that 3.2 trillion dollars were added to the money supply. This means the US government spent 3.2 trillion dollars more in one year than the U.S. government projects it took in through taxation. Since then, another 4.5 trillion dollars of government overspending has taken place. Where does the money come from?

Here is how it works. In one way or another, the government issues a decree that gives out credits for this huge amount of money. There is nothing other than thin air backing the value of the supposed credit dollars.

It should be obvious to any thinking person that simply issuing a decree does not create 100,000 more houses, 100,000 more acres of land, 100,000 more trucks, or 100 more ships or 100 more airplanes. Neither does a decree of Congress simultaneously give birth to a million calves or hatch 10 million more chickens.

Neither Congress, the Senate, the President, or the Fed can magically create these real productive things by simply issuing a decree that now there are 3.2 trillion dollars more than there were one day ago. Yet many people believe that the government, by committing just such deception, will overcome disease, end poverty, stimulate the economy, end immoral conduct, and vanquish all the country's enemies. Few even consider that deficit government spending is an immoral act that has evil consequences.

To help us understand the delusion that money by decree perpetuates with a so-called "economic aid package," I would like to use an illustration. Let me propose that counterfeit (fake) money will stimulate parts of the economy.

In this scenario, another country simply prints one trillion bogus U.S. dollars and sneaks them into the United States. Is the United States or its people any richer because of the increased dollars now in circulation? Do the people of the United States suddenly have more houses, factories, tractors, turkeys, and sheep? The

obvious answer is “no.”

Will the answer be any different if the foreign country successfully smuggles in 4.5 trillion dollars? Again the obvious answer is “no.” Yet the sheer size of such a counterfeiting would assure an effect on the parts of the economy where the fake dollars were spent. And the unchangeable, unobserved consequence of the 4.5 trillion dollar stimulus in the economy is that the total dollars existing in the world would be diluted by 4.5 trillion dollars.

Take a gallon jug and pour in three quarts of colored water. Now add 3.2 cups of clear water. The coloring in the whole gallon will now be weaker. It works the same way with dollars.

No one can escape the effect of adding 4.5 trillion dollars of funny money to the total number of dollars without adding to the amount of goods available for purchase. Therefore, prices of goods and services will

BULLETIN, JUNE 1, 2023

—A bill to suspend the debt ceiling until 1 January 2025 passed the House of Representatives. A comment by Representative Chip Roy of Texas: “With what was given away we can now achieve a \$4 trillion increase in the debt ceiling by 1 January 2025.”

rise. It will not happen all at once or evenly, but it will happen. *Inflation is inevitable.* Put another way, a decrease in the purchasing power of the dollar must take place with the 4.5 trillion dollar increase in the money supply.

The rapid ratcheting-up of the national debt by 4.5 trillion dollars in just four years is unprecedented. The national spending and borrowing races upward out of control. Inflation in the United States, like a runaway horse that took the bit in his mouth, has raced away toward a dangerous crash.

The horse cannot easily be put back in the barn, and the huge national debt paid off. Yet those in charge declare the present rate of inflation to be unacceptable. So they think maybe they can slow inflation down by pouring water on a raging fire while other authorities are pumping more gasoline into the fire.

At this time, the chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board has stated, “What we need is a period of slower growth so that the economy can cool off, so the labor market can cool off, so that wages can cool off That’s the only way we know to bring inflation down. And it can be painful, but we don’t know of any painless way for inflation to come down.

Now, 20 May 2023, Congressmen are struggling and sweating about whether or not they should raise the debt ceiling on 1 June 2023 to pay for past overspending with more fake dollars. The alternative is most unpleasant. If the government fails to inflate again with more fiat funny money, some bills will go unpaid. That, in turn, would further erode confidence in the U.S. dollar.

It seems highly unlikely that Congress will fail to raise the “debt ceiling.” After the crocodile tears are shed and a few protests made, the ceiling will be raised.

History is littered with countries that have tried this same trick of overspending by issuing fake money—Argentina, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Zimbabwe. In every case, wild inflation overtook them and destroyed the value of their currency. Wild inflation in those countries resulted in hard times for the masses. Prices of goods rose. Many real goods became scarce and people often had to stand in line for essentials. Inflation wiped out the productive middle class and stimulated war and violence.

We do not know what is going on in the United States of America. It appears that serious inflation is upon us, but there could be much more sinister things involved. Mayer Rothschild, the originator of the world’s modern banking system, made this telling statement: “Give me the power to control a nation’s money and I care not who makes her laws.”

Maybe the masks and lockdowns are only a distraction. They will hopefully go away, but the U.S. money system will never be the same and we do not know what is coming. There may be surprises ahead that will take the dollar in an unforeseen direction. But the old saw, “This time will be different,” is not likely. Instead, the hyper-inflated dollar will likely lose its place as the world’s premier currency, just as the English pound lost its dominance in another era.

Here are some of the consequences of fake money that happened to other countries that hyper-inflated their currencies.

— The upward spiral of magic money continued. It became politically impossible to increase taxes enough to cover spending, except by stealth (inflation). It also became politically impossible to decrease government

spending by any sizable amount.

– Inflated dollars were not distributed evenly among all the people. As people become more and more dependent on government handouts and largess, —farm subsidies, medical payments, war-making industries, transportation—all came under tighter and tighter government controls and regulations.

Whatever happens to the value of US money, God's people should stick by the principles given to us in His Word.

– As more and more controls and regulations came from the top down, the economy faltered or tanked. Inflation, controls, and taxes, destroyed personal initiative.

– Prices of goods and energy sky-rocketed. Government stepped in to control rent prices, labor prices, energy prices, and many other basic things formerly taken for granted. Shortages developed.

– Overnight, the decimal point had been moved to the left by two points. Thus \$100 dollars became \$1.00. In 1933, Franklin Roosevelt made it illegal to own most forms of gold and confiscated it by issuing paper dollars worth less than the actual value of the gold. Governments have used all sorts of tricks to try propping up the currency.

– It became harder and harder to borrow money because the money lost its value so fast that exorbitant interest rates had to be charged. Some sectors of the economy failed and prices came down in other sectors because there were not enough buyers with money.

– The rich became richer and the middle class and the poor were wiped out.

– Violence increased as law and order broke down. Strikes became more frequent. Corruption and bribery became common place.

– People looked for someone to blame for the problems. Religion and riches were commonly attacked.

These are not prophecies. These are only some things that have happened in countries that have tried to inflate their way out of overspending. Once the habit of overspending has taken hold of a country, it appears that nothing can be done to stop the juggernaut of inflation.

Whatever happens to the value of US money, God's people should stick by the principles given to us in His Word.

First of all, do not be deceived by the lure of debt, speculation, and easy money. **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7; NASB).** God's laws remain in effect. **“They sow the wind, and they reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7; NASB).** What an apt illustration of planting virtual dollars and the tornado they spawn.

Invest your life in nurturing life according to God's design—building sharing, growing good things—not in selfishness, like the rich man who said, **“Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come [retirement]; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19; NASB).**

Second, the People of God should always live in good conscience, not being a party to evil. Stay out of gambling and get-rich-quick schemes that promise great gains without physical work. The people of God should recognize the sinful nature of man and the fact that evil men in the kingdoms of this world control virtual money. They use the power of funny money for their own selfish ends.

Be wary of government payments to you. They will control you and influence your sense of right and wrong. Draw close to the brotherhood in times of distress.

We should always remain honest before God. Only by abiding by God's laws of right and wrong will **“the righteous shine forth as the sun” (Matthew 13:43).**

Third, the people of God should never put their trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives all things to enjoy. **“Do good. Be rich in good deeds, be generous and willing to share” (I Timothy 6:17-18).**

Inflation discourages savings and honest toil, but let us not be idle. God's standard is that he who will not work should not eat.

“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” (I Thessalonians 3:10-12).

“By faith” ... means that knowing, desiring, and being confident that simple and obedient living, will give a vision for something beyond this life.



God's Wondrous Carbon

by Menno Knight

"Listen to this, O Job, stand still and consider the wondrous works of God." (Job 37:14 (NIV))

"Carbon dioxide emissions from developed nations are causing global warming."¹

This statement places in a nutshell the current rage to blame supposed global warming on the gas, carbon dioxide. But is this so?

God made the wondrous gas we know as carbon dioxide (CO₂) and He made it with some marvelous properties. These qualities of carbon dioxide counter the theory that man-made emissions can or will cause global warming.

Let us consider some marvelous facts about God's wondrous carbon dioxide that negate this false ideology.

The Vastness of the Atmosphere

Through the force of gravity the atmosphere presses down upon us. Men and computers have calculated that the atmosphere blanketing the earth weighs five quadrillion tons² — a quadrillion equals 1,000 trillions. Of this vast unimaginable sum, less than four hundredths of one percent is composed of carbon dioxide.

The Marvelous Constant

That is right. Only .04% of the air we breathe (a very, very, small part) is composed of carbon dioxide.³ The other 99.6% is composed of 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, and about six-tenths of a percent of other gases. And the air is in that ratio all over the earth.

When an American travels to China, the air he breathes there is always in the same ratio as the air he breathes at home. One does not need to carry an air-balancer along with him as he travels from one country to another. God's mysterious air-balancer works everywhere in the world.

One will not find the air to be 2% carbon dioxide in China while it is only .5% carbon dioxide in the United States. No cloud of carbon dioxide hovers over New York, Hong Kong, or Mexico City where millions of

people live and cars and trucks and power plants burn fossil fuels.

When the power plants belch black smoke into the sky, what you see is not carbon dioxide; carbon dioxide as a gas is invisible and odorless. Men calculate how much carbon dioxide is emitted from each source based on particles and other tests and guesses. But men do not measure carbon dioxide ascending into the atmosphere; they estimate those amounts.

When carbon dioxide in larger amounts, such as when a volcano erupts, enters the atmosphere, it rapidly disperses throughout the world until the ratio of the gases in the atmosphere is the same; at high altitude or at sea level, the ratio remains constant (78:21:1).

I would liken it to placing pond dye in a pond; within a few hours the coloring in the pond is the same color throughout. What causes the ratio of gases in the air to always stay in these same proportions? It is another of God's creation mysteries.

The Wondrous Plants

In the 1600s a Belgian physician, Jan van Helmont, wanted to explore the marvel of how plants grow. A common theory of the time was that plants grew by eating the soil. Van Helmont did not think so. He set up an experiment to test the theory.

Van Helmont planted a willow sapling in a tub. He weighed the sapling and the dry soil in the tub. Five years later he again dried the soil and weighed the tree. The soil in the tub weighed 2 ounces less, but the tree had gained 164 pounds.

Van Helmont concluded that the mass must have come from water because it was the only thing he had added to the tub. He was wrong. He did not know about the God-created miracle called photosynthesis.

In photosynthesis, plants use carbon dioxide gleaned from the air to convert the energy from the sun into sugars and carbohydrates so they can live and grow. Plants can miraculously multiply from one seed into many seeds as in corn where more than 500 seeds may be harvested from one ear. This can happen in only

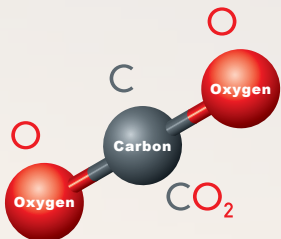
¹ Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, John Kerry at United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) held in Cairo, Egypt; November 6-18, 2022.

² Encyclopedia Britannica, "How much does the earth's atmosphere weigh?"

³ Multiple sources agree on the composition of air. Two sources are: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (gov), "Atmosphere;" and Chemicool "Composition of Air."

four months with nothing but water and a few minerals added. Or given 40 years of time, a mighty oak can spring up from one acorn.

Here is the way photosynthesis works. Carbon dioxide (commonly abbreviated as CO_2) is a clear odorless gas composed of one atom of carbon (C) and two atoms of oxygen (O). The plant miraculously takes in the carbon dioxide molecule from the air, retains the carbon atom for its own use, and releases the two oxygen atoms back into the atmosphere. When the plant dies and decays or is burned, each carbon atom reunites with two oxygen atoms in the atmosphere and again forms carbon dioxide.



*A molecule of carbon dioxide:
one atom of carbon, two atoms of oxygen*

Photosynthesis requires sunlight, chlorophyll, water, and carbon dioxide gas. Chlorophyll is a substance in all green plants, especially in the leaves. Plants take in water from the soil and carbon dioxide from the air. Photosynthesis starts when chlorophyll absorbs energy from sunlight. Green plants use this light energy to change water and carbon dioxide into oxygen and nutrients called sugars. The plants use some of the sugars and store the rest. The oxygen is released in the air.

Photosynthesis is necessary for life on earth. Without it there would be no green plants, and without plants there would be no animals.⁴

Does photosynthesis sound complicated? It is very complex. It is a miracle! No man can duplicate the wonder by creating a living cell that reproduces itself and grows something out of energy from the sun and water.

God's Wondrous Animals

Even the animals indirectly depend on carbon dioxide to survive because when the plants take in carbon dioxide they discharge oxygen back into the air.

Animals, along with humans, breathe in the oxygen molecules and exhale carbon dioxide. Therefore, the more people and animals, the more carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere. And the more carbon

dioxide in the atmosphere, the happier the plants.

Animals cannot live without oxygen; plants take in carbon dioxide and give off oxygen. In 1772, Joseph Priestly, an English preacher, did an experiment to show how animals depend on the oxygen emitted by plants and wrote about it to Ben Franklin.

London, 1 July 1772

Dear Mr. Franklin,

I am fully convinced that the air, which is made harmful by our breathing out, can be restored through plants. I have gathered up used air in a container and sealed this container hermetically. Seven days later, I placed a mouse into this container. In another container with the same used up air, I placed a plant. Seven days later, I placed a mouse in the same container where the plant was.

The mouse which was in the container without a plant died after 5 seconds. The mouse placed in the container with a plant, lived happily in the container for many minutes. Then I took the mouse out and placed it in the other container without any plants in. This poor mouse, which did so well in the container with the plant in, had to be taken out and resuscitated after spending as little as two seconds in the container without plants. This experiment shows us that plants can give the air its freshness back.

Kind regards, Joseph Priestly

Thus God's carbon dioxide benefits both plants and animals in a wondrous ongoing cycle.

Conclusion

After God appeared to Job in the whirlwind and asked him a lot of hard questions, Job responded, "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, [things] I did not know" (Job 42:3). I may have erred because I did not understand the wonders of God's carbon. But I honor and worship the God of heaven as the creator of all things.

Have no fear of man-caused climate change. The theory that burning too much fossil fuel will result in disastrous climate change falls flat on its face when looked at in the light of God's wondrous carbon dioxide. **The atmosphere is too grand, the ratio of the gasses in the air all over the earth are locked in, and the plants can use more carbon dioxide in the miraculous process of photosynthesis.**

Man and his works [carbon dioxide emissions] are too small to change the climate on the earth. If the climate changes, God will be the One who does it.

J. G. L. | Georgia

⁴ Britannica Kids, "Photosynthesis," 2023



God's Wondrous Works

Our Father's wondrous works we see
In the earth and sea and sky;
He rules o'er all in majesty,
From His royal throne on high.

The raging winds and waves are calm,
When He says to them, "Be still";
The heavens praise Him in a psalm,
And the angels do His will.

He maketh worlds by His command,
Weighs the mountains great and high;
He metes the waters in His hand,
Spans the lofty starlit sky.

Our God to save from sin's control,
Gave His Son: a sacrifice;
His grace, abounding in the soul,
Makes the earth a paradise.

What a mighty God we serve!

-Clara M. Brooks

My Heavenly Father

By Adelle Myers

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." - John 10:10

God created me and in 1981 gave me to a poor California painter from a broken home and a discontented Michigan farm girl from a large family.

Papa grew up using humor to survive his way through his mom's three marriages and the mistreatment by most of the men in his life. My dad longed to be the papa of a big, happy family, but Papa lacked God's tools to work through the challenges in his marriage. He ultimately produced frayed security in his children. But our father never mistreated us and we knew he loved us.

My mother was the middle child in a Dutch family of nine children. My maternal great, great, great grandparents emigrated from Netherlands to Michigan in 1848 for religious freedoms and better farming opportunities. Their descendants remained part of the Dutch Reformed church until the 1970s when my mom and her siblings got swept into the rebellion of that time. Unlike my dad, who was often escaping the turmoil of his home via his bicycle, my mom grew up in the safety of a close-knit community. Everybody knew everyone else and life was predictable, punctuated by church services.

However, Mama thought life was too safe and too predictable. When her drafted brother brought home his handsome sailor buddy, my parents fell in love. They went to California and got married under an oak tree. Mama was barely 19 and Papa was 24.

My mother sullenly turned her back on the God of her Dutch Reformed church, and plunged into my father's godless culture. They lived on the fringes of the hippy movement. California offered a world of education. There they tried, in their humanness, to form goals that went beyond the status quo—home birth, homesteading, homeschooling. It was all part of trying to be responsible without being swept into a mindless system.

Papa was a street artist on the Golden Gate Bridge, supporting his way through art academy. Mama picked up odd jobs in town. Several years later they moved back to Michigan so my dad could have a teaching job at an arts college and my mom could be close to her family. They were selfish and living in poverty; they thought it would be irresponsible to have children.

Nine years after their marriage, I was plunged into this couple's life. Thankfully, they were ecstatic with



Simon, Adelle, and Sarah Peace Myers, July 19, 2023

the change in their plans. Obviously, I brought major adjustments, tough for self-centered people without God's help. But they wanted to give this family thing their best.

When I was three years old, I have vivid memories of standing between my mom and dad, banging on first one set of knees and then the other. A storm of emotion and hurting words swirled like lightning and thunder above me. If either one, because of my insistent knee-banging, would absentmindedly pick me up, I'd quickly do one of those pencil wriggles to get down and away from the storm ...

Then, suddenly, I was buckled into my car seat. I sat next to my baby sister who was two weeks old, and Mama drove us away. I very clearly remember stretching my head up high enough to see above the car windowsill. I watched my Papa, my adored anchoring Papa, standing on our front steps. He was getting smaller and smaller, shoulders slumped and hands limp with emptiness.

I hate that memory picture. This scene repeats itself still, when I drive away from visiting my aging father. I look in the mirror of the car and see him standing, slump-shouldered and empty. He is still alone, still without the forgiveness offered him through Jesus'

sacrifice or the tools for living righteously, which God the Father gives through His Holy Spirit.

I grew up like a lot of children in the 80s and 90s – oscillating between my father’s world of secular art

God was not a part of my life. Or was He?

and my mother’s world of higher education. Papa took us girls to stay with him a couple days each week. We would go along to deliver his oil pastel landscapes to art galleries or to hang his large abstract paintings in the homes of the wealthy.

On the days we were with my mom, she managed to homeschool my sister and me. Because of Mama’s work schedule, we did not have a set routine for learning. My classroom was in the public library and in Lake Michigan. Compared to many of my friends, my childhood would have seemed unstructured and unstable, which it was. But in another way, it was all just “normal.” In one way I was a ping-pong ball – being spat back and forth between my parents. In another way I was an odd ball – going to the public library to study tortoises when all the other children were at school. And in still another way, I was a ball of nerves – trying to please Papa, trying to please Mama, trying to bridge their communication gap.

God was not a part of my life. Or was He?

If you had come to my city and stopped to eat lunch at the town park a few blocks from my house, you would perhaps have glanced up from your picnic table and seen a scrawny, unhealthy-looking youngster wearing a tie-dyed T-shirt, purple shorts and a fly-away ponytail watching you while rollerblading. You probably would not have thought God was working in that goofy child’s heart and life. But God was working in my life. He did a very good thing for me. I became VERY SICK. I was eventually diagnosed with a slow-growing brain tumor. I was seven years old when I had my first surgery to remove the tumor.

After a long and painful recovery, the tumor grew back, just as I was starting to feel better. When I was 10, I endured a second surgery by an over-confident surgeon. It turned out to be exploratory and not remedial. After that surgery, my parents sat me down to tell me an incredibly hard thing: I was going to die.

I grinned at my parents. They were sitting together, looking at me.

“Did you hear us, Adelle? You have 4 to 6 months left to live.”

I even think Papa had his arm around Mama’s shoulder! I grinned broader. I was elated. They were together! Together they were telling me this!

Although the restful security of having my parents together was salve on my raw heart, I had to comprehend what they were attempting to make me understand. The cancer had spread to my brain stem and was considered inoperable. The doctor told my parents to keep me comfortable until it was over. I would probably not live to see my 11th birthday.

This death sentence dramatically affected me and I started to ask questions: Why was I born? How did I get here and why? Did Someone other than my parents play a part in my existence? Was it just chance that things happened to me or was there a big unknown something or Someone who was working behind the scenes? What or who was this force or power? Could anyone tell me what happens when I die? Big questions for a ten-year-old girl.

I needed answers. Skinny and sick though I was, I came out of my shy shell and asked my parents and the grown-ups whom I knew, my hard questions. The answers I received were not helpful:

– “You are such a nice little girl, I am sure God or the angels will take you to heaven.” (To where?)

– “You will just cease to be.” (Black nightmares followed.)

– “You might become a boy in India during your next life.” (Ugh! A boy?)

– “Think of God as a big mother.” That was repulsive



Stephen Duren with two daughters, 1989

to me. I loved my mother, but my mother was tiny and decisions could be hard for her. Responsibilities sometimes crushed her. Besides, I could get away with being bad behind her back! My soul cried for a father.

– “There is NO God, and don’t ask me again,” bellowed my big atheist friend.

With such a response, I had no intention of asking Jim again! But I smiled, because Jim was angry. I reasoned that adults usually get angry at something, not nothing. If Jim was angry at God, saying He is nothing, then Jim was actually angry at something; therefore I concluded, God is real!

I had sung Christmas songs. Now as I lay on our sofa propped up on pillows that felt rock hard to my aching head, I pondered their meaning. “Joy to the world the Lord is come, let earth receive her King ...” “Good Christian men rejoice, with heart and soul and voice ... now we need not fear the grave, Jesus Christ is come to save.”

My father did not want to just “wait for it to be over” so they could plan my funeral. He searched the nation for another prognosis. He eventually learned of a “crazy” but brilliant Jewish doctor in New York City, who would risk the procedure. Shortly before my third surgery, my neighbor gave me a children’s Bible storybook with pictures. I studied those pictures.

Although I went into surgery, and possibly my death, without knowing God, I went rested. Somehow, since I now knew that God was real, I also knew the answers to all my questions would be in that book. I was too sick and miserable to read it, but I trusted all the little bit I knew of my Big Someone – GOD.

Since I am writing this here on earth, you know I did not die during that 3rd surgery. I was astonished

Could anyone tell me what happens when I die?

that the itsy-bitsy faith I had in my Big Someone was rewarded. I was given time to keep searching!

It took years to feel normal as I slowly recovered. Yet as I entered my teens, I sensed that the whirl of the world posed a battleground to swamp my hunt for God. My acting classes, children’s choir and other entertainments enticed and occupied me, but they gave me no hope for living or peace for dying.

After my last surgery, our landlord sold our house – again – and we rented another home in town – again. God plunked us next door to Baptist neighbors. They were the witnessing, invite-you-to-revivals, give-

you-tracts and shovel-your-driveway kind of Baptist neighbors. They annoyed my mom, God bless them. Well, they kind of made me feel guilty too. It just would not do to be in the backyard lustily singing out a precocious song from a current movie when Mrs. Grote, clad in her feminine skirt and soft hair roll, was in her backyard. I wonder why Mrs. Grote never rebuked me, but I wanted to be like her. She was gracious about the certainty of God and His Word. I wanted to have my rough edges smoothed off by God too, like Mrs. Grote.

There was another influence of God besides the Baptist neighbors. Some homeschooled friends, also on a hunt for meaning in life, invited us to a “cottage meeting” in their barn. The rest of the folks attending,



Maureen Jo Dozeman, Havalah, and Adelle, 1993

besides a few other homeschooling families, were Amish. We sat amazed at this service. It was certainly milder than any theatrical show I had been a part of, yet the singing was more compelling than any concert. Their spirits were more magnetic than my various entertainments.

I sat riveted to my straw-bale seat. My soul longed for a simple faith, a modest life, a prayerful demeanor, a walk with God. These folks reached out in love to all of us, humbly answering our questions about being “born again” and pointing us to God’s answers in the Bible. Similar to my attraction to Mrs. Grote, I wanted to have the spirit of my Amish friends.

Some things started making me feel guilty. I could not maintain my resolutions to be honest or keep from getting angry or avoid arguing with my mother and sister. I wanted to “be good” but I could not; I started feeling rather hopeless about it. I thought maybe I could do better after I finally grew up. But my mother was grown-up and she was just plain depressed. It was so bad I was at a total loss how I should respond to her.

Then a surprising thing happened. Mama took two

religion classes in her college training, the Pentateuch and the Minor Prophets. By the time she completed those two classes she liked reading the Bible so well she switched her major from English to Religion. What she was going to do with a college degree in religion I do not know, but God used all this to call her... and to call me.

One spring day, in 1994, while driving home from my aunt's house, Mama looked in her rear view mirror at my sister and me riding in the back seat. "Girls!" She smiled widely. I blinked because it had been months since I had seen Mama really smile. "Girls!" she smiled. "I have found it!"



Adelle Duren at Thirteen, 1994

I elbowed my sister to keep a watchful eye on Mama. I was dubious. "You found what, Mama?" I asked.

"I have found GOD!" Mama's face just glowed. She had been lost and now was found.

I watched my mom's life for several months. She started changing things around our home. It was as if our house was being purified as she was changing. I was glad she was freed from her condemnation and depression; she hummed about the housework and prayed before meals. It felt like there was finally a father's authority in our home. I knew I wanted to be "found" and saved from my sins also.

In June of 1994, I called on the name of the Lord to be saved and believed God had forgiven my sins. I pledged to follow and obey Him. That change of

loyalty, honoring my Heavenly Father above even my earthly father, gave me peace and a sense of purpose in life.

My Heavenly Father started filling the fatherless ache. He gave me courage and support to live in a new way with new reactions. God was no longer just a Big Someone. He was my Heavenly Father; I was His daughter. It seemed that anything lovely and beautiful were special gifts from Him to me. He did impossible things for me, just because He liked to. I wanted to stay in His smile.

Mama got up the courage to visit one of the Amish families, starting a year of periodically traveling three hours north to their community. We were continually amazed that they included us in their daily life – church services, meals, chores, devotions and family picnics. We learned so many things from these visits—Bible stories I had never heard before, confessing my faults, what my filler words really meant, the freedom of telling the truth, the beauty of godly music. My Baptist neighbors gave me my first KJV Bible, but my Amish family gave me the Bible, taught and lived in flesh and blood.

We tried to listen to God's Holy Spirit as we made many changes. We weeded through our clothes, books, music and entertainment. As we sorted we asked, "Would we honor God watching this or using that? Does the Bible give principles about it?" Bathing suits, fantasy stories and the television were eliminated because we could not feel they drew us closer to God or obeyed His principles. I remember laughing with relief on the day we got rid of our television.

We evaluated our food/drink, friends and employment by the Bible. We wanted every area of our lives to be under Christ's control. Sometimes it was joyfully simple. Sometimes it was really hard. Sometimes we were too slow. We were ignorant and blundering, but we wanted to please our Heavenly Father. Changing my immodest clothing for something

*"I have found GOD!"
Mama's face just glowed.*

feminine and discrete was a rather simple switch, but yielding my attitudes and thoughts to God was ongoing. Our friends noticed more changing about us than just our new modesty and as we became less "normal" we became rather lonely. We realized we needed to find a church that would support our biblical convictions.

We visited twelve churches in ten years time! Why did we visit so many churches? A major reason we church hopped was because we had rare convictions.

Imagine me listening to Mama's side of a hopeful telephone conversation: "Hello, I found your church's phone number in the yellow pages and I am wondering a few things about your statement of belief. Do you encourage women to cover their heads during prayer? ... Yes, I realize that is considered a practice reserved for the early church, but do you practice communion which is in the same chapter? ... Okay, well thank you."

"What did he say, Mama?"

"He said something about their church kept that tradition until the 1950s. A few ladies still wear something on their heads during services but only three old ladies wear it during the week. He did invite us to church on Sunday to see for ourselves."

"But they say they are Mennonite. Don't Mennonites dress like pilgrims?"

Even after five or six dead-end calls on the phone, I was still breathless, hoping someone might believe as literally as we did. Mama had begun her Christian life excited by the power of prayer. We prayed for rent money, for rain to water our pocket-handkerchief lawn and for power to memorize the names of the books of the Bible in order. When Mama realized God cared about our daily lives, she prayed faith-filled prayers that God would bring her a godly husband. We girls joined her and wondered what God would do!

The day came when Mama got her answer. It was in Mark 10. She read it with her childlike faith and called us to her side.

"Girls," she said calmly. "Girls, would you support my decision to stay unmarried as long as Papa is alive?" We looked at her in disbelief. Had her faith run out?

"I believe it is not God's will for me to seek another husband if my first husband is still alive. I believe the Bible says this is adultery. Will you trust God with me?" We nodded.

Mama used the same simple reasoning on divorce and remarriage I used with a fellow on the street who asked me why I wore "that headdress."

"If I am wrong in my understanding of what God means in this passage, I have lost nothing by obeying what it seems He is asking. But, if I disregard what I think God is saying and follow what modern man is preaching and am wrong in that, then I am disobeying God. And that is serious enough to me to forgo a little vanity or endure a little loneliness for the joy that is set before me."

Do not think we were spiritual giants. We cried. But the assurance from God's Spirit dried our tears and gave us joy in the sacrifice. Yet our adherence to a strict obedience to the Word of God made us struggle to fit

into an established church. We were lonely. At last, I pled with Mama to find and stick with a biblical church.

In our search for a church home, a family told us what they did not like about a little unaffiliated Anabaptist church in northern Indiana. Out of desperate curiosity, we visited. We found that godly living was encouraged and we valued the sermons. For about half a year we drove two hours every Sunday to visit. Then we moved



Adelle at 18, Maureen Jo, and Havalah, 1999

near to the church when I was 25. It was exciting but it was also a challenge blending our convictions and opinions with an established group.

We survived during our lonely years because my Heavenly Father helped us as we sought Him. However, when we joined with our church, I felt like we could now thrive. A godly church can further God's teaching and bring balance to an individual. I needed to learn to bless others and to be blessed by others. Instead of keeping myself on the outskirts of church life, I chose to integrate myself in with whole families, taking the risk of sometimes misunderstanding each other in the process. I am grateful for all that my Heavenly Father gave me in my little church.

I am so thankful, that my Heavenly Father, picked me up as a dirty child, dusted me off, and made me one of His precious daughters. Since that day when I chose to follow and obey Him, I have found that walking with Him in newness of life has been a faith-filled adventure.

Adelle and her husband, Simon Myers, and her mother, Jo, presently worship together with the believers at Somerset Mennonite Church in Pennsylvania. God has blessed their home with a daughter, Sara Peace.

— In Awe Of My God —

When I hear the birds' sweet singing
E'en when the skies are gray;
And see them seeking food,
From dawn, 'til close of day;
I'm called to praise my God,
Whatever comes my way.
For He sees the things I need,
And will care for me each day!

I see the little flowers,
So beautiful, though small;
Off' unseen, still they shine
For God, Who sees them all.
I think how God sees me,
Though I am weak and small;
He sees me live for Him;
And give to Him my all.

I see the rainbow, shining,
While rain is pouring fast;
For the sun shines through it,
Beautiful colors to cast.
I think of God's promises
That cannot fail, but last.
They shine right through the storm;
As His hand holds me fast.

I see the first rays of sunshine,
Pushing the shadows away;
Ever brighter they shine,
Into glorious light of day.
I think how God loves me,
And drew me to His way;
Cleansing my sin's darkness,
To shine for Him each day.

I see small streams and rivers,
E'er seeking the lowest place;
Spreading life and beauty,
As downward, they ever race.

I think how Jesus came,
Bringing redemption and grace.
He gave His life, in love,
And took the servant place.

I see the tow'ring mountains,
Ever pointing up to God;
So magnificent and great;
On their heights, men oft' have trod.
As I see their tow'ring height,
My thoughts are drawn to God.
As I think on His greatness,
My heart is truly awed!

As I look at all God's works,
I see His loving hand.
His great pow'r and majesty
I cannot fully understand;
But my heart bows in worship
To God, Who holds my hand.
I seek to know Him better;
Till before Him I shall stand.

— Faith Jansky

my heart is truly awed

Talkative

An excerpt from the book, *Pilgrim's Progress*

by John Bunyan

*Apparently the theme of Anabaptist Voice, “Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only” (James 1:22) was a live issue in 1672 when John Bunyan wrote his classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*. Accordingly, the following selection has been chosen to reinforce this Bible teaching.*

Walking with Talkative

Moreover, I (John Bunyan) saw in my dream that, as Christian and Faithful walked on, Faithful, chanced to look to one side and saw a man whose name is Talkative walking at a distance beside them. He was a tall man, and something better looking at a distance than near at hand. To this man Faithful spoke in this manner:

Faithful – Friend, are you going to the heavenly country?

Talkative – I am going to that same place.

Faithful – That is well; then I hope we may have your good company.

Talkative – Gladly will I be your companion.

Faithful – Come on, then, and let us go together, and let us spend our time in talking of things that are profitable.

Talkative – I like to talk of things that are good, with you or with any other. I am glad that I have met with those that love to speak the truth for there are but few who care to spend their time thus in their travels. This has been a trouble to me.

Faithful – That is, indeed, a thing to be lamented; for what things are so worthy of the use of the tongue and mouth, as are the things of the God of heaven?

Talkative – I like you wonderfully well, for your saying is full of the truth. What is more pleasant and profitable, than to talk of the things of God? If a man loves to talk of miracles, wonders, or signs, where shall he find things written so delightful, or so sweetly penned, as in the Holy Scripture?

Faithful – That is true; but to be profited by such

things in our talk should be that which we plan to do.

Talkative – That is what I said; for to talk of such things is most profitable. By talking about these things a man may get knowledge of the folly of earthly things, and of the benefit of things above. Besides, by this a man may learn what it is to turn from sin, to believe, to pray, to suffer, or the like; by this, also, a man may learn what are the great promises and comforts of the gospel, to his own enjoyment. Further, by this a man may also learn to answer false opinions, to prove the truth, and also to teach the ignorant.

Faithful – All this is true; and glad am I to hear these things from you.

Talkative – Alas! the lack of this knowledge is the cause that so few understand the need of faith, and the necessity of a work of grace in their soul, in order to eternal life.

Faithful – By your leave, heavenly knowledge of these is the gift of God; no man attaineth to them by human working, or only by the talk of them.

Talkative – All that I know very well, for a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven; I could give you a hundred scriptures for the confirmation of this.

Faithful – Well then, what is that one thing that we shall talk about at this time?

Talkative – What you will. I will talk of things heavenly or things earthly; things in life or things in the gospel; things sacred or things worldly; things past or things to come; things foreign or things at home; things necessary or things accidental, provided that all be done to our profit.

*“If anyone ... does not bridle his tongue ...
this one's religion is useless.”*

– James 1:26



A man whose name is "Talkative"

Narrator – Now Faithful began to wonder; and, stepping up to Christian (for he walked all this while by himself), he said to him, but softly, “What a brave companion have we got! Surely this man will make a very excellent pilgrim.”

At this Christian modestly smiled, and said, “This man with whom you are so taken will deceive with this tongue of his twenty of them that know him not.”

Faithful – Do you know him, then?

Christian – Know him? Yes, better than he knows himself.

Faithful – Pray, who is he?

Christian – His name is Talkative; he dwells in our town. I wonder that you should be a stranger to him.

Faithful – Whose son is he? And where does he dwell?

Christian – He is the son of one Say-well. He dwells on Prating Row, and everyone knows him as Talkative

of Prating Row. He has a fine tongue, but he is indeed a sorry fellow.

Faithful – Well, he seems to be a very pretty man.

Christian – That is, to them that have not a thorough acquaintance with him, for he is best abroad; near home he is ugly enough. Your saying that he is a pretty man brings to my mind what I have observed in the work of the painter, whose pictures show best at a distance, but close up they are not pleasing.

Faithful – I am ready to think you do but jest, because you smiled.

Christian – God forbid that I should jest (though I smiled) in this matter, or that I should accuse any falsely. I will give you a further discovery of him. This man is for any company. As he talks now with you, so he will talk when he is on the ale-bench; and the more drink he hath in his crown, the more of these things he hath in his mouth. Religion hath no place in his heart, or house, or conversation: all he has lies in his tongue, and his religion is to make a noise therewith.

Faithful – Say you so? Then am I by this man greatly deceived.

Christian – Deceived! you may be sure of it. Remember the proverb, “They say, and do not;” but the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. He talks of prayer, of turning to God, of faith, and of the new birth; but he only talks of them.

I have been in his family, and have seen him both at home and abroad, and I know what I say of him is the truth. His house is as empty of religion as the white of an egg is of savor. There is neither prayer nor sign of turning from sin in him. He is the very stain, reproach, and shame of religion to all that know him.

The common people that know him say of him: “A saint abroad, and a devil at home.” His poor family finds it so: he is such a fault-finder, and so unreasonable with his servants that they neither know how to do or speak to him. Men that have any dealings with him say it is better to deal with a heathen than with him. This Talkative will cheat, beguile, and overreach others. For my part, I am of the opinion that he has, by his wicked life, caused many to stumble and fall, and will be, if God prevent not, the ruin of many more.

Faithful – Well, my brother, I am bound to believe you, not only because you say you know him, but also because like a Christian you make your reports of men. For I cannot think you speak these things of ill-will, but because he is even as you say.

Christian – Had I known him no more than you, I might, perhaps, have thought of him as at first you did;

yea, had he received this report only from those that are enemies to religion. Good men are ashamed of him: they can neither call him brother nor friend; the very naming of him among them makes them blush, if they know him.

Faithful – Well, I see that saying and doing are two things, and hereafter I shall better observe the difference between them.

Christian – They are two things, indeed, and are as diverse as are the soul and the body; for, as the body without the soul is but a dead carcass, so saying, if it be alone, is but a dead carcass also. The soul of religion is the practical part. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Talkative is not aware of these things: he thinks that hearing and saying will make a good Christian, and thus he deceives his own soul. Hearing is but as the sowing of the seed; talking is not sufficient to prove that fruit is indeed in the heart and life. And let us assure ourselves that, at the day of doom, men shall be judged according to their fruits.

Faithful – Well, I am now sick of his company. What shall we do to be rid of him?

Christian – Take my advice, if you do as I bid you, you shall find that he will soon be sick of your company too, except God shall touch his heart and turn it.

Faithful – What would you have me to do?

Christian – Why, go to him, and enter into some serious conversation about the power of religion and ask him plainly (when he has approved of it, for that he will) whether this thing be set up in his heart, house or conduct.

Narrator – Then Faithful stepped forward again, and said to Talkative, “Come, what cheer? How is it now?”

Talkative – Thank you, well: I thought we should have had a great deal of talk by this time.

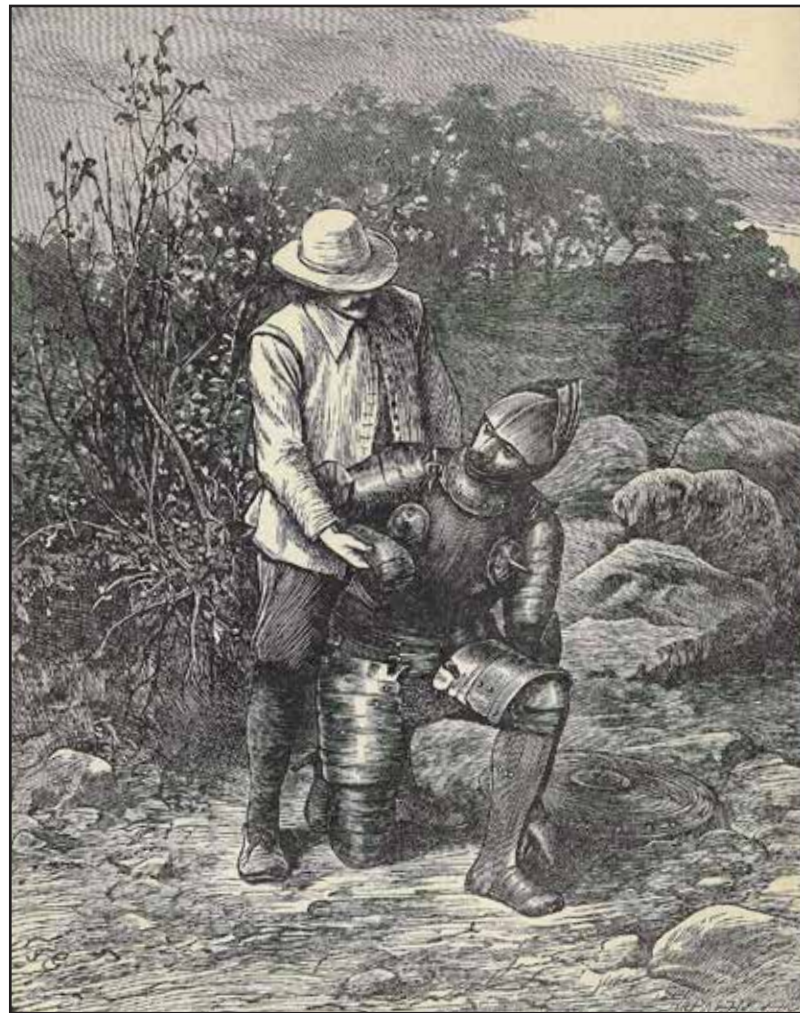
Faithful – Well, if you will, we will fall to it now; and, since you left it with me to state the question, let it be this: How doth the saving grace of God show itself when it is in the heart of man?

Talkative – I perceive, then, that our talk must be about the power of things. Well, it is a very good question, and I shall be willing to answer you. And take my answer in brief, thus. First, where the grace of God is in the heart, it causes there a great outcry against sin. Secondly, ...

Faithful – Nay, hold; let us consider of one at once. I think you should rather say, it shows itself by inclining the soul to hate its sin.

Talkative – Why, what difference is there between crying out against and hating sin?

Faithful – Oh! a great deal. A man may cry out against sin in order to appear good; but he cannot hate it except by a real dislike for it. I have heard many cry out against sin in the pulpit, who yet can abide it well enough in the heart, house, and life. Some cry out against sin, even as the mother cries out against her child in her lap, when she calls it a naughty girl, and then falls to hugging and kissing it.



CHRISTIAN AND FAITHFUL JOIN COMPANY
"He could not rise again until Faithful came up to help him."

Talkative – I perceive you are trying to catch me. Pray, tell me why you ask me such questions?

Faithful – No, not I; I am only for setting things right. But what is the second thing whereby you would prove a discovery of a work of God in the heart?

Talkative – Great knowledge of hard things in the Bible.

Faithful – Great knowledge may be obtained in the

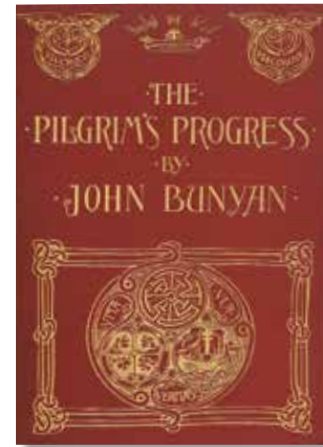
mysteries of the Gospel, and yet there is no work of grace in the soul. A man may have all knowledge still not be a child of God. When Christ said, "Do ye know all these things?" and His disciples answered, "Yes," then He added, "Blessed are ye if ye do them." He does not lay the blessing in the knowledge of them, but in the doing of them. For there is a knowledge that is not attended with doing: "He that knows his master's will, and does not do it." A man may know like an angel, and yet be no Christian; therefore your sign of it is not true. Indeed, to know, is a thing that pleases talkers and boasters; but *to do* is that which pleases God.

Talkative – You are trying to catch me again; this is not profitable. My part is not now to object, but to hear. What more would you say of me?

Faithful – I have heard of you that you are a man whose religion lies in talk, and that your life gives this your mouth-profession the lie. They say you are a spot among Christians, and that religion fares worse because of your ungodly conduct; that some already have stumbled at your wicked ways, and that more are in danger of being destroyed thereby: your religion, and

an alehouse, and greed for gain, and uncleanness, and swearing, and lying, and vain company-keeping, will stand together. You are a shame to all who are members of the church.

Talkative – Since you are ready to take up reports, and to judge so rashly as you do, I cannot but conclude you are some peevish or cross man, not fit to be talked with; and so adieu.



"Pilgrim's Progress was published less than 60 years after the authorized *King James Bible* was first printed in 1611. But before Bunyan's death in 1688 they had printed 100,000 copies of *The Pilgrim's Progress* from this World to That which is to Come. In 1902 it was still claimed that *Pilgrim's Progress* was second only to the Bible in the number of books sold.

"To bring some familiarity to the background of *Pilgrim's Progress*, I quote the following from the preface to Jesse Lyman Hurlbut's rendering of the *Pilgrim's Progress* published in 1902. "

"Perhaps a short account of Bunyan's own life may add to the interest of his book. John Bunyan was born in 1628 at Elstow, a small village near Bedford, which is in the heart of England. His father was a poor man, traveling on foot from place to place mending pots and pans and the simple furniture of country kitchens, and the son followed the same trade, and was known as a "tinker." He tells us that he lived a wild life, and was especially known as one of the worst swearers in the region.

"When the great Civil War broke out in England, in 1642, between King Charles the First and the Parliament, Bunyan became a soldier on the side of the Commonwealth, as the party against the king was called. He served in the army between 1644 and 1646.

"In 1648, at the age of twenty years, he married a good young woman, who led him to prayer and to a new life. But it was hard for one who had led such a life as his had been to turn to God, and it cost the young man a great struggle. It seemed to him that his past sins were like a load upon his back, just as he afterward wrote of his "pilgrim," and it was long before he found peace.

"He became a member of a little Baptist society, and soon began to preach. Crowds came to hear him, drawn by his earnest spirit and his quaint striking manner. But when Charles the Second became king, no religious services were allowed except those of the Church of England, and all other meetings were forbidden. Bunyan however went on preaching, until he was sent to prison in Bedford. In Bedford jail he stayed twelve years. To find a means of living in jail, he made lace, and sold it as a support for himself and his blind daughter.

*"If the prison was hard for Bunyan his sufferings were made a blessing to untold millions, for while in Bedford jail he wrote the *Pilgrim's Progress*. This story was intended to be a parable, like many of our Savior's teachings; that is, put into the form of a story the life of one who turns from sin, finds salvation through Christ, and in the face of many difficulties makes his way through this world to heaven.*

"In 1672 Bunyan was set free, and allowed to begin again his work as a Baptist minister; and he soon became one of the most popular preachers in all England. He died quite suddenly in 1688, when he was sixty years old."

– Jesse Lyman Hurlbut

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

Way Too Much

by Cru Sader

I've appreciated this magazine since receiving issues early on. Having said that, there certainly is a lot more in this magazine of which I'd agree than not.

It was a total surprise to see three pages given to wearing what is known among Mennonites, I guess, as plain suits. Where I live in the center of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, we might on rare occasions see what you are calling a plain suit. Perhaps among those known here as Weavertown people, and that is not a large group. I personally have attended Paradise (PA) Mennonite Church all of my 95+ years and have been a member since making a decision to follow Jesus at about age 14.

In early years some older people wore what was known as plain coats. But, for the past many years we are a part of AMEC (Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations). Our pastor is not of any kind of Mennonite background but subscribes to what AMEC is about.

It amazes me that you go to such an extent to "talk up" wearing a "plain coat" and long sleeves with other ways of making you feel "different" and this is absolutely amazing.

So brother editor, my issue is that you are making way too much of what you call a plain suit, I believe you sense what you are doing is the Lord's will and I won't dispute that at all.

From one brother to another, I am ... yours in the fellowship of Jesus.

AV Editor

The long statement of the Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations (AMEC) says a lot of good things that sound very similar to the statements of other evangelical churches. We agree with many of the written statements by men who are far more learned

than we are and rejoice that for whatever reason Christ is being preached (Philippians 1:18).

However, there remains a great divide between what AMEC churches believe should be put into practice and what Anabaptist churches practice. Some of the most notable differences lie in modesty for men and women, the wearing of the devotional covering, the woman's role in the church, separation of church and state, and a disciplined church. I suppose many of these things Anabaptist churches insist should be put into practice are considered "nonessential" by AMEC churches and most evangelical churches as well.

These biblical commands are considered "essential" by Anabaptist believers who aim to put them into practice. That is part of my defense of the plain suit. It helps remind us that we are a separate and distinct people in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Practical Question:

What godly practices do you expect to find in your congregation that set it apart from other evangelical churches?



Strange Clothing

by In my Mind

Thanks for the two *Anabaptist Voice* that came today.

I can't quite picture Jesus in a plain coat ...

AV Editor

Matthew 3:4 tells us that John the Baptist wore rather crude clothing made of camel's hair held together by a leather belt around his waist. His apparently unconventional diet consisted of locusts and wild honey robbed from bees in the Judean wilderness. Jesus said that of those born of women, there was none greater

than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11). Jesus also said John did not eat bread or drink wine (Luke 7:33). Yet, Jesus did not tell everyone to copy John's lifestyle.

Rather, Jesus came as the Messiah and lived a completely different lifestyle than John the Baptist. He ate and drank the same foods as the ordinary Jews of his time (Luke 7:34). He probably dressed as a Jewish teacher when he began his ministry. He may even have worn blue tassels on the corners of his garments as the Jews were commanded to do throughout their generations (Numbers 15:38).

The purpose of these tassels was "that you may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy for your God" (Numbers 15:40).

Sound familiar? Maybe Jesus in a plain suit is not so strange after all.



A Church Evaluation

by Howd Weedo

When AV listed generally expected godly practices of a plain church (AV28, page 25), I thought of an experience at our church.

A distant cousin of mine told me he would be in the area and would like to visit our church where some of his relatives attend. He offered to sing a solo, make a donation, and do a free evaluation as he had done in other churches.

I didn't want to say he was unwelcome, but I said his solo wouldn't fit in with our services. Donations are accepted, but our offerings are designated instead of being placed in a general fund.

The evaluation was a concern. It would be good to know how visitors feel when visiting our church, but would his evaluation only create divisions within the church? I was not sure.

Our creed is the New Testament. Would he judge us by the Bible or by man-made rules? His background was Methodist and not Anabaptist. My cousin came and did his evaluation. The many items on his evaluation sheet were listed under four main headings.

I. Church in General:

II. About the Pastor:

III. About the Congregation:

IV. Other Info that Should be Checked:

Not long after my cousin's visit, I received the following letter:

March 4, 2023

I have one question at this point. Is the Church open to any change? It is great to know what you stand for as is stated in your 2023 Yearbook and Directory. You have a very beautiful church building, with one exception (no flag). This temple seems to serve the needs of all the parishioners who come there regularly. That is excellent. Why go to extravagance? As you said, it is not needed. Serving the Lord is.

It seems to me that you folks do serve the Lord in the best way you know how. I think God would be well pleased.

I agree that some churches who have organs play them too loud. One big example was the church I had been to the week before. They had this big expensive pipe organ, that when played as loud as they did, you could barely hear the voices of the congregation. Upsetting in my eyes, but it's their church and their business. At least they did not break the law as I saw in your church (no flag).

When I left you folks last Sunday, I had a lot of mixed emotions. It was a very spiritual service. One to be certainly pleased of. It was very nice to see my distant relatives, and the Church they so adore. The folks I met at your Church were very friendly, and nice. I was also thankful of your generosity. However, I was quite upset that I saw no American Flag inside or outside of your church. This is called "unlawful assembly."

My beliefs are not exactly the same as yours, that is clear. I don't oppose everything that your church opposes. Yes, I did grade the Church, and will release that information soon...

I think our church was a culture-shock for my Methodist cousin. He was surprised that our ministers were not salaried. The thing that grabbed his attention most was us not having an American flag in our church.

Why should we? Our church is not a branch of the U.S. government, but submits to a higher authority, the Kingdom of God (Acts 17:7). Christ's great commission was to go teach all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). Christ is not only for America.

As promised, I received another letter from my cousin with our promised report card attached.

May 8, 2023

It has been a bit since I've had the opportunity to attend services with you. This, and the following attachments are just my views, as everyone will see things slightly different. I find it quite exceptional, and amazing that your pastors don't get paid for what they do. As a Church in whole, everyone seemed very respectful to God, and it seems to me, that is very important.

Thanks for the opportunity to have services together.

If 100 is perfect and 69 is failing, my cousin gave us a score nearly halfway between. As for the 16 expected godly practices of a plain church listed in AV 28 page 25, we fail. More challenging is how Christ sees us.

Jesus had a book written and sent to the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 1:11). He addresses the angel of each of the churches. Jesus has some praise and some criticism for the churches, but his promises apply to the overcomers.

If Jesus would address the angel of my church, what would he say? What would he praise us for and wherein would he praise us not? (1 Corinthians 11:22). Would he say there is much worldliness in my church? Would he say that we are breaking the first commandment because he is not first in our lives? What would Jesus promise to the overcomers in my church?



AV Editor

I have been impressed by the overriding statement to the churches in Revelation, “To the one who is victorious ... I will give the victor’s crown.” No where does Christ say the churches will be judged as a corporate body; it is always the individual who will be judged for his own deeds.

Yet the people we fellowship with can be a help in keeping the individual faithful and victorious until the end of life. And it is with that in mind that we have listed some of the godly practices we expect to find in Anabaptist congregations.

This interesting report card for one congregation is outstanding in what it uses to determine the health of a congregation or church. Most of them are irrelevant to one’s spiritual condition before God and can apply to any nominal Christian church. Several points are at distinct odds with Anabaptist and biblical principles.

1. The flag. As has been pointed out, a Christian cannot have a dual allegiance both to God and country.

2. A temple. The meeting houses are not temples. Our bodies are “the temples of God.”

3. Church leadership. We do not want a professional ministry. We want a local ministry living by God’s calling and standards.

4. Children’s ministry. Children belong with and under the oversight of their parents, strong family life with prayers, singing, and living together.

5. A capella singing. No instruments in the worship service.

As in Revelation 2 & 3, some signs can indicate the general spiritual condition of a congregation. But God will ultimately judge the people on an individual basis.

Practical Question:

1. What are things you hope to find and share in a godly congregation?



The Impossible Pyramid

by Great Changes

Like you, the story of The Great Pyramid by Norman Ward, fascinated me (Spring 2023, AV29). The Great Pyramid is, indeed, a testimony of ancient man's ability to accomplish tasks far above what is credited to them by evolutionists. It also attests of a once great civilization that was brought low by the Almighty God.

I beg to differ, however, with the statement you make that the Great Pyramid would have been built eighty-eight years before the Flood of Noah's time. I see multiple problems here. You say, "If Brian Thomas' chronology is correct" The math may be correct in itself, but I think it is illogical.

It seems some people do not understand the great upheavals the earth endured during the Flood, both on the surface as well as under the surface. Peter says, "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished" ... (II Peter 3:6). I believe everything manmade would have been destroyed by the flood. Looking at the pyramid, it seems so massive that one gets the idea that perhaps it was big enough to withstand the forces of the Flood. However, when you look at the Grand Canyon, as well as many other geologic features, you can imagine what the hydrology of the Flood with its magnitude, could have done, to even such a grand edifice as the Great Pyramid.

The precise level of the pyramid itself is testimony of it not being built prior to the Flood. As was mentioned, the thirteen-acre base is in precision of seven-eighths of an inch of being perfectly flat. That is remarkable. But, honestly, I don't think there would have been any thirteen-acre plot left on earth that would not have been affected by great geological upheavals as a result of the Flood, and would no longer be level. Dr. Walt Brown, in his book, *In the Beginning*, refers to the upheavals due to tectonic plates being shifted, etc. which I do not wish to address here.

Another factor we need to look into is that we do not believe the Egyptian civilization that was responsible for building the pyramids would have existed before the Flood. Egypt is also known as Mizraim, after one of the sons of Ham. There were only eight people on the Ark, so Mizraim was not born until after the Flood. Mizraim moved to Egypt and it was his descendants that populated Egypt.

Anyway I look at it, the Great Pyramid could not have been built before the Flood.

AV Editor

Both of us agree that the universal Flood of Noah's day did take place. And it could have been around 2472 B.C. The question is, "On which side of the Flood were the pyramids built?"

You think evidence supports the thought they were built after the Flood because the Flood destroyed everything. And then you conclude, "Anyway I look at it, the Great Pyramid could not have been built before the Flood." You may be right.

I admit that I do not know when the Great Pyramid was built. But, even today, we cannot explain how it was built, especially in the time frame often ascribed to its construction. If it was built only by brute force, it would have taken hundreds of years, not 20 years as archeologists often claim.

Furthermore, the evidence of technology and machinery necessary to quarry the stones, transport them, and to hoist them into place is completely lacking. In short, we have found no evidence that such machinery ever existed. Yet, there the impossible Great Pyramid stands.

Anyway, as I look at it, the Great Pyramid could not have been built after the Flood. There is another idea that supports this thought. The pyramids were connected to the Egyptian gods and the pharaohs which could have been another reason God sent the Flood to wipe out this idolatrous worship.

In addition, I would add that neither theory contradicts the biblical record as far as I can tell. Someday, we shall know the right answers to the questions of when and how the Great Pyramid was built. Until then, the mystery has been hidden from the wisest of men, and bears witness to the sovereignty of God.



Jews of the Heart

by Xcep Shion

I appreciated Ted Byler's article, "The Israel of God" (AV28, pages 7-11). "He is a Jew that is one inwardly ... Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter."

I would like to point out however, that even though all believers are one in Christ, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female (Galatians 3:28), yet even as there is a distinction between

Christians (men and women)—men speak, lead and teach in the worship service, but women keep silent—so also even today there is a distinction in God’s eyes between Jews and Gentiles.

Evangelism was to be done “to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.” Thus it is also with rewards and punishments. “Tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (**Romans 2:9-10**).



Orthodox Jew praying at the western wall.

From the perspective of the gospel, the Jews, in their unbelief, are enemies of God to our advantage and benefit. But from the perspective of election, they are beloved, for the sake of their forefathers. Because of the obedience of faith on our part, we have been granted mercy and grafted into the tree of life. The natural branches were cut off, but if they cease clinging to their unbelief, God has the power to graft them in again.

As in times past we Gentiles had not believed God, yet now through their unbelief we have obtained mercy. As the Scripture says, “**Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy, they also may obtain mercy**” (**Romans 11:31**).

This causes me to remember Corrie ten Boon’s father’s gracious Christian kindness to the Jews, hiding them from Hitler’s men during World War II, as recorded in *The Hiding Place*. This is how we also should relate to Jews today. Even if they are not in danger of life and limb, we should be extra kind, considering their forebearers.

“Now if the fall of them be the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness. ... if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (**Romans 11:12-15**).

AV Editor

It is hard to conceive that special rewards or special punishments await Jews because of bloodlines and circumcision. The whole point of the Romans 2:9-10 quoted is summed up in **Romans 2:11**: “**For there is no partiality with God.**” That is right. Evil doings will be punished and righteousness rewarded whether one is a Jew or a Greek.

Yes, God has the power to graft in both Jews and Gentiles into the tree of life, based only on their belief and not on their nationality. **Romans 3:22** says this very plainly. “This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile” (NIV). It says the same thing in **Romans 10:12**, “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile” (NIV). On this fundamental truth hinged the great struggle for equality in the early church.

Yes, God has the power to graft unbelieving Jews who turn to Christ, back into His special nation of Israel, the church. The people of God should treat both Jews and Gentiles with kindness, respect, and love.

Much of this “special treatment for the Jews” idea hinges on a misunderstanding of several words in Romans 11:25-26. “until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in,” and “so all Israel will be saved.”

The key to a correct understanding of these phrases is found in the next verse, “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn ungodliness away from Jacob.” Now I will rephrase Romans 11:25-26, with the clearly intended meaning. “That hardening in the hearts of some Israelites happened until Christ came and saved even some Gentiles. In the same manner, it is only through Christ that any Israelite will be saved.”



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: New Stories

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists.

Agree with Your Adversary

by James Landis



Several years ago, I burned all the papers in the folder. I wanted to forget that sorry chapter. But in the hope that some others will benefit from my experience, I will rummage around in the dark corners of my brain and recreate the story.

My son-in-law and his family wanted to relocate to another state. We were willing to help make it possible.

After looking at several different farms in the area, we finally located a tract of land in a decrepit state—weed infested, trees growing up on the edges, and a dysfunctional two-pivot irrigation system. There were no buildings or fences.

A friend of ours in the area made arrangements for us to meet the owner. After some back-and-forth with the owner—he owned many thousands of acres—he agreed to sell off about 200 acres from the 1,000-acre tract—the rest of the tract was planted in ten-year-old pine trees. His sale price was several hundred dollars per acre above the market price, but we agreed to it.

No realtor was involved. There should have been.

How do you write up a sales agreement for an undefined piece of land? You cannot. The owner said, “Sure, go ahead and survey it.” So I did. We had a nice plat made with the exact acreage we wanted and we paid for the survey.

Then a puzzling red flag occurred. I came upon a fisherman at the small pond and introduced myself as

the one who was buying the place. He acted strangely, like I had done something bad, and immediately packed up his gear and went home.

The owner then took steps to write up a sales agreement. I cannot imagine that we went ahead with what we did without waiting for a signed sales agreement. Maybe we did have one and maybe we did not. I cannot remember.

Anyway, I moved our dozer in and started cleaning up to allow the pivot to go on around in a full circle.

A friend had a single-wide house-trailer he wanted to sell, so I bought it and moved it onto the natural spot for a house. We had the power and telephone connected. A nearby well still had the pump in it; when we put electricity to it, water came out. A septic system proved ready to function. I wondered what this all meant. Upon inquiry with some neighbors, I found that apparently some hunters with their campers had been run off the site several years earlier.

By this time of the year it was getting close to time to plant soybeans under the two pivots. Then the owner gave me several pages of a legal contract to sign. I am not a lawyer, but I can read. The contract had several onerous clauses therein, the chief one saying something that allowed repossession for almost any reason.

I called the owner and told him I could not sign such a contract and was ready to give it up. He suavely said, “Well, you write up a contract the way you want it.”

“What about the planting of the crop?” I asked.

“You can go ahead and plant the crop,” he assured me.

One clause in the proffered contract stated that the owner would continue to receive the USDA payments for the cotton allotment on the land. Upon checking further into the situation, I learned that certain conditions also accompanied these payments. It was clearly evident to me that this land and the way it had not been cared for over the last several years, did not qualify. Yet those who passed out the payments fudged the terms so the owner could receive the government subsidies.

If we were to gain ownership of the tract of land, and develop it as we planned, the government payments would rightfully cease. That did not concern us, but it did concern the owner; he did not like it.

By this time I had seen enough red flags that I talked to a lawyer in my home area. I told him I wanted a crop lien placed on the crop. My lawyer really saw no

need to do this. He said, “If they allow you to plant the crop on the land, that is good enough.” But he obliged me, journeyed to the other county, and recorded a lien against the crop at the courthouse.

I hired a neighbor to plant the soybeans and got a good stand. We bought a river screen (about \$3,500) so we could pump water out of the creek to water the crop. The soybeans grew well.

The owner presented me with another contract to sign. But he had reinstated the chief onerous clause and the whole contract was little different than his original. I did not sign it.

With the nice growing crop, the place looked much better than it had for a long time. The possibility of losing the government payments also loomed overhead. As I look back, it seems that the owner made up his mind that he was not going to sell the place, if indeed he had ever intended to really sell it.

His lawyer called and arranged for my wife and me to come to a meeting in his office. Because of a medical emergency the owner could not be there. But when we arrived, the owner’s lawyer, his accountant, and his brother were there. The lawyer was super smooth considering the dirty work he had to do. The accountant appeared to be honest, upright and trustworthy. In the course of our discussion, the brother became very angry.

The lawyer informed us there would be no sale of the property and pressed for a settlement figure. I responded that I did not come to the meeting to make a settlement. I pointed out that we had a lien on the crop registered in the court house. We discussed the onerous clause in the proposed contract and the reason why it had been reinstated. Nothing budged.

They wanted a walk-away settlement figure and a cancellation of the lien on the crop. Several days later I received a letter from the lawyer threatening eviction if I did not remove the house trailer within one week. Then a phone call came telling me they were taking over the crop.

Practical Question:

1. What should a Christian do?



One Man - Two Lives

by Albert Stoltzfus



Down the road from my wife's parents' place in Due West, South Carolina, there's a little house trailer that now sits empty. The windows are dark. A row of gospel signs, seven of them and a cross, to be exact, line the road out front.

Beside the trailer is a sizable garden surrounded by a well-built fence. Blueberries, raspberries, goji berries (an incredible source of antioxidants), grapes, muscadines, figs, and fruit trees grow there. There is cabbage and kale and a line of tomato cages that stand ready and waiting. Everything is planted in meticulously straight rows, arranged perfectly. But the garden, though a beautiful exhibit, is growing up in weeds. It is lonely and forlorn.

An old man named Ralph Kroger lived there. He bought the trailer and two acres from my brother-in-law about the time I started dating Juanita, more than five years ago. On some of my earliest visits to Juanita's home, her father (Abner) and I spent hours working to clear trees from the area that would later become Ralph's garden.

Ralph also worked diligently with the help of Abner to clear the land, build a fence, and lay out his plot. On later visits, I loved to go find Ralph working in his garden where he'd pause and we'd browse and talk. He was a conversationalist and seemed happy to engage as long as I appeared interested.

Ralph, in his mid seventies, was the same height as I was, 5'10". He had a big chest for a man his age and a thick neck with a prominent vein bulging along the side. His face was deeply tanned; his forehead furrowed.

When he talked he would often get so excited that he stammered to get those first few words out.

We learned some interesting things about Ralph, though not necessarily from him. Forty years earlier Ralph had been a famous body builder. In one writer's words, "He was one of the most celebrated body builders of the 60's and 70's, winning and placing in most of the major contests of the time. His best year was 1975 when he won the WBBG Pro Mr. America, the WBBG Mr. International, and the WBBG Pro Mr. USA. During his prime years he appeared on the covers of some of the biggest muscle magazines of the time including *Iron Man* (3x), *Mr. America*, *Strength and Health*, *Muscular Development* (2x), *Muscle Training Illustrated*, and *Health and Strength*."

Ralph's body building career lasted into his early forties with him competing and winning against men half his age. Astounding images of him were titled, "Ralph Kroger, Mr. Universe."

Ralph lived in California, Hawaii, Chicago, and Iowa. He was married to five different women. "My whole life was about me," he said. At least 4 children were born to him, but he seemed to have little contact with them.

In his late 40's Ralph gave his life to the Lord. No longer living for himself, he ran a gym in Iowa for years—Ralph viewed the gym as his ministry base to share with people about the Lord. Gospel signs adorned the walls of the gym and tee shirts had Bible verses on them.

Ralph was in his 70s when he was traveling through rural South Carolina, the area where Abner lived. He had already been slowed down by numerous gospel signs when he spotted a gray-bearded Mennonite man and his wife in a long dress, working in their garden together. He couldn't believe his eyes. To him it looked like a scene from the 1800s. Ralph was so impressed he turned off the highway, drove into their lane, across their yard, and right up to them.

To start with, Ralph was really interested in nutrition. Then there was the biblical instruction to "till the land." And, he had never heard of the Mennonite people. It was such a rare, impressive sight to him that he just had to know more.

It wasn't long until Ralph bought the mobile home from Abner's son. He believed it was God's provision for him. Leading up to this time, Ralph had developed a growing concern over the predictions of "when the grid goes down." It was in the forefront of his mind as he purchased the little plot and began making preparations for his own survival with a substantial supply of dried food, his growing garden, and many other plans that needed to fall in place.



Ralph was a determined man who, once his mind fell in a certain track you couldn't change it. At least one time, though, Ralph changed his mind.

You see, Ralph had a problem. What was he going to do when the grid did go down and he was the only person left with food? How would he protect his stash from hungry people coming to steal from him? How could he hide and keep his supplies for himself? He was ex-military, so of course guns and ammunition entered into the equation—Ralph had plenty of both in his mobile home, and he knew how to use them.

Abner, seeing the error of Ralph's thinking from a Christian perspective, presented him with this scenario. "Can you picture Jesus sitting up there on your porch with a gun, shooting the poor hungry people that are coming to steal your potatoes for their starving children ... how's this supposed to work?"

Ralph shrugged him off, but Abner persisted. Over the next few days while the two worked together, Abner kept bringing up this scenario with the question, "How is this consistent with the example of Jesus? Do you really think Jesus would do that?"

Then Ralph saw it. He changed his mind. Suddenly he saw how his garden was going to benefit the community. People would see him working in his garden. They would know where food was, and should

hardship come, he would stand at his garden gate passing out food to hungry people and their children. He would be the first to starve while providing for his community.

When I met Ralph, I rarely heard him talk about his body builder days. If I asked a question about them, he'd give me a short answer and resume working. It was not who he was anymore.

Now he constantly talked about two main things ... the Lord, and his garden. Ralph was passionate about the Lord. He preached, "Repent and believe" to everyone he met. He was on a new course and he was headed forward.

Ralph lived alone. He believed it would be wrong for him to remarry. He was committed to follow his Lord in singleness the rest of his days.

On Sunday morning, 20 January 2019, a lady drove by Ralph's house and saw his old beater of a car parked in the driveway. Knowing that he was usually in church over that time, she called a neighbor man who went over to check on him. He found him kneeling by his chair in his little kitchen ... gone. Ralph Kroger died on his knees. When I first heard about it, I just marveled and said, "What an awesome way to die!" He had told Abner, "If you come over some day and I'm not doing well, don't call the ambulance. God will take care of me."

This is a story of one man and two lives. Or is it one life and two men? At 35, Ralph was popular. He was an idol. His life was what many Americans dream of, but he was EMPTY. At 75, Ralph was forgotten. He lived like a poor man, but he was OVERFLOWING.

These two men are a vivid portrait of two men worldwide. Two men quite familiar to you and me. To each of us they offer a life, only one of which can exist. We must choose between the two: Ralph Kroger, "Mr. Universe" on the prowl, or Ralph Kroger, on his knees before THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE.

— written in 2019

Practical Question:

1. What are signs of a life lived for self?
2. What are signs of a life lived for God?



Book Review

The Last Things in the Teaching of the Bible

by Larry Miller

I appreciated the *Anabaptist Voice* #28 article, “The Israel of God. It was solidly based on the scriptures. It clearly answers a pertinent question that today, in some Anabaptist circles, is pleading for an answer. That question is, “Who is the true and exclusive Israel of God?” Brother Byler’s answer was, “It is the church of Jesus Christ.”

We always want our answers to questions to be solidly based on the scriptures; but sometimes it is also helpful to know what faithful believers of the past thought and taught. A knowledge of history always broadens our perspective and gives us counseled, time-tested advice.

By going back and looking at what earlier Anabaptist-Mennonite men believed about what the Bible teaches on eschatology, we can receive broad-based counsel and time-tested applications. It is a way of confirming, “Those things which are most surely believed among us” (Luke 1:1).

So what did the faithful Anabaptist-Mennonites of past generations believe about the Israel of God and Christ’s Kingdom—past, present, and future?

The book, *Last Things* by the late Chester K. Lehman is a defense of the historical position of the Christian church on eschatology. The author states that the most accurate statement of belief of the Mennonite church on the “Last Things” is found in their four Confessions of Faith drawn up in the years 1600, 1627, 1630, and 1632. Each of these Confessions contains an article on the “Last Things.” The statement issued in 1632 has become the recognized standard of the Mennonite Church.

Throughout the book, the author carefully demonstrates how correct interpretations vindicate the church’s time-honored position on these matters. For instance, Brother Lehman writes on page 198, “The view of the church for nineteen centuries has been that ... the opportunity of turning to God in penitence ceases at the moment when our Lord appears to receive to himself the church.”

The book also gives other historical positions of the church that answer modern-day questions such as:

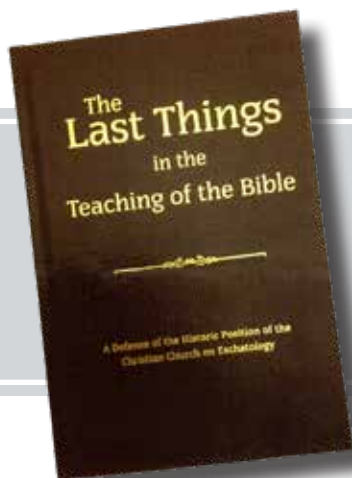
1. Will Jesus establish an earthly kingdom?
2. Will there be a rapture that leaves behind people who can then still be saved?
3. Will the return of Christ actually be in two stages as is so widely claimed?

To find time-tested and biblical answers to these questions and many others like them, read the book, *The Last Things in the Teaching of the Bible*.

The late Merle R. Ruth wrote this about the book:

It deserves a very high rating ... In some respects, it may in fact be unexcelled by any other Mennonite writing on this particular subject. An in-depth study of the biblical teaching ... contending for the faith in a non-contentious way. The writer demonstrates how correct interpretations vindicate the church’s time-honored position. We should all appreciate a writer who is willing to go to great lengths to establish the validity of his conclusion.

Obtain a copy of the book, *The Last Things in the Teaching of the Bible* and test your own beliefs against the historic positions taught therein. For more information about the book, contact:



Larry L. Miller
4088 Blue Rock Road
Washington Boro PA 17582
Email: larry@rail-connect.net
Phone: 717-681-2500



Circulation & Financial Statement

Income & Expense Report

April thru June 2023

April 1, 2023 Beginning Balance	\$4,133.20
Income	
Donations	\$2,140.00
Local Support*	\$7,000.00
Total Income	\$9,140.00
Beginning Balance + Income	\$13,273.20
Expenses	
Handling & Packaging	\$678.00
Postage	\$3,789.91
Printing	\$5,932.00
Staff Expenses	\$606.70
Total Expense	\$11,006.61
30 June 2023 Ending Balance	\$2,266.59

Circulation Report

June 2023

ISSUE #23 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 5,000 | Operating Cost: \$10,559.39

Cost Per Copy: \$2.11 /ea.

ISSUE #24 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 5,000 | Operating Cost: \$10,715.95

Cost Per Copy: \$2.11/ea.

ISSUE #25 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$11,163.95

Cost Per Copy: \$2.30/ea.

ISSUE #26 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$10,995.60

Cost Per Copy: \$2.27/ea.

ISSUE #27 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,925 | Operating Cost: \$11,310.26

Cost Per Copy: \$2.30/ea.

ISSUE #28 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$11,006.61

Cost Per Copy: \$2.27/ea.

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

We thank our supporters for the \$ 2,140.00 given to help with the cost of publishing AV29. If you wish to share in the publishing cost of AV30 it will be much appreciated.

All gifts given to *Anabaptist Voice* through the local church are tax deductible.



End Matters

I like to think that when we gather together in a worship service and listen to a sermon, we should be able to take at least one inspiring truth along home with us. One thing! Of course, we will want to share that truth with someone else—family, friend, customer, or someone we meet the following week.

Another issue of *Anabaptist Voice* has come together and is ready to go to the printer. I ask myself, "What is the one thing people will remember from this issue?" Will it be the need for consecration, a ruby, the dangers of wealth, the hoped-for rest, funny money, God's wondrous works, the life story, a letter, a discussion from the Round Table? What will people who read AV29 want to share with others?

Do me two favors:

1. Write a note or send an email and tell me what most gripped you in AV29.

2. Find someone else unacquainted with *Anabaptist Voice* and introduce them to the magazine.

Anabaptist Voice spends zero money on advertising. But I was thinking — or was it dreaming? — if each person who reads AV29 added one more name to the mailing list, we could double the number of people reading *Anabaptist Voice* by the time AV30 comes out. If that should occur I would also pray the Lord would supply enough funds to cover the additional cost of \$2.30 per copy.

Until He comes,
James G. Landis



Anabaptist Voice
5282 Hwy. 56 South
Waynesboro, GA 30830

editor@anabaptistvoice.com

www.anabaptistvoice.com

*“Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.
Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the
God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.”
~ Psalm 25:4-5*

