

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

Vol. LXXVIII MAY 2010 No. 5

THE SWORD AND TRUMPET monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for "the faith which was once delivered to the saints." This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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THE SWORD AND TRUMPET (USPS 615-540) is published monthly by *The Sword and Trumpet, Inc.*, P. O. Box 575, Harrisonburg, Va. 22803-0575. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisonburg, Va. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 1 year US \$15.00, 2 years US \$25.00. Bulk rates on the basis of US \$12.00 per year. Add US \$3.00 per year for countries outside USA and Canada. Telephone (540) 867-9419 or 867-9444. FAX (540) 867-9419. E-mail address: swandtrump@verizon.net. Website: www.swordandtrumpet.org

from the Catholic Church on November 18, 1525.

Michael went to Strasbourg, France, and stayed with Wolfgang Capito, a German humanist who became a leading reformer. During his stay with Capito, Michael discussed theology with his host. They disagreed on several points including infant baptism. Sattler's experience with Protestant reformers was somewhat different from that of the Swiss Anabaptists in that his disagreement over infant baptism did not cause animosity between himself and his friends. In a letter written after he left Strasbourg, Michael referred to them as "his beloved brothers in God." After Michael's execution, Capito described him as a "dear friend of God."

In February of 1527, a group of Anabaptist brethren met in the town of Schleithem, north of Zurich near the German border. In that meeting, a document was drafted listing seven articles on which they agreed. Michael was the principal author of these articles known as the Schleithem Articles of Faith. This document is considered the first Anabaptist confession of faith. It was so widely circulated among the Anabaptist brethren in the region that Protestant reformers in Switzerland felt the need to respond to the work. By late summer of 1527, Ulrich Zwingli had published a document titled "Refutation of Anabaptist Tricks" in an effort to refute its teachings.

The Schleithem work was not a systematic confession of faith, but it did address seven major issues upon which the Anabaptist brethren agreed. The seven articles addressed baptism, the ban, the breaking of bread, separation from the world, the role of pastors, the sword, and the swearing of oaths.

Michael was a young man of only 37 years in March of 1527 when he and his wife were arrested, tried, and convicted of heresy soon after the drafting of the Schleithem Confession. On May 20,

1527, as a result of this conviction, Michael was taken to the town marketplace in Rottenburg and tortured. The judge had passed sentence on him that a piece was to be cut from his tongue. His sentence also included that red-hot tongs be used to rip pieces from his flesh, twice at the marketplace, and five times while tied to the cart on the way to the place of execution.

At the marketplace, Michael's tongue was cut out although not enough so that he could not speak at all. He was then taken outside the city and tied to a ladder with a sack of gunpowder tied to his neck. He prayed for his persecutors. He prayed also, "Almighty, eternal God, Thou art the way and the truth; because I have not been shown to be in error, I will with Thy help on this day testify to the truth and seal it with my blood." He was then pushed into a large fire. As the ropes around his hands burned away, Sattler held up two fingers as a signal to his group to show them he was confident about his fate and prayed, "Father, I commend my spirit into Thy hands."

Margaretha, Michael's wife, was then severely coaxed by friends to recant. However, she told them she would not deny her God and said she had wished to die alongside her husband in the fire and join him in Heaven. Margaretha remained steadfast and, two days after Michael's execution, was drowned, often called "the third baptism" by the authorities.

Michael stands as a monument in the lineage of faithful Anabaptists holding Jesus Christ as preeminent. Although Michael's involvement, authoring, and formulation of the Schleithem Articles were principal arguments leading to his condemnation and death, these articles were a forerunner to later written articles of faith, unifying groups in their beliefs. They helped solidify principles of early Anabaptist belief and practice. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Calvary Messenger*, February 2010.

Person of the Month:

George B. Stoltzfus (1909-1954)



George B. Stoltzfus was born March 27, 1909, near Malvern, PA, to Amos and Elizabeth Stoltzfus. There were five children in the Stoltzfus home—one brother, one foster brother, and two sisters.

In 1920, at the age of 11, he was converted to Christ and was subsequently baptized and joined the Millwood Church near Gap, PA.

In 1929 the Millwood congregation was interested in having an outreach in the city of Coatesville. Several families went to Coatesville where they held services preaching the Gospel. Eventually souls were saved and a mission church was established. Brother George also began to attend this new work. He helped out as a Sunday school teacher and also as Sunday school secretary.

George made the acquaintance of Miriam Hertzler who was from Morgantown, PA, and later married her on November 26, 1931, when he was 22. God blessed their union with six daughters and one son. As a father, George Stoltzfus was concerned about his children that they might know the Lord as their Saviour.

In May of 1947 the Coatesville congregation was looking for a pastor and George Stoltzfus was ordained to that position on May 14 of that year. As a preacher Stoltzfus' messages were very evangelistic.

Brother Stoltzfus' ministry was not limited to his local congregation. He was called upon by various churches, some in Lancaster Conference and some in another, to hold evangelistic meetings in their congregations. He was fearless and passionate in his preaching because he knew what he believed and was clear at making his point.

His first love, however, was his own congregation. Some of his prayers for the salvation of his children were answered one Sunday morning after he had preached the Gospel and invited persons to come to Christ. He later found out that three of his children had answered that invitation.

Stoltzfus showed his interest in Christian day schools by accepting positions of influence in both the Parkesburg Christian Day School and Lancaster Mennonite School.

The counsel he gave was appreciated in every part of his ministry.

George Stoltzfus appeared to be in his prime in July of 1954. On Saturday, the 10th, he was doing some farm work on his property with another brother when he experienced a heart attack and died thirty minutes later. George B. Stoltzfus was only 45 years of age. Brother Stoltzfus had been preceded in death by his foster brother and one of his sisters.

Brother George's funeral was held at the Millwood church four days later on July 14, 1954.

- Gail L. Emerson

Maintaining a Heart for God

by John D. Parker

Two well-known leaders of the evangelical world, Dr. R. C. Sproul in an interview with Dr. H. B. London of Focus on the Family Pastoral Ministries, made some critical observations not long ago. [Dr. Sproul] “When I read the biographies of the great saints . . . though they were different in many respects, there was one common theme . . . and that is . . . THEY WERE ALL INTOXICATED WITH THE HOLINESS OF GOD! It was a passion to KNOW GOD that turned them around . . .” [H. B. London]. “What we have embraced as the “Cure-All” [a reference to the “Mega Church” and “Seeker Church” movement] has in many ways become our poison . . . and it just scares me . . . I don’t know how we are going to get back from it . . . I know that this whole concept of Holiness . . . if we don’t come back to some of that, we’re just going to be a shell . . . we’re going to be sounding brass and tinkling cymbals . . . we’re just going to be going through motions . . . with no roots that go down deeper in people’s lives.”

It is urgent that we go back to our roots and focus on having fervent “Hearts for God”! This will not happen instinctively because we are holiness people. It is not “automatic” that we will always choose rightly, and naturally gravitate to that which is holy in the sanctified state, any more than it was “automatic” for Adam and Eve who were “perfect” and “pure” in their original condition.

God wants a love relationship with us that is built on “desire” and “choice”! Gary Smalley has written one of the most helpful books ever on maintaining a healthy and happy marriage entitled “Love Is a Decision.” A healthy love rela-

tionship is not “automatic” and all romantic! It is a daily choice! And so it is in our relationship with God. If we would have a “Heart for God” we must maintain by our daily decisions a commitment to that which honors and pleases God!

Though Adam and Eve enjoyed a perfect and satisfying relationship with God in the Garden, there came a day when they chose wrongly, and selfishly. And they wrecked their union with God and consequently brought great hurt and sorrow to the human family. You may have made many, many, many wonderful decisions and commitments for God throughout your life. Those decisions are the reason you are today serving God. Those decisions are the basis of your relationship with God to this point. But, tomorrow you could choose to wreck all that has been and might be by making a bad choice and not maintaining a “Heart for God”!

I could stop at this point and recount the many examples of those who started well, went on for years and climbed the ladders of success, but wrecked it all in a moment by failing to maintain a “Heart for God”! Perhaps you would say, “But I don’t believe it just happens in a moment . . .!” I agree! It happens in the amount of time that it takes to neglect the maintenance of your “Heart for God”! No man has ever been so well sanctified that he could neglect the “maintenance” of a “heart relationship with his God”! You and I are subject to the same human weaknesses in some measure as are the unsanctified, for we are still human! We are still finite! We are still on probation!

We will never serve the Lord so long that we have somehow earned an

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immunity to sin! Examples of tragic failures abound even among the ministry! Occasionally the sad responsibility falls on church leadership to make that dreaded trip to the door of another parsonage and confront yet another pastor, and take his credentials because he has failed to maintain a heart for God and has fallen into sin! What an unspeakably sad day! Precious little children are forever scarred by the mark of shame upon their family; faithful wives are forever wounded, maybe even broken by the loss of trust. Many within the church are left floundering in disillusionment and anger; the community is sickened by yet another scandal; and Satan has a celebration as he witnesses the setback to the cause of Christ, all because someone has failed to maintain a "heart" for God! Someone tried to walk on the water of yesterday's grace but like Peter in a moment of weakness took their eyes off Jesus and sank beneath the waves! Someone enjoyed the security of yesterday's approval with God, like King David; and in a false sense of security became vulnerable to the temptation, which caused their downfall.

Most of those in church leadership have a strong sense that there are those of our own churches that are struggling, and failing in some very critical areas. Statistics tell us that there are those among us who have already failed! Just because we are "Holiness" people, in no wise exempts us from the tragedy that is so prevalent in the church world today!

We can't look at someone and see some visible sign that they have compromised their "Heart for God" by neglecting to maintain a pure heart! We can't tell who is presently conscious of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in their life! But I've been where some of you are! I've tried to struggle on and preach and visit and counsel and lead a flock when I had become negligent in the maintenance of my own relationship with God, and I found myself empty and mechanical! I remember struggling with temptation and

finding to my horror that my will had weakened. I thank God for those times which some of us will forever point back to when we confessed our need and renewed our vows and wept our way through to new victory and determination to "maintain a heart for God!"

There was a day when some were naive enough to think perhaps we could pretty well legislate sin out of the church. But the mind-boggling speed of the advancements of technology, combined with the ever-increasing tolerance of our society for sin and wickedness, have forced us to admit that we can no longer make a list that is long enough to eliminate sin's appeal to us. Even the public AM and FM radio waves are rapidly being filled with lewd, suggestive, and even downright filthy talk and music. Telephones are a venue through which anyone may connect with all sorts of depraved people for immoral purposes! Television and movies are at their all-time low in promoting sin and immorality. Now the computer, which has become such a vital part of everyday life, has also become the most frightening of all the channels through which minds and hearts can be filled with sin's influence! And most of us have them! It is so easy and private for any one of us to be drawn "away and enticed" and incidentally find ourselves caught in the web of sin; and NO ONE KNOWS! It can be done with such anonymity and secrecy and it is so easy! When an individual has failed to "maintain a heart for God" he or she has robbed himself or herself of the protection of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit to guard their thoughts and actions, and so they are at their most vulnerable! Soon one has grieved away the Spirit of God and wrecked their relationship with God by "choosing" in a moment of weakness to give in and go there, and open their mind and affections to sin! They have valued more the indulgence of their flesh, than the will of God! Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also!

You and I can only hope to persevere

and remain faithful until the end as we heed the admonition of our Lord and of the Holy Scriptures to actively “MAIN-TAIN” our love relationship with God. Listen to the call of the Lord to discipleship and its relevance to this subject . . . Luke 9:23—“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” This is still the mandate for those of us who would be His disciples! Note it is a “daily,” ongoing action!

How is this done? Again, heed the words of our Lord . . . Matthew 6:33—“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Let’s connect to these words of our Lord the admonition of the Apostle Paul . . . Colossians 3:1-3—“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Notice the word is “SET” which means: to direct one’s mind to a thing, to seek. It is important to understand that God doesn’t arbitrarily do this for you! It is equally important to understand that the instruction is to “Direct one’s MIND . . .” not one’s emotions. This is the “Seat of the Affections”! The emotions follow! “For where your treasure is; there will your heart be also.”

Then we need to look anew at the challenge of the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1, 2 which so clearly explains the means by which we “maintain” a heart for God!

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

It is by this “renewing of your mind” ALONE, that you and I will “PROVE”

God’s good and acceptable and perfect will in our lives! And all of this is subsequent to our sanctification, or to the presenting of your being as a “living sacrifice” holy and acceptable unto God. As we remain yielded to God, volitionally committed to pleasing Him, by the influence of His Holy Spirit upon our minds we will find our thought processes changing. Our minds are reprogrammed to understand and to know “what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”! This only happens as we daily deny “self,” die to self, and consciously choose to “set our affections on things above”! It is not a mindless, robotic, or automatic conformity to the image of Christ that is accomplished by the “Lord of our Life” pushing the buttons and “controlling” us! Nowhere in the Bible will you find anything that indicates that the Holy Spirit “controls” us in that way! That is contrary to the purpose of God in the creation of man. God desires a “love relationship” with us, a relationship of choice! So we must “set our affections upon” His way! If we fail to, another tragic failure is just around the bend!

Perilous pitfalls are lurking out there, and the very real possibility that some of us are already being drawn into the subtle traps of Satan! Don’t wait to flee to God for mercy after you have fallen into failure and shame! Don’t wait until someone is knocking at your door to confront the “sin” of your life! Don’t let it be your wife or your husband and your children that bear the shame and confusion of your personal failure! Don’t even wait until you have given in and opened your mind to the influence of sin and its tangled web of deceit! If you are struggling; if you are not successfully “maintaining a heart for God”; if you are not “up-to-date” in your surrender of your entire being as a living sacrifice; flee to Him for mercy! Renew your vows! “SET” your affections anew on Him, NOW! ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Convention Herald*, September/October 2009.

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Safe Mode

by Daniel E. Miller

The moment we emerge from the comfort of the womb, we enter a large, lonely, and dangerous world. The natural world around us continues to groan from the effects of the Fall, and through disease and disaster it often seems bent on our destruction. In the human realm, we are threatened by selfish individuals primarily intent on self-survival and the furtherance of their own agendas. These inclinations breed hate and malice, crime and warfare.

It is providential then that the Creator has given each of us innate skills of self-preservation. These skills express themselves in a multitude of ways at all stages of life's journey. We see them in the impulse of a hand jerking away from a hot surface, and in the response of a tearful child to a ferocious dog. We use skills of analysis, conflict resolution, and problem-solving as we encounter dangers created by fallen humanity.

As treacherous as life becomes and as real as the threats that confront us, it may seem logical to assume that self-preservation is really the purpose of living. If we can make it safely from birth to a long-delayed death

with a minimum of suffering and pain on the journey, we have lived well, the assumption goes. And although few people may actually verbalize this philosophy of life, many people's lifestyles reveal self-preservation as their primary goal.

As Christians, we have adopted a worldview that runs counter to this way of thinking. Our creed declares that our purpose on earth is to bring glory to God, whether that be accomplished by life or by death. We follow the example of One who came to give His life, not to preserve it. Our hall of heroes is lined by those whose lives were cut short because they stood unwaveringly for their beliefs and "loved not their lives unto the death."

Yet as I examine my own heart and observe the conservative Mennonite church today, I fear that the philosophy of self-preservation has influenced us in subtle ways and in too many cases is becoming our default mode of operation. Too often, decisions are made with God's Word as the stated determiner while in reality the status quo of financial security and physical well-being are the factors that

determine our choices.

Consider these hypothetical situations: We choose not to serve in a city mission, citing the high crime rate. We don't interact with the unsaved neighbors, worried about the negative impact on our children. We decide not to support the new outreach ministry, naming good stewardship in light of our other financial commitments. We decline the request to move to a neighboring state to help in a church plant, concerned that our children grow up too far away from their relatives. We choose not to share our faith with our co-workers, afraid that they will become offended and make our work experience miserable. Situations like these occur when we allow ourselves to become so enchanted with life in its current state that we fear its disruption more than anything else. When this happens we begin to operate in something of a "safe mode."

In the world of technology, safe mode refers to a very basic way to run the computer's operating system. While a computer run in safe mode is less likely to crash or face other such problems, it also has greatly reduced capabilities. According to wikipedia.org, "safe mode is intended for maintenance, not functionality."

There is a remarkable parallel then between a computer and a Christian. It may be true that when we enter "safe mode," embracing the status quo and putting our primary efforts into maintaining it, that we will be less likely to face the dangerous "crashes" that may otherwise confront us. But we, even more than computers, were made for so much MORE than maintenance mode! We were made for high functionality. The gifts of life, salvation, and a godly heritage were not meant to be hoarded and quietly nurtured. Rather we have injunctions to take them and fling them to the waiting world. To whom much is given, of him is much required. We are living in amazing times. Advances in technology and transportation have made the transmission of the

Gospel far easier than it has ever been before. Searching hearts are finding truth and yearning to know more. Will we take advantage of these opportunities or be content to stay in safe mode?

In addition to the opportunities we miss, a problem with operating in this mode is that the things and places we assume are safe are often fraught with their own set of dangers. When money is plentiful, streets are safe, and life is comfortable, it is easy for the human heart to lose its reliance on God. Once that happens, we tend to let down our guard and become prey for an enemy who delights in throwing temptations in our paths. Interpersonal strife, dysfunctional families, and moral failure are common results. It is also true that parents who choose to raise their children in what they assume is a safe environment may find that in the absence of physical dangers, the natural spirit of adventure within the child may lead him to experiment with things that will permanently damage his soul.

Our inborn tendency to self-preservation is indeed God-given. Without it we would not have lived to see today. Yet, like many of God's gifts, it has the potential to be abused. The challenge for all of us, no matter where we live or in what context we serve God, is to put His calling and His claim on our lives above everything else. Doing this involves a daily surrender of our supposed rights to safety and security. It involves a conscious effort to trust God to provide and protect. This may mean that we will be called to dangerous places and tasks. It may mean that we will not enjoy the comforts and conveniences to which we are accustomed. But a time is coming, on the streets of Heaven, when we will forget those things. When we look into the faces of those with whom we shared Christ, and when we hear the words, "Well done," we will celebrate the day we escaped from safe mode. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Life Lines*, January/February 2010.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

MAY 2, 2010

A Faithful Community

Colossians 1:1-14

The lessons for May focus on the teachings of the New Testament church on principles for living in the faith community. The first three are from the Book of Colossians, and one each from Philemon and Jude. These are all short books and should be read in their entirety for context to the lessons. The first four are from the pen of Paul, the last from Jude, assumed by most Bible scholars to be the brother of Jesus.

Though Paul had never visited the church at Colosse (see 2:1), he had a keen interest in its welfare and was informed of its struggles by Epaphras (1:7, 8), perhaps the founder and minister of the church. No doubt he had traveled to Rome to visit Paul in prison and share with him the struggles facing the church due to false teaching. Paul's response is sent back to Colosse by Tychicus and Onesimus (4:7-9), whom we meet in the lesson for May 23.

Paul begins his epistle with his usual greeting, bestowing the grace and peace of God upon the faithful ones at Colosse. He thanks God for them and their faithful witness to God's saving grace as well as their love to each other. He praises them for embracing the truth of the gospel as taught by Epaphras, their faithful minister, and for the fruit it had produced in their lives.

Paul informs his readers that his constant prayer for them is that they "might be filled with the knowledge of [God's] will in

all wisdom and spiritual understanding." This knowledge of God and His will for them will be their bulwark against the sinister tide of false teaching encroaching upon them. Though the Colossian heresy is not readily identifiable in this epistle, Paul's response would indicate it carried Judaistic and Gnostic overtones. Their best defense was knowledge of God's will and a spiritually disciplined life.

As these Colossian believers gained inner strength through their increased knowledge of God, they could walk worthy of their calling, they would be fruitful in good works, and exhibit strength of character and patience. They would do all this with joyfulness and thanks to God who had made them through His saving grace qualified to become "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." Why wouldn't that realization cause joy and thanksgiving?

To be delivered from the kingdom of darkness and sin controlled by Satan and moved over into the kingdom of the Son of God's love is the essence of the salvation experience. That is the redemption spoken of in verse 14. It is possible because of the blood of God's Son shed for mankind. These Colossian believers had experienced this transformation and now Paul writes both to commend them and warn them not to allow false philosophies to rob them of their resulting joy and position with God.

Saving faith must continually evolve to remain vital. Paul here gives believers the formula for making that work—continual growth in the knowledge of God, deepening spiritual understandings and constant

thankfulness to God. Good for the believers at Colosse, good for us in 2010.

For thought and discussion

1. Discuss practical ways we as individuals and bodies of believers can grow in our knowledge of God.
2. Note how Paul prefaces his message with praise and assurance of his continual prayers for the saints at Colosse. Leaders, take note.
3. What are some modern-day heresies threatening the church? Identify them and discuss how they can best be combated.
4. There are a number of Christian virtues emphasized in this passage. Which one, or ones, do you think are most noticeably lacking among believers today?
5. Note how inner spiritual strength provides the foundation for the expression of Christian virtues. Then determine within yourself to develop that inner strength.

Lesson emphasis: That continual growth in the knowledge of God is key to spiritual victory, joy, and thankfulness.

Key verse: 9b

MAY 9, 2010

An Established Community

Colossians 2:1-10

Though Paul had likely never visited the churches in the Lycos River Valley—Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis—he had an apostolic concern for their spiritual welfare. It is likely that these churches were established during Paul’s tenure in Ephesus when through his efforts “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:10). It is thought that perhaps Epaphras (see 1:7) was the founder, at least of the church here at Colosse.

Having been informed of some insidious teaching threatening the stability of the church, Paul very diplomatically addresses these heresies by emphasizing the all-sufficiency of Christ for man’s spiritual

needs (see Chapter 1, verses 15-29). Here then in Chapter 2 he expresses his deep concern for their stability and faithfulness, and emphasizes that inner strength derived from a knowledge of God and a unity of purpose among the believers are keys to their success in combating false teaching.

In verse 3 Paul emphasizes again the all-sufficiency of Christ “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” The “hid” aspect of this wisdom and knowledge does not mean that it is unfathomable, but rather that it is “contained” in Him. Christ is the source of all spiritual wisdom and knowledge. It is the believer’s task to explore and mine that knowledge for his personal benefit, in order to fortify himself against the beguiling influence of false teaching. False teachers seek to undermine truth and the simple facts of salvation. Immersing oneself in the search for God’s wisdom and knowledge will keep one from being duped by those who teach erroneous doctrine.

Paul goes on to praise the Colossian believers for their steadfastness in the faith and to encourage them in its continuance. Though absent from them and not personally acquainted, he nevertheless shares a pastoral concern for their spiritual prosperity. In verse 1 he expresses his deep concern and care for their spiritual vitality.

Paul further admonishes these believers to continue to walk in Christ who is their firm foundation, and to be continually built up, or growing in their faith and their knowledge of Christ (see last Sunday’s lesson). They are to abound (overflow) in this faith with continual thankfulness to God for His providence.

Paul warns again to not allow anyone to turn them aside from firm faith in Christ through “the vain and hollow philosophies of deceitful men.” The false teacher’s apparent attempt was to add various teachings or rituals to simple faith. Paul warns, do not let it happen. There dare be no dilution of faith, no practice or philosophical tenet added to simple faith in Christ’s redemptive work (see 1:14).

In the last two verses of our lesson text

Paul emphasizes again for all believers the complete sufficiency of Christ to meet man's spiritual needs. In Him is encompassed the fulness of God's revelation and the source of all power over evil and falsehood. And then he closes with these blessed words: "And ye are complete in him." He is all we need for salvation and the maintenance of our faith.

For thought and discussion

1. Paul's example here shows how earnest prayer is a requisite element of pastoral concern and care. Should not we all more readily engage ourselves in its practice to thwart the inroads of false teaching?
2. Lest we are ever tempted to add man's philosophies to simple saving faith, let this passage be a clear and forceful reminder that in Christ alone is all we need for salvation and growth in the knowledge and wisdom of God.
3. How do we discover the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ? Discuss.
4. How do we receive Christ? How do we walk in Him? How does this refute the addition of other elements to saving faith?
5. Identify and discuss some of the vain philosophies threatening today's church. Then discuss how they can best be combated.

Lesson emphasis: That a thorough knowledge of Christ is the basis for combating false doctrine.

Key verses: 6 and 7

MAY 16, 2010

A Committed Community

Colossians 3:1, 2, 12-17

As Paul wraps up his letter to the Colossian brotherhood he asserts certain ethical principles and practices which should be evident among them as a committed, growing body of believers. He has warned them against the influence of false teachers. He

has encouraged their total dependence on Christ and urged growth in knowledge of Him. In the latter part of Chapter 2 he affirms their salvation experience and states the foolishness of adding empty ritual practices to their faith.

Then, as he begins Chapter 3, he states certain things that should evidence their walk of faith. First of all he says that their affection, or mindset, must be on heavenly things, not on things of the earth. This redirection of life focus will lift them above the temptations of daily living to the realm of spiritual consciousness where the things of God so far outweigh the things of earth that they become less threatening.

Paul goes on to say in the verses between our text verses, that since their life is now so bound up in Christ and pleasing Him, it will make a vivid difference in how they live and relate. They will consciously put off the works of the flesh—immorality, evil thoughts, anger, wrath, malice, filthy speech, lying, etc. The new person they have become in Christ will reflect His image.

Then, as the elect of God, beloved of Him, living holy lives, they will "put on" qualities of life that reflect their change of life direction. They will exhibit mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and forbearance toward one another. They will readily forgive wrongs done against them, in the spirit of Christ. These are not normal human qualities. They are not found in unregenerate man (see verses 7-9). They are qualities of character found only in those risen to new life in Christ, those whose attitudes and responses have been sanctified and redirected by the redeeming act of Christ. They stand in stark contrast to the expressions of the former life. (See Paul's comment to the Corinthian believers in 1 Corinthians 6:11.)

Paul says next that the overarching quality is to be that of love. As several versions state verse 14, "above [or over] all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." And then, and only then, can the peace of God rule in their (and our) hearts. Love must be the motivating factor

in all interpersonal relationships.

In the last two verses of our lesson, before Paul turns to instruction for specific individuals (verses 18 and following), he sets forth several principles for the corporate worship experience. Worship is to be centered on God's Word. That Word must be the basis for all teaching and admonishing within the body of believers. Singing is also a vital part of the worship of God. Hymns of praise and songs of instruction and exhortation all have their place in the worship of the gathered fellowship. Paul's admonition to "sing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" can only be done when the peace of God reigns in each individual heart and the love of God abounds between all believers.

Paul closes this section by stating that whatever is done, word or deed, must be done in the name of the Lord Jesus with thanks to God the Father through Him.

Total commitment to God and to one another is essential for a harmoniously functioning community of believers.

For thought and discussion

1. To set one's affection on heavenly things requires a conscious act of the will. What are some practical ways we can make this happen? (See 2 Corinthians 10:5b and verse 16 of our lesson text.)
2. What will help us to "put on" the Christian graces Paul mentions in this passage? (Don't overlook verses 2 and 16.)
3. Why do these Christian graces seem so difficult at times to flesh out in interpersonal experience? Discuss hindrances and helps to becoming a loving, caring Christian community.
4. Which of these graces seems most difficult for you to put on, and how do you plan to remedy your failure? Ponder.
5. What can you do to help your community of believers achieve harmony and order, both in living and worshiping together? Discuss.

Lesson emphasis: Applying the grace of God to all human relationships.

Key verse: 17

PAGE 10

MAY 23, 2010

True Christian Community

Philemon 8-18, 21

We have here in our study today a gem of an epistle. It is short, but carries many lessons in Christian living and relationships. It is the only one of Paul's letters written to a specific individual instead of a church group. You will want to read the entire epistle and some background to get the complete picture surrounding this brief, yet highly instructive letter. An understanding of the social environment in which this account takes place will also add significantly to your study and understanding of underlying issues.

Paul was a prisoner in Rome, but was allowed the freedom to write, preach, and receive visitors. It is evident that he used his time profitably (see Acts 28:30, 31 and Philippians 1:12, 13). We also have his four "prison epistles," letters to the churches at Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and this short one to Philemon, all written while in bonds.

The setting for this letter to Philemon is this: Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon of Colosse, had made his way to Rome and through divine orchestration had come into contact with Paul. That contact led to Onesimus' eventual salvation and subsequent service to Paul in the cause of the Gospel (verses 10, 11, and 13).

However, he was another man's servant and Paul did not feel comfortable retaining him without permission. There was also an ethical element involved. Onesimus had possibly stolen from Philemon, or at the least defrauded him of his rightful service (v. 18). Somehow this must now be made right in light of Onesimus' Christian commitment. So Paul was sending Onesimus back to Philemon, carrying this personal letter on which hung so much.

Paul makes no demands in this letter, rather, he entreats gently and

SWORD AND TRUMPET

diplomatically. He does not speak from apostolic authority, but in endearing terms as friend to friend. He pleads for Philemon to carefully assess the situation and to receive his repentant slave back as a brother in Christ; in fact, just as he would receive Paul himself should he be free to make a visit.

Paul does not minimize Onesimus' wrongdoing, but affirms that there has been a radical change in his life from unprofitable to profitable, the meaning of the name *Onesimus*. Paul gives him up reluctantly, wishing to retain his service in the work of the Gospel, but not willing to do so without Philemon's blessing. Obviously here was a young man with ability and capabilities. Some traditions suggest that years later he became bishop in the church at Ephesus.

In a bit of reverse psychology, Paul suggests that Philemon charge to his account whatever monetary damage Onesimus has caused him. But he then reminds him "how thou owest to me even thine own self." Apparently Paul had been instrumental in bringing Philemon to saving faith, a much greater value than any charges Onesimus could have incurred.

Paul must have known his man for he writes with the confidence that Philemon will do even more than he suggests. He also hopes, through his prayers, to be delivered from prison and make his way to Colosse.

There are many underlying lessons in this short letter. Hunt for them. And rejoice at the marvelous ways God works in the human experience.

For thought and discussion

1. We see the hand of God at work behind the scenes in this story. How have you seen Him work things out in your life which would be humanly impossible?
2. Note the equality which Christ brings to human relationships, so ably demonstrated in this account.
3. Some decry the fact that Paul did not openly speak out against slavery in this

letter. Or did he? If so, in what way? What implications does Christianity have regarding slavery? Discuss.

4. Ponder how Paul's mentoring of Onesimus helped to develop his potential and open up opportunities for future Christian service. Never doubt the transforming capabilities of God, nor the benefit we can be to one another in the Christian brotherhood in enabling others for service.
5. What to you is the most striking aspect of this account? Have your class share their observations. It should make for lively and instructive discussion.

Lesson emphasis: The leveling and binding influence of Christ upon those who accept Him as Saviour and Lord.

Key verse: 21

MAY 30, 2010

Combating Error in Christian Community

Jude 3-8, 19-21, 24, 25

We have here in Jude another brief epistle, but one packed with instruction and warning for the church. Not only was this warning valid in Jude's day, but necessary and instructive for the church in our day. The church of Jesus Christ is constantly under attack, both from without and, sadly, often from within. Jude saw this and proceeded in very forceful and explicit terms to warn the saints and condemn the teachers of error.

Jude, the half brother of Jesus, refers humbly to himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ. He who had formerly rejected Jesus now rises to defend His teaching and the system of religion He had initiated. Jude was a man of ability and insight. While proposing to write a treatise expounding on the "common salvation," the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," he was suddenly, and divinely, directed to write

encouragement and warning for those under attack by the insidious influence of false teachers (see question #1).

Jude is particularly alarmed that these evil men are inside the church, having crept in unawares. And while he is certain of their eventual condemnation and judgment, he is also keenly aware of their current potential for leading believers astray. He outlines in broad terms the thrust of their deceptive message—licentiousness (lust), and denial of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Jude goes on to cite three examples from the Old Testament Scriptures of God's intolerance of evil: His chosen people suffered for their deviation from His will. Disobedient angels were bound over for final judgment, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their wickedness. Let not anyone think that these present teachers of error will escape God's wrath. Their sins are described as the pollution of the flesh, rejection of authority, and slander, sins that parallel those in the examples cited from the Old Testament.

In the verses between our text verses, Jude further describes the character and tactics of these ungodly men. He again assures his readers of God's eventual judgment upon those who so pervert the truth of God and attempt to lead others astray (see Romans 1:18-32). Jude reminds his readers that they had been warned against such false teachers by the apostles. Deception was nothing new. They should not be surprised at what was happening in their midst.

Jude affirms (verse 19), that these who set themselves apart by their sensual conduct are devoid of the Spirit of God. They are wicked, debased, immoral, and subject to God's punishment. But he then gives words of encouragement and outlines a strategy for defending themselves

against the insidious influence of these spiritual perverts.

The antidote is to build themselves up in the faith, pray, keep themselves within God's love, and live in light of eternity. These are proactive strategies for arming oneself against the spurious teaching and influence of those whose false doctrine and sensual living deny Christ and His influence in their lives. Jude says beware of them, guard against them.

Jude closes his letter with a beautiful doxology of praise to the One and only true God whose power is able to keep them from stumbling into the trap of the errorists and "present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Amen!

For thought and discussion

1. The apparent heresy against which Jude warned was a syncretism of antinomianism and Gnosticism. Study their meaning. Are they still a threat today to "the faith once for all delivered to the saints"? Discuss their influence.
2. What are the best defenses against error creeping into the church and corrupting sound doctrine? Discuss.
3. One good way to delineate between truth and falsehood is to study God's dealings with people in the past (see 1 Corinthians 10:11).
4. Discuss practical ways we can build ourselves up in the faith, individually and corporately. Use verses 20 and 21 as a springboard for your discussion.
5. What does the latter part of verse 3 teach us about "the faith" and why it must be vigorously defended?

Lesson emphasis: The eternal significance of adhering strictly to the faith, and why and how it must be defended.

Key verses: 20 and 21 ■

Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings
bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

Earthquakes Continue in Haiti

According to the USGS, there have been 61 earthquakes of magnitude 4.5 or greater in Haiti since the big one on January 12. My cousin Ronald Overholt, who is CAM's warehouse supervisor in Haiti, writes, "We have been having these 4.7 [earthquakes] almost every morning and it ends up scaring all of us pretty bad each time each happens. Thankfully none of us have gotten hurt yet."

—Sources: US Geological Survey, E-mail from Ronald

* * * * *

Trash-Talking the Taliban During Firefights

It's a remarkable combination of psychological warfare, political roundtable and trash-talking. Afghan soldiers and Taliban fighters taunt each other, debate each other, and try to persuade each other almost daily over their radios, at times while even shooting at each other.

The foes chatter with each other over their Vietnam-era, two-way radio system. It's such an antiquated system that the Taliban and the Afghan forces share radio frequencies, and verbal barbs, as they try to kill or capture one another.

I asked Maj. Said Rahim Hakmal what they talk about. Politics, he said. "The Taliban will say things like why do you side with the Americans? Why do you sell

out your country? You love Obama more than Afghanistan."

Hakmal said the standard response goes something like, "The Americans are here to help our country function again. They don't want to stay. They want to help, then leave. You should help too."

Then the shooting starts.

—Excerpt from "Trash-Talking the Taliban During Firefights" (<http://j.mp/9WgAse>) from *ABC World News*

* * * * *

Goshen College Begins Playing National Anthem

Goshen College has broken a 116-year tradition of not playing or singing the national anthems at home games. Being a Mennonite school, they believe that the military nature of the song ("rockets red glare, bombs bursting in air") made it inappropriate to be played at a Mennonite college. They also believed it implied allegiance to country over allegiance to God.

Not anymore.

Goshen has a diverse student body, with 45% being non-Mennonite. Pressure from them and conservative talk radio hosts' listeners caused Goshen to make a compromise: they decided to play an instrumental version rather than having it sung.

—Source: *Associated Press*

* * * * *

Man Crashes Plane Into IRS Building

A man upset with the IRS committed suicide and homicide by crashing his single-engine plane into an IRS building in Austin, Texas. He killed one IRS agent and himself. He left a 3000-word suicide note online. The *LA Times* said it “included a litany of complaints about the tax authorities, organized religion, government bailouts and ‘sleazy’ accountants, and a life story that included a divorce, lost jobs, and struggling businesses.”

—Source: *Los Angeles Times*

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Pro-Life Ad During Super Bowl

Focus on the Family ran an ad during the Super Bowl with a striking pro-life message. Conservative Christian and Heisman Trophy-winning college quarterback Tim Tebow’s life story was featured. Tim was the fifth child and the doctors recommended to his mother that she abort because of medical complications. As a Christian, she refused. Tim went on to become a star quarterback.

Pro-choice groups were quite upset and tried to get ABC to pull the ad, which they refused to do.

49.5 million babies have been murdered in the U. S. since Roe v. Wade was decided in 1973. I saw a bumper sticker today that said, “Adolf Hitler made 6 million choices.” That pales in comparison to 49.5 million.

—Source: *Washington Post, National Right to Life*

* * * * *

Hamas Leader Assassinated in Dubai by Mossad?

Dubai police are claiming that the Mossad assassinated a Hamas leader in Dubai. They’ve published the pictures of 30 Jews captured on security cameras, whom they claim carried out the assassination. They’ve also released copies of

passports allegedly used by the assassins. If the Dubai police are correct, it would be a massive embarrassment for the Mossad to have their agents so thoroughly unmasked. However, some security consultants believe that the Dubai police are merely making stabs in the dark, given that two of the thirty assassins “escaped” to Iran. In any case, it took the Dubai police ten days after the Hamas leader died of induced heart attack to figure out that it was a murder.

A former CIA Field Officer from the Middle East writes an opinion piece (<http://j.mp/c2di2w>) in the *Wall Street Journal* that analyzes the assassination and opines that it is nearly impossible to carry out an assassination in the modern world without being identified. The assassins’ steps were traced via security cameras from the moment they landed in the airport, and many of them were identified by computer analysis of cell phone records.

The Times reports that the Mossad has experienced a massive influx of applications for employment since this hit.

—Source: *The Times of London, Wall Street Journal*

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Lone Voice Warns of Debt Threat to Fed

“The US must fix its growing debt problems or risk a new financial crisis,” Thomas Hoenig, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, warned on Tuesday, adding a mounting deficit could spur inflation.

“Mr. Hoenig said that rising debt was infringing on the central bank’s ability to fulfil its goals of maintaining price stability and long-term economic growth. ‘Stunning deficit projections were putting political pressure on the Fed to keep interest rates low, infringing on its independence at the risk of inflation,’ he said.

“Without preemptive action, the US

risks its next crisis,' Mr. Hoenig said in a speech at the Pew-Peterson Commission on Budget Reform.

He was the only Fed member who dissented at last month's meeting against language indicating that interest rates should remain near zero for an 'extended period.'

"On Tuesday he said that the worst option for the US was a scenario where the government 'knocks on the central bank's door' and asks it to print more money. Instead, the administration must find ways to cut spending and generate revenue. He called for a 'reallocation of resources' and noted that the process would be painful and politically inconvenient.

"The US budget deficit is projected to be \$8,000bn (£5,800bn, £5,000bn) in the next decade. Barack Obama, US President, recently lifted the government's borrowing authority to \$14,300bn.

—Excerpt from "Lone voice warns of debt threat to Fed" (<http://j.mp/cPOAho>) in *The Financial Times*

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UK Airport Scanners May Violate Laws-Rights Group

"The use of full-body scanners at British airports may breach human rights laws, the country's equality commission said on Tuesday, potentially undermining the latest weapon against terrorism.

"The new technology has been hurriedly introduced at London's Heathrow airport and Manchester airport in northern England after a botched attempt to bomb a U.S.-bound passenger aircraft from Amsterdam on Christmas Day.

"Nigerian suspect Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab is alleged to have boarded a U.S. aircraft on December 25 with explosives hidden undetected in his

underwear.

"The full-body scanners, which see through clothes to produce an image of the whole body, might have detected the explosives, experts have said."

—Excerpt from "UK airport scanners may violate laws-rights group" (<http://j.mp/d96zE2>) in *Reuters*

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Gun-Toting Boys From Brazil Rule Rio's "Corner of Fear"

"A boy steps boldly into the night traffic and waves a gun to bring the cars to a halt, clearing a path for a motorcycle which screeches into the intersection. Riding pillion is another boy, brandishing a machine gun.

"Later two teenagers, also riding pillion on motorbikes, flash their guns at other motorists; nearby, a boy can be seen taking aim with a rifle equipped with a telescopic sight. Other youths wander the street smoking crack.

"For residents, the junction between the busy Dom Helder Câmara and dos Democráticos, in North Rio de Janeiro, has become known as the Corner of Fear—and video footage of daily life there has shocked a nation already familiar with guns and violence.

"The latest images, captured by undercover journalists from the Rio tabloid *Extra*, have exposed the city's criminal youth culture . . .

"The age of the criminals—one pistol-toting boy is 12—is obvious cause for alarm, but so is the seeming impunity with which they act."

—Excerpt from "The gun-toting boys from Brazil who rule Rio's 'Corner of Fear'" (<http://j.mp/9GRHJG>) in *The Times* of London

* * * * *

Feedback: hansmast@hansmast.com

Why worry when you can pray?

Forgiveness

by Lester Coblentz

What goes through our minds when we think of forgiveness? The dictionary says forgiveness is: to release a debt or to pardon a wrong someone has done to us.

Forgiveness is a pertinent topic for the times in which we are living. There are so many people we need to forgive. We find that the inability or the unwillingness to forgive has become an accepted part of our society. We are poisoned with grudges, hatred, resentments, anger, and bitterness when we harbor hurts in our hearts. Past offenses and various hurts (real or imagined) impair our potential for spiritual growth. A person current with the news can conclude that many people are hostile and angry, and will go to great extremes to take revenge. The answer to our dilemma is forgiveness; both received from God and granted to those that wronged us.

There are two aspects of forgiveness that I would like to look at. They are the forgiveness we receive from God, and the forgiveness we grant to others.

When we are forgiven by God we expect not only the transgression to be forgiven, but also that a healthy relationship be established with Him. Regardless of how sinful we may have been in the past or how much we may have been against God, we expect to be loved, helped, encouraged, fed, kept, and guided by Him. We do not expect the slightest blemish on our record; rather the opposite.

As we pray for forgiveness according to the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3), we set our own standard for it. We ask to be forgiven to the same degree that we forgive those who have sinned against us. "Forgive us our debtors as we

forgive our debtors." This would indicate that we use the same standard in forgiving others as God does to us. Subconsciously we have a very strict and exact accounting standard for those that may have offended us. On the one hand, we expect to be fully forgiven with no strings attached. On the other hand, we have a different value system in place for those we are to forgive. Are we comfortable with God using the same standard of forgiveness with us as we extend to others?

When we forgive someone, we often say, "I forgive him, but . . ." or "I'll forgive her when . . ." This indicates that our forgiveness toward a personal offense is contingent on a list of conditions that we deem necessary to complete the process. These conditions could include: "Until he proves himself"; "until she is really sorry"; "when he makes restitution"; or, "when they show some more maturity." Do you see what is going on here? We have a completely different standard for people we are to forgive than God had when He forgave us. Too often, the forgiveness we extend to others is based on certain conditions or is delayed. Is this true forgiveness?

When we think of the forgiveness we receive from God, we have the assurance that it is whole and complete. We relish the fact that our sins and shortcomings are removed as far as the east is from the west. Our slate is clean. We are as pure as the freshly fallen snow. Let's suppose that God would say one of the following to us: "I'll forgive you, but we can't be friends anymore"; "I'll forgive when you prove to me that you are truly sorry"; or,

(continued on page 18)



Counseling From the Word

Is What We Believe Important?

by James Rudy Gray

When a troubled person sits in your office and the process of counseling gets underway, is what they believe important? Is what you as a counselor believe important?

I think that what we as counselors believe is more than important--it is essential! By the same measure, what our counselee believes is critically important to their adjustment and well-being.

Behavior always arises from something, but what? Are we simply the products of our environments or are we genetically predisposed to certain types of behaviors? Could it be that what we believe (right or wrong) influences more of our behavioral choices than we ever thought?

From a Christian perspective, what a person believes is fundamental. It is basic to how we will live our lives. Since we live in an age when truth itself has become a concept that postmoderns cannot seem to define, we are left with the residual effects from that kind of belief system.

For example, we know from the research that is available that if a person believes that sexual immorality is not wrong they are much more likely to engage in sexual immorality. Beliefs contribute greatly to the development of values. Values, in turn, lead a person to adopt a certain attitude and manifest specific behaviors.

According to Josh McDowell, many studies reveal that youth who do not have

a moral and Biblical belief system are:

*36% more likely to lie to a friend.

*48% more likely to cheat on an exam.

*200% more likely to steal.

*200% more likely to physically hurt someone.

*300% more likely to use illegal drugs.

*600% more likely to attempt suicide.

McDowell goes on to point out that while this is "disturbing, it should not be surprising." Most of our youth today do not have a Christian worldview. This ungodly belief system is then evidenced in so many destructive and self-destructive behaviors.

Christians who study the Word of God know there are moral absolutes. There is right and wrong, truth and error. But what about those who have little or no understanding of God's truth? Seventy percent of today's young people do not believe in absolute truth. That kind of belief system translates into language that sounds something like this. "Well, that [particular behavior] may be wrong for me but I am not you."

This is the type of situation we are facing and will continue to face as Christian counselors. Even people in our churches are often woefully under-equipped when it comes to an understanding of the basic doctrines of truth found in Scripture.

How can we help people who want Christian counseling but do not believe the basic

tenets of the Christian faith? According to George Barna, 58% of today's teenagers believe that all religious faiths teach equally valid truth.

Pragmatism is the ruling philosophy of the day for most people and for the overwhelming majority of young people. It is the concept that what works for me right now is what is best for me right now. That thinking, of course, is flawed and destined to lead a person into both disappointment and difficulty.

What can we do? We can at least encourage believing parents to be serious about their own professed faith and work diligently to ingrain the truth of God into their children's lives. What can we do in the counseling room? Connect with the person on a caring level; share God's truth with that person in practical ways, showing them that God's law and a sense of right and wrong are "built-in" to every heart (Romans 2:14-16); demonstrate the truths of God in your own life as you counsel and live.

God is a great God. His grace has overcome more problems than we can begin to imagine. He is able. Our counseling must not move in a fanatical direction that produces little understanding but in a systematic flow that embraces God's truth and applies it practically to this world today. ■

—Reprinted from *Pulpit Helps*, Chattanooga, TN. AMG Publishers.

FORGIVENESS . . . cont'd from p. 16

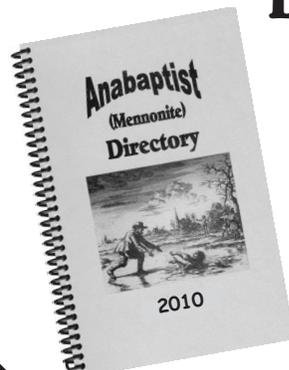
"I'll forgive you after you live a more consistent lifestyle." Would you feel forgiven? The answer is a resounding "NO!"

In Matthew 18 we have the account of a servant being put into debtors' prison because he was not willing to forgive a small debt after he was forgiven an enormous debt. There are many people that find themselves in debtors' prison today. The irony about their dilemma is that they are the ones that locked themselves in this prison. They are in prison as a result of not forgiving. Each person in debtors' prison has the key that would release him from bitterness, resentment, spite, anger, revenge (along with a host of other poisonous emotions). The key I am referring to, which each one has because of what Christ did on the cross, is forgiveness.

People will try other methods (or keys) to free themselves from this debtors' prison. People's faulty attempts are denial, blame, pietism (and a number of others). We need to keep in mind that even though we have the key of forgiveness to set us free, it is God that forgives sins. We need to have faith in the finished work of the cross. Let's use the key of forgiveness and be released from this prison. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Deeper Life Ministries Newsletter*, January/February 2010.

Anabaptist (Mennonite) Directory 2010



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Sermon of the Month



Each month we will feature a Biblical sermon in this column. We would like to emphasize expository preaching and ask our readers to submit good expository sermons for consideration. Please send typewritten copies by “snail mail” or E-mail to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; swandtrump@verizon.net.

Professing Christians, Awake!

by Asahel Nettleton, 1783-1844

(a leading evangelist in the Second Great Awakening)

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep”
(Romans 13:11).

The text is addressed to Christians. The language is borrowed from natural sleep in which a person is in a great measure insensible to the objects and to what is passing around him, but life remains in the body. And thus it is when there is much insensibility to divine things among Christians—they sleep, but life remains in the soul. Language similar is often addressed to sinners, but then the image is borrowed from the dead who sleep in the dust. Hence the exhortation: “Awake, you that sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.”

The wise and the foolish virgins both went forth to meet the bridegroom—and while he tarried they all slumbered and slept. But between the two mark the difference. The one has oil in her vessel, but the other has none. One has life, but the other is dead. Our text then is addressed to the Christian who was dead, but is alive again. To the Christian who is asleep and again bears the image of death. And now it is high time to awake out of sleep.

It is proposed:

- I. To inquire when the Christian may be said to sleep.
- II. To offer motives which ought to induce him to awake.

I. When does the Christian sleep?

1. In general he desires his own ease, and begins to consult that, when it comes in competition with duty. Religion is the great business of his life. It imposes on him many duties which are painful and crossing to corrupt nature. Thus the fraternal admonition—“Exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. You shall in any way rebuke your neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him”—is the command of God. To neglect this and similar duties for fear of incurring reproach is to indulge in spiritual sloth. You may sit down and rest quietly if you will not disturb your fellow sinners around you with a sight of their sin and danger. This requires no effort. And here thousands resign themselves to rest. Individuals or a church may

close their eyes on the conduct of an offender and be silent, and this awful indifference to his soul assumes the name of charity, without lifting a finger to *restore such a one in the spirit of meekness*. The slothful servant will ever consult his own ease by sinful contrivance to shun duty.

2. As one in sleep is insensible of the objects and to what is passing around him, so in a measure is it sometimes with the Christian. Though not wholly lost to a sense of divine things, yet they make but a feeble or slight impression on his soul. In this frame they go to the house of God, and no wonder they soon forget what they have never felt. Once they saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but now they walk in darkness. Once they had a feeling sense of the worth of souls and could weep over perishing sinners around them—"I beheld the transgressors and was grieved"—but now they can endure the sight almost without emotion.

This unhappy state of mind is further evident from their conversation. Once they seemed to be dead to this world—they spoke often one to another—their conversation was in Heaven. But now their attention is all engrossed with the world; they converse with ease and cheerfulness about the trifles of time, but on the great things of eternity have little or nothing to say. Or perhaps they speak on these high and heavenly themes, but it is in a dull and lifeless manner. They seem to glance over the mind like trifles. They appear not to take an immediate interest in the subject. They feel not the impressive weight of eternal realities. When this is the case, they talk like a person in sleep. He knows not what he says.

3. Another mark of this unhappy state of mind is a reluctance to secret prayer, which very properly has been styled the breath of the Christian. Has anyone continued long without the spirit of prayer, it is a sign that he is asleep. And if not shortly awaked from this breathless state, we shall be compelled to believe that he is dead. How far these and similar remarks apply to professing Christians present, you will understand me, is

best known to themselves. One thing is certain. Sure I am it is not my business to cry peace in the ears of any who are asleep.

But I proceed.

II. What motives ought to induce them to awake?

First, consider "the time." My brethren, it is Gospel time. Gospel light is risen upon us. And those who do not open their eyes on the glory of this light must remain in eternal darkness and despair. "For if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

The light of Heaven is shining upon us. And can you sleep? "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." It is no time to sleep. It is the day that we shall ever witness: the day of salvation. The business of this day will not suffer you to sleep. It calls on you loudly to awake. Think, my brethren, have you nothing to do for yourselves? Have you no sins to repent of, no evil propensities to mortify? Are your evidences of grace bright enough? Do you love God with all your hearts, and are you perfectly conformed to His holy law? In short, are you willing to die as you are? If you have anything to do for yourselves, it is high time to awake out of sleep. "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

Have you nothing to do for your brethren? Is no brother or sister wandering from the path of duty? Go and in a feeling, friendly manner tell him his fault between him and you alone. Why hesitate? Delay not. Duty calls. God commands, and love to his soul demands that you go without delay. "If he shall hear you, you have gained your brother."

Parents! Where are your children? Are they all brought securely within the ark of safety? Doubtless you pray with them and for them. But this is not all your duty. Have you ever taught them that they are sinners, that they must be born again, and are you urging them to remember their Creator now

in the days of their youth? Were you this day called to part with one of your children, could you rest satisfied that you had done your duty? Have you not one word more of instruction, counsel, or warning for your children before you meet them at the bar of God? If so, then it is high time that parents awake to a sense of their duty: that you set your houses in order and prepare for death.

Again, it is high time to awake because others are up and active about us. The men of this world shame us by their conduct. They rise up early and sit up late. They plan and execute. Labor, fatigue, and hardship are nothing to them if they can but collect a little of this world together before they leave it. They are laying up treasures on earth, which the moth and rust will soon corrupt. And shall you not be as earnest to lay up for yourselves a more enduring substance—a treasure in the heavens? They are laboring for that meat which perishes, but you are called to labor for that which endures unto everlasting life. Do you not feel reproved by their conduct, to think that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light?

Again, my brethren, you are on the field of battle. And it is high time to awake, for the enemy is up and active about us. The prince of darkness with all the several ranks of evil angels is your enemy. The malice of their legions is directed against the Redeemer's kingdom in this world. War is declared with all saints. And the legions of Hell have gone up upon the breadth of the earth. He is already in possession of the hearts of all wicked men. They are his servants. The devil is styled the "prince of this world, the ruler of the darkness of this world; this is the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." While you sleep, these are all sowing tares and destroying about us. Says the Captain of your salvation, "He that is not with me is against me; he that gathers not with me scatters abroad."

Observe: it is not a feeble foe you have to contend with. You are called to wrestle, not merely with flesh and blood, but before the battle is won you will have to grapple and

contend with angelic powers, with principalities and powers. Observe: your enemy is crafty. Snares and temptations are laid thick around you, and unless you are wakeful you will certainly be ignorant of his devices. That moment when you let down your watch, the enemy began to come in upon you like a flood. While you slept, the Philistines were upon you. And I would come to blow the trumpet and sound the alarm. Awake, you that sleep. Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Think not to find a bed of sloth in the field of battle. "Awake and put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Therefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you may be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked." Awake, then, for your enemies are many, powerful, and crafty.

Another reason why you should awake is that sinners are perishing around you. While you sleep, your example will contribute much to their destruction. Yes, while you sleep the world may now be stumbling over you down to destruction. Little does that ungodly professor of religion think what a train of immortal souls may be following him down to Hell. It is a fact not to be concealed that one ungodly professor of religion may do more to prevent the conversion of sinners than many infidels. I know it is most unreasonable that mankind should suffer themselves to be thus forever ruined. It can surely be no consolation to the sinner in Hell that he was led there by a hypocrite.

Brethren, is Heaven and Hell a fable? If so, then let us treat them as such. Or are they eternal realities? Why, then, this

silence, this seeming indifference to the souls of men that your fellow sinners should obtain the one and escape the other? Do you verily believe that within a few days you shall be in Heaven, singing the song of redeeming love—or in Hell with devils and damned spirits forever and ever? Have you ever described your own danger and fled for refuge from the wrath to come, and do you feel no concern for the souls of men? Or are there no sinners in this place? Have they all become righteous? Do all profess to know the Lord from the least to the greatest? Is there no prayerless family in this place, on whom God has declared He will pour out His fury? No prayerless youth to whom God has said, “I will cast you off forever”?

My brethren, if there is one impenitent sinner among us who is in danger of going into that place of eternal torment, can you sleep? One sinner in this house! One inhabitant of Hell! Solemn thought! One soul present that will be lost forever. Who can it be? Could you bear to hear the name? Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning? Have you not reason to believe that many are now living “without hope and without God in the world”? “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in thereat, because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.”

Wherever God designs to pour out His Spirit and to call up the attention of sinners to divine things, He will be inquired of by His children to do it for them. This He has taught us in His Word and often in the language of His providence. It is high time for you to awake out of sleep; for others are awake—sinners at a distance are alarmed—and hundreds are now flocking to Christ. And can you rest? Are there not more souls here to be saved or lost forever? Are they not as precious as ever? And is He not a prayer-hearing God? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy clean gone forever? And will He be favorable no more? No, my brethren, “the Lord’s hand is not short-

ened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear.” Come, then, “you that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; if you speak not to warn the wicked, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at your hand.”

Brethren, how is your zeal for the salvation of souls compared with that of the Son of God? “He beheld the city and wept over it—O Jerusalem, Jerusalem.”

Did Christ o’er sinners weep?
And shall our tears be dry?

How is your zeal compared with that of Paul? “I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.” There is a dreadful storm of divine wrath coming upon the world of the ungodly. It is high time to awake out of sleep, for their damnation slumbers not.

Again, consider how long you have slept and you will see that it is high time to awake. How many months—and of some may we ask, how many years—have you slept in God’s vineyard? And still you continue on sleeping away the day of salvation. Let me tell you that your sleep is awfully dangerous. If not shortly awakened, God in anger will say: “Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see.”

Further, consider what time of day it is with you and you will see it is *high time to awake*. How long has your sun been up? Your best season is already gone. With some, I perceive, the sun has already passed its meridian. Yes, it is now hastening its rapid descent. Aged fathers, your sun is now casting its last beams upon the mountains. “Yet a little while is the light with you. Work while it is day; the night comes when no man can work.” If then you have any work to do, any word to leave for your brethren, or your children, they are now waiting to hear. Delay not, for while I am speaking night is coming on. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor

wisdom in the grave, whither you go.”

The believer ought to awake and take a view of the glorious prospect that lies just before him. Come, then, you mourning pilgrim, you who have long traversed the wilderness asking the way to Zion, you who have long labored and prayed and groaned to be delivered from the bondage of sin, your struggles for eternal life shall have an end. “Look up—and lift up your head, for behold, your redemption draws nigh. It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.” Nearer than it was last year. Nearer than it was the last Sabbath—nearer than ever, on all the wings of time it flies. This night you may wake up amid the song of angels—and a crown of glory, of eternal life, may be placed on your head.

Short is the passage, short the space
Between my home and me;
There, there behold the radiant place—
How near the mansions be!

Awake then and behold the glorious dawn of a bright new day, “Where your sun shall no more go down: neither shall your moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.”

Finally, it is high time to awake, for all who do not awake in time will suddenly awake in Hell. There is great danger of being deceived and thus only dreaming of Heaven. The Christian can never sleep sound, but is always disturbed. I sleep, says the church, but my heart wakes. He cannot sleep long. He will soon be affrighted and wake up awfully alarmed. But others sleep soundly. They are at ease in Zion. They neither weep for their sins nor rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Their hope of Heaven is a pleasant dream which cannot be broken. And here they sink down into a deep sleep.

The Christian church is a net which gathers every kind. Ten virgins professed to be followers of Christ. Of this number, five only were real Christians. Many are called, but few are chosen. Many will go to the bar of God with hopes no better than the spider’s web. Many who now commune

together on earth will never meet in Heaven. Many who now appear to us to be real Christians will, no doubt to our surprise, be found on the left hand of Christ.

The sinner having professed religion with a false hope can hardly be driven to give it up. “The hope of the hypocrite is like the giving up of the ghost. What mean you, O sleeper!” If you will not now awake, by the worth of your soul, I entreat you to fling away your hope of Heaven. “For there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrown out. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.”

Better fling away your hope and conclude you are lost than to sleep any longer, for then will you awake in earnest to inquire, “What must I do to be saved? Watch, therefore, for you know not when the master of the house comes, lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. At midnight the cry will be made, Behold, the bridegroom comes.” Then will there be great confusion, for thousands will be deceived. “Let him that thinks he stands take heed.”

“These things says he that has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If, therefore, you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you.”

And now it is time—it is high time to awake out of sleep, because many will be forced to awake when suddenly they shall lift up their eyes in Hell, being in torment. ■

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Creation vs. Evolution— *A Summary*

by Wesley Hooley

Charles Darwin observed many variations WITHIN species, as with the finches, but noted that the fossil record was against his theory of evolution from simple forms of life to more complex, saying, “Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated chain, and this perhaps is the most obvious and serious objection that can be urged against the theory.” And, “Why, if species descended from other species by fine gradations, is not all nature in confusion, instead of being, as we see them, in species well defined?” And, “Why do we not everywhere see innumerable transitory forms? Why do not we find them embedded in countless numbers in the crust of the earth?”

After hunting for over 140 years, leading paleontologists admit they cannot produce any valid examples of transitions (evolutions). Natural selection only selects the best in the various “kinds” of life, but never changes them into other “kinds,” etc. Leading evolutionist Stephen Gould and Niles Eldridge of the American Museum of Natural History have said that it has long been a trade secret of paleontologists that intermediate forms do not exist. Gould also said that our ability to classify both living and fossil species distinctly, and using the same criteria, “fits splendidly the creationists’ tenets.” And “I regard the failure to find a clear ‘vector of progress’ in life’s history as the most puzzling fact of the fossil record—we have sought to impose a pattern that we hoped to find on a world that does not really display it.” (But those kinds of comments are not made known to the public or in the

schoolbooks.) So Gould proposed “punctuated equilibrium” (quantum jumps), but other evolutionists say that anyone proposing that ought to be laughed off the intellectual stage.

So the bottom line is that evolution is based on false assumptions, and the fossil record is against it. But public schoolbooks present it as fact, and still present evolutionary concepts that have been abandoned by leading experts, including evolutionists, years ago.

The accusation constantly is that scientific creationism is only religious. Biblical creationism is, of course, the fact of Creation interwoven throughout the Bible, but scientific creationism concerns only the scientific facts and evidences, such as:

- the fossil record shows an abrupt appearance of creatures fully formed basically as now living, with no transitions from one kind to another;
- mutations are mistakes in the genes and delete information from the genetic code, cause birth defects and many diseases, and never bring about new forms of life;
- polonium halos in the granites of the earth’s crust indicate the rock came into existence almost instantly in the solid form, because polonium has a half-life of only minutes and the halos would have been obliterated if in the molten state;
- helium remaining in the granites indicate they could not be millions of years old;
- the laws of bio-genesis—everything only reproduces after its own kind, each cell in all life requires a number of infinitely complex parts to come into existence at the same time (Irreducible Complexity);

•the so-called geological column is only hypothetical and never appears complete in that order anywhere in the world, and often with “older” strata on top of “younger” for miles, with a very thin layer between them refuting over-thrusting.

During the British industrial revolution, the moths were supposed to be one of the best examples of evolution by natural selection by supposedly changing color when the pollution darkened the trees. But there were both light and dark moths before, and after, the industrial revolution, and the birds naturally selected and ate more of the ones they could see best, so naturally those surviving multiplied more. No evolution at all, only different proportions of light and dark moths.

The Nebraska Man was used to try to discredit creationists around the time of the Scopes trial, at the objection of William Jennings Bryan for the scanty evidence. Imaginary drawings were made of him and even his “family,” but it was based on only a tooth, which later turned out to be from a pig. All the “Ape-Men” turned out to be hoaxes or invalid. But that information, as well as many other such things, is kept from the public schools, and they still deceive the students with a lineup of “Ape-Men.” The movie “Inherit the Wind” greatly twisted and misrepresented the Scopes trial, making creationists look stupid; it was, and still is, shown in public schools.

That there are similar designs in different species (Homology) proves nothing for evolution. God used similar designs in different creatures, just as people build houses using designs similar as used in barns, etc. Intelligent Design is totally evident in all creation. Our brains are hundreds of times more complex than all the supercomputers, and no one would argue that computers did not require intelligent people to design and build them. Yet some use their brains to say that it all came about by chance. The arguments of “vestigial” organs and “Embryonic Recapitula-

tion” have long been discredited by experts, including evolutionists. But such things are still presented as facts in some schools.

As to religion, there are many religions based on evolution. But if the scientific facts were taught, the students could see for themselves what they harmonize with in religion—that they do indeed harmonize and agree with the Bible, and that evolution is against the basic scientific laws. Nothing can create itself and anything left to itself deteriorates from order to disorder.

The Bible speaks of the “circle” (arch, vault) of the earth, never that it is flat. It makes many statements that scientists are finding were true all along. There are hundreds of books, videos, and literature that show the scientific facts for Creation, but they are generally banned from public schools and libraries. The truth is, confirmed by a growing number of highly educated scientists, that evolution is totally fallacious and unscientific. Over a thousand scientists belong to creationist organizations.

St. Luke’s Gospel lists the genealogy of Jesus back to “Adam, who was the son of God.” In Genesis 5 and 11 it gives the number of years each lived when their sons were born, from Adam down to Abraham, and historical dates are known on down to the birth of Jesus Christ, totaling around 4000 years, and every time we write the date we acknowledge the number of years since Christ. The Bible is the most documented book ever written, substantiates itself by the harmony of all the many different writings over a span of thousands of years, and there are no older records.

Consider the *infinite wonder of intelligent design* and *complexity* in all nature. It is reported that there are billions of chemical reactions in each cell in our bodies every second, such as in your eyes as you read this and transmit it to your infinitely complex brain; and the same in the process of hearing, thinking, speaking, and all processes in life. As Darwin said,

“To suppose that the eye, with all its inimitable contrivances, could have come about by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree”; does not all this show that nothing could be more absurd than the theory of evolution?

Sir Fred Hoyle of Cambridge University said, among many such things, “The notion that the operating program of a living cell could be arrived at by chance in a primordial soup on Earth is evidently nonsense of the highest order.” Anything 1/100 as obvious in any other field would have discarded evolution long ago as someone’s silly dream. Where there is no evidence that it ever did happen, it is totally unreasonable that it be taught exclusively to our children. It causes many to lose their faith in God. How could all the millions of different kinds of plant and animal life possibly exist through a long process, and reproduce before they are fully formed; before the infinitely wonderful process of reproduction by all the ways of pollinization, seeds, germination, insemination, developing in the womb, birth, breastfeeding, food digestion, distribution of nutrients in the bloodstream for growth and energy, etc. etc. ad infinitum, is complete? Our hearts beating continually, every breath we take transferring the oxygen to the blood and exhaling the carbon

dioxide, and thousands of other things we take for granted all the time, are infinitely complex. That all demands an Intelligent Designer to create everything into existence, and in a short period of time as Genesis records, as all nature could not long exist without a balanced environment of plant and animal life.

As authorities point out, a great many of the problems the world is now facing can be laid at the door of the belief that has been dogmatically fed into the minds of our children, and the public in general, that we are just a product of chance, just animals; which then causes many to believe that there are no absolutes, no right or wrong, and many are acting accordingly.

The early scientists that brought in our scientific method and headed up the various scientific fields were creationists. The great Sir Isaac Newton wrote many papers on both theology and science. True science and true religion fit like hands in gloves. The theory of evolution was propagated mostly by those who did not want to believe in God. Hitler and Marx were inspired by it. But as the Bible says, there shall be false teachers among you bringing in damnable heresies; and that there will be no excuse because God’s existence and eternal power are clearly seen by the things He has created. And the Bible shows the way to eternal life in Heaven. ■



“Provoke Not Your Children to Wrath” . . . cont’d.

church-related matters, they would win a very devoted loyalty. This is a mistake. Children and youth do not have the emotional capacity to deal with adult conflicts. They may be confused, and feel obligated to take sides, but lack the judgment needed. Sometimes they may turn against their parents, and other times they may unwisely defend the parents’ viewpoints, correct or otherwise.

Father must avoid the attitude that he and his wife are the only adults who understand their children. Since no one else

understands their children, he rejects the authority of other adults over them. Children with this type of “protection” will resist any correction coming from the school or church. And, sadly, they eventually turn against their parents as well.

Fathers, we are responsible to guide our homes with impartial love, fairness and consistency, right priorities, and sound discernment. The consequences are eternal. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Home Horizons*, August 2009.

“Provoke Not Your Children to Wrath”

by Clair R. Weaver

The command “provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4) is directed to fathers. A similar command is “provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged” (Colossians 3:21). As fathers, we can evoke or incite anger in our children.

Partiality toward children may provoke them to wrath. A father once commented, “I have always been taught that I should treat my children alike, but how shall I do this if my children are not alike?” Since children do not all respond the same, and do not have the same abilities or potential, parents cannot always treat them alike. But parents can and must love all their children alike, and provide equal parental protection that produces a sense of belonging in each child. Inequalities in these basic areas will lead to feelings of rejection, envy of siblings, and hurt and anger directed at Father. Feeling betrayed by someone they trust most can even cause children to be disillusioned with their parents’ faith.

Another primary cause of anger in children is inconsistency in fathers. Human nature would cause Father to mete out discipline in proportion to his irritation. This results in a much more severe punishment for the same offense one time than at other times. Consistent, fair discipline brings rest rather than wrath. Children will also observe whether their father expects as much of himself as he

expects of them. Children can sense when Father has a sincere desire to live by his own standards and expects a little more of himself than he requires of others. They will respond with respect for his standards and his correction. However, when this is otherwise, children may develop a disdain for his convictions, and contempt for him as a father. When provoked, children often feel justified to react in disrespect and rebellion. They may disdain the convictions and correction of their parents to the extent that they purposely do

things to hurt them. But whenever a person deliberately tries to hurt another, he always hurts himself even more.

Fathers should heed the warning to “not offend one of these little ones,” and should consider its serious consequences.

A father who allows possessions to control him and rob time from his family may provoke his children to wrath. Children may think that they are not as important to Father as his money and business pursuits. A father who thinks he can win loyalty

by giving gifts to his children will soon discover that things do not make children happy or bring endearment. The more things a child has, the less he will appreciate them. The child will also believe that even more is owed to him.

Another pitfall is to “tell them everything.” Some church leaders have fallen into this trap. They think if they share with their sons confidential information about

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Children can sense when Father has a sincere desire to live by his own standards and expects a little more of himself than he requires of others.



Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

“... singing with understanding!”

Breathe on Me, Breath of God



Hatch/Jackson

Lyrics: An important part of understanding any hymn is knowing to whom it is addressed. This may seem too obvious to be worth mentioning, but it is surprising how we sing hymns regularly without thinking specifically of the audience. It really does make a difference how we sing if the hymn is a prayer to God or a song of encouragement and exhortation directed at our fellow-worshippers.

So, who or what actually is this “Breath of God” that is the audience of this hymn? It seems to harken back to one of Jesus’ first appearances to His disciples following the Resurrection. The Apostle John records that Jesus “breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). This method of bestowing the Holy Spirit on the disciples is interesting, because the Greek (as well as Hebrew) word used for “Spirit” can also be translated “breath” or “wind.” The term usually translated as “Holy Spirit” (sometimes “Holy Ghost,” KJV) could be literally translated “Holy Breath” (in the sense of the “breath of life” that separates a corpse from a living being). So it seems clear that the poet is using this play on the Greek “pneuma” to address the Holy Spirit, and request His work in various aspects of life.

Not only does this hymn serve as a prayer of invitation to the Holy Spirit, it is also a good instruction of the type of work the Holy Spirit actually does in the lives of those He

breathes on. The first thing He does is to bring new life. Before the Spirit breathed the breath of new life into us, we were spiritually dead, thinking and feeling only selfish thoughts and desires. The life that the Spirit brings enables us (progressively) to love the way God does, and do His will. Secondly, the work of the Spirit is to purify our hearts. Not only do we need to love like God and do what He would, our whole being needs to be so in tune with His desires that we want what He wants in everything. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit and He is working in us, we can be assured that we have the eternal life that the last verse speaks of.

Music: Although Robert Jackson originally composed this tune for a different hymn (“O Perfect Life of Love” by Henry Baker),¹ its beautiful simplicity is a perfect fit for this simple prayer. The most striking feature of this tune that sets it apart from all the other short-meter tunes is the opening three measures that accompany the title phrase, “Breathe on me, Breath of God.” The tenor seems to be the important part of this phrase, and its “descending from the heavens” over the static alto and bass parts give the distinct feeling of something coming down over us, as opposed to our going out after it. This is indeed the way God sends His Spirit, and the music describes it very well. ■

1. www.hymnary.org

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

EDWIN HATCH, 1878

TRENTHAM S.M.

ROBERT JACKSON, 1688

1 Breathe on me, Breath of God, Fill me with life a - new, That I may
2 Breathe on me, Breath of God, Un - til my heart is pure; Un - til with
3 Breathe on me, Breath of God, Till I am whol - ly Thine; Un - til this
4 Breathe on me, Breath of God, So shall I nev - er die, But live with

love what Thou dost love, And do what Thou wouldst do.
Thee I will one will, To do and to en - dure.
earth - ly part of me Glows with Thy fire di - vine.
Thee the per - fect life Of Thine e - ter - ni - ty. A - men.

The Problem of Tongue Control

by Arlin Weaver

James, in his epistle, presents the dilemma of tongue control. *"The tongue can no man tame,"* he writes in James 3:8. Yet, for any man that *"bridleth not his tongue,"* his *"religion is vain"* (James 1:26). And there is the problem—the tongue cannot be controlled, yet religion is worthless as long as the tongue is not controlled.

Our tongues, or our words, have tremendous potential for trouble. As James suggests, the tongue is a fire—a fire lit by Hell—and is unrestrainable, depraved, and full of death-bearing venom.

And it is impossible to tame.

Many people, Christians included, are satisfied with attempts to tame this deadly venom. "Be careful of your words," we remind each other, and "watch what you say."

Mere tongue control, however, easily becomes the path to hypocrisy, and the bet-

ter we get at controlling our tongues, the less honesty crosses our lips. In religious worship our words can ooze with piety; yet in relating to those we know best our words bristle with bitterness. *"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh"* (James 3:10-12).

Mere attempts at tongue control will never adequately control this unruly member. Instead, we must *deal with the source*, that is, the heart must be made sweet so that the words will be sweet.

Some measure of tongue control, or carefulness in speaking, will always be in order. But we must be honest enough to understand

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The Ultimate Reason for God's Anger and Wrath

by Renald E. Showers

The ultimate reason for God's anger and wrath cannot be known and understood apart from the fact that, in eternity past, God determined to have a Kingdom over which He could rule as sovereign King. God created the universe, including "the heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them" as the realm of His Kingdom (Exodus 20:11). He also created angels and people to serve Him as subjects (Genesis 1:26, 27; Psalm 148:2-5; Colossians 1:16).

In fact, the title *King* is assigned to God 41 times in the Hebrew Old Testament.¹

God's Personal Assertion of Sovereignty as King

God asserted His sovereignty as King over His Kingdom through several claims.

King Over Angels. God declared that, as "the LORD of hosts," He is "a great King" (Malachi 1:14). The word *hosts* refers to the host of angels in God's Heaven. As a result of Isaiah's heavenly vision of "the Lord sitting upon a throne" in the presence of angelic seraphim, Isaiah exclaimed, "Mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:1, 5). King David wrote:

*"The LORD hath prepared his throne
in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth
over all. Bless the LORD, ye his angels,
that excel in strength, that do his com-
mandments, hearkening unto the voice
of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his
hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his
pleasure" (Psalm 103:19-21).*

A psalmist exhorted, "Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts!" (148:2). Micaiah said, "I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of

heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left" (1 Kings 22:19). The Levites declared, "Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, . . . and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Nehemiah 9:6).

Luke recorded, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13, 14). These passages prompt the conclusion that, as "the LORD of hosts," God is "a great King" of the angels.

King Over Nations. God claimed, "I am a great King, . . . and my name is dreadful among the heathen" (Malachi 1:14). He thereby indicated He has sovereign rule over the nations of the world.

He asserted sovereign rule over Babylon, declaring,

*"And I will make drunk her princes,
and her wise men, her captains, and
her rulers, and her mighty men: and
they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and
not wake, saith the King, whose name
is the LORD of hosts" (Jeremiah 51:57).*

He asserted sovereign rule over Moab: "Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts" (48:15).

He asserted sovereign rule over Egypt, warning,

*"As I live, saith the King, whose
name is the LORD of hosts, . . . O thou
daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish
thyself to go into captivity: for Noph
shall be waste and desolate without an
inhabitant. The daughter of Egypt*

shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north. The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him” (46:18, 19, 24, 25).

King Over Israel. God declared, “I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King” (Isaiah 43:15), and “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God” (44:6). He thereby asserted He has sovereign rule over the nation of Israel.

Assertions of God’s Sovereignty as King Over Other Parties

The Bible records many human expressions of God’s sovereign kingship. For example, after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon humbled himself before God and was released from the mental illness God had inflicted on him because of his boastful pride, he wrote the following:

“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (Daniel 4:34, 35, 37).

The Prophet Jeremiah asserted,

“Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men

of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion” (Jeremiah 10:7, 10-12).

The author of Psalm 10:16 stated, “The LORD is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.” A psalmist wrote, “For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. For God is the King of all the earth: . . . God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness” (47:2, 7, 8).

Another psalmist asserted, “For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods” (95:3). David said, “I will extol thee, my God, O king” (145:1). A psalmist exhorted, “Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King” (149:2). Samuel told the Israelites who wanted a human king, “The LORD your God was your king” (1 Samuel 12:12).

Revolt Within God’s Kingdom

After God completed the creation of His kingdom, He evaluated that “it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). But sometime afterward, the most magnificent of all His angels—“the anointed cherub that covereth” (Ezekiel 28:14) and was “perfect in [his] ways from the day that [he was] created, till iniquity was found in [him],” turned against God (v. 15). His “heart was lifted up” with pride because of his magnificence (28:17; cf. 1 Timothy 3:6), and he deceived himself into thinking he could set up a throne for himself in Heaven and be like God (Isaiah 14:12-14).

He began a revolt to overthrow God and usurp His position as sovereign King of the

universe. Thus God changed his name to Satan (meaning “adversary, enemy”²). Satan persuaded a significant number of God’s angels to join him in his revolt against God. Thus the Bible refers to the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:9).

Satan succeeded in convincing God’s original human subjects, Adam and Eve, to join him in his revolt against God (Genesis 3:1-8). He indicated that, if they would choose to disobey God’s command to them, they would become like God. In other words, they would become their own gods, free to do whatever they wanted, no longer required to obey God’s commands. They made the fateful choice to declare their independence of God’s rule and assert their own self-rule.

This choice produced a radical change in mankind’s spiritual nature. Humanity lost its original, favorable disposition toward God and became confirmed in a disposition of enmity against Him—a disposition that, by itself, does not and cannot submit to God’s rule. (“The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” [Romans 8:7].) Since enmity against God is sin, the Bible often calls this disposition “sin” (Romans 6–7). Theologians often call it “the sin nature.”

Since it was the first two human beings who experienced this radical change in their spiritual nature, and since human beings reproduce after their kind, every person inherits this sinful disposition of enmity against God at the moment of conception. Thus King David stated, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5).

This radical spiritual change in mankind in the earliest stage of human history sheds significant light on the ultimate reason for God’s anger and wrath. Gustav Stahlin wrote, “A profound reason for the wrath of God is the same in both” the Old and New Testaments, “namely, the human hubris which basically despises God and seeks to live without Him, cf. Romans 2:4 ff.; 1:18 ff.”³ The word *hubris* refers to “wanton arrogance” and “insolent disregard of moral

laws or restraints.”⁴ Thus “the wrath of God is the onslaught of the holy God asserting and establishing His absolute claim to dominion.”⁵ Divine wrath expresses itself “in attacks on all forces which oppose the holy will of God.”⁶ ■

ENDNOTES

1. K. Seybold, “melek,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Stott, translated from *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 8:365.
2. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds./trans., “satan,” *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (1952: translation and adaptation of Walter Bauer’s *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur*, 4th ed.; (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 752.
3. Gustav Stahlin, “orge,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (hereafter cited as *TDNT*), ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans./ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, translated from *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:423.
4. *Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed., unabridged (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam, 1939), s.v. “hubris,” 1210.
5. Johannes Fichtner, “orge,” *TDNT*, 5:407.
6. *Ibid.*
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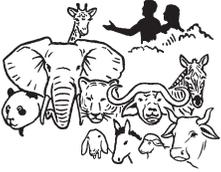
Problem of Tongue Control . . . cont’d.

that the wrong words we speak are not merely “words we didn’t mean that we said by accident,” but symptoms of heart issues. When my words are impatient, I must search my heart for impatience. When my words are angry, I must deal with the anger within. When my words are demeaning, I must confess my pride.

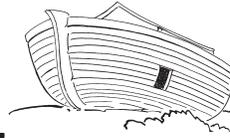
Do you have a speech problem? Do not be satisfied with controlling it. Instead, ask God to go to the source and make it sweet.

And the words the sweet heart speaks will be sweet. ■

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Beginning Issues



Distant Starlight and a Biblical Time Frame

by John Mullett

The farm I grew up on as a child seemed like a big place (approx. 54 acres), and for little legs it was, but as I grew so did my world. I can recall a time, when from my perspective, my home state (Ohio) seemed like a big place and the United States seemed huge—not to mention the Earth. Certainly perspective has its effect, because when I'm on foot it's still a big state/country/world! However, with the modes of modern transportation, we've managed to "shrink" our world so much so that we are able to move between most (any two given) populated points on Earth in about 36 hours or less.

As we've reached deeper into space through modern science, we've become increasingly aware of the enormity of space, and in comparison the Earth is really a rather small place—we live in a vast universe! Along with our understanding, certain questions have arisen regarding the accuracy of a Biblical model of origins and a young universe. Since we are able to comprehend (at least in part) the mind-boggling distances of even our closest stars, it seems that if the universe were only 6,000 years old (approximately), we shouldn't be able to see them as their light would not have had time to reach us yet based on our knowledge of the speed of light. This raises the question, if the Biblical timescale is indeed accurate, why can we see the light of these stars? Did God create the light en route, or in other words, did He create the light beams too? That raises its own set of questions as it would indicate that stellar events, observed at distances greater than time allows for light to travel, would never have

occurred in reality. Consequently the events would only represent illusions and serve to give the Earth apparent age beyond the Biblical record. Certainly God could have created in that manner if He so pleased, but why would He choose to do so? Why would God want to make the Earth appear older than it is?

So should we call the Biblical record into question or how do we interpret the vastness of the universe? While there may not be one specific model (regarding distant starlight) that we can point to as "proof" of the accuracy of the Biblical timescale, enough work has been done by men such as Dr. Russell Humphreys to show its feasibility. In the work on his model *A Young-Earth Relativistic Cosmology* he has developed a cosmology, based on factors such as *relativity* and *gravitational time dilation* (an effect of relativity), that seems compatible with the Bible's history, but a significant key in his work is the demonstration of how changing starting presuppositions leads to different conclusions. The beliefs we take with us into a project always affect how we interpret the available data.

In all of life we need to start our thinking from the Bible if we want to come to accurate conclusions, and astronomy is no exception. We can always trust the Bible—it will never let us down! One thing we do know for sure—*"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork"* (Psalm 19:1 ESV) The universe speaks to the majesty of our Creator and I invite you to worship Him with me! ■

Affirming for 250 Years

by David W. T. Brattston

Anabaptists have maintained for over four hundred years that it is wrong to swear an oath to tell the truth in a secular court. For example, the *Statement of Faith* Article 17 “Christian Integrity” of the Fellowship of Concerned Mennonites states:

The Lord Jesus Christ has forbidden to His followers the use of any and all oaths, because of the infinite limitations of human beings and the obligation always to speak the truth. In legal matters, we therefore simply affirm the truth.

This principle did not start in the sixteenth century Reformation but was shared by believers that lived so early that they—or Christians not long earlier—knew the writers of the New Testament personally and could ask them for clarifications or explanations of what they had written. The following article will include these ancient non-Biblical authors to show that ancient Christians embraced the same ideas on oath-taking as do Mennonites. This article will also indicate how Anabaptists can live this precept in United States Courts today.

Under the heading “That we must not swear,” one Christian toward the middle of the third century AD quoted the relevant passages of Scripture:¹

In Solomon: “A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and the plague shall not depart from his house; and if he swear vainly, he shall not be justified, and if he swear with no purpose, he shall be punished doubly.” Of this same matter, according to Matthew: “Again, ye have heard that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not swear falsely, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven, because it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, because it is his footstool; nor by

Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your discourse be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatever is more than these is of evil.” Of this same thing in Exodus: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” The reference to Matthew is 5:33-37.

But did Jesus in this passage intend His words to be taken in their full literal sense, or was He using a figure of speech with the intention of discouraging no more than needless oaths? It appears that for the first two and a half centuries of the Faith, Christians interpreted it at face value and strenuously avoided all swearing.

Except for the Gospel of Matthew, the Epistle of James contains the earliest specifically Christian statement on oath-taking, dating from the first century AD. Without referring to Jesus’ words, James 5:12 tells us not to swear by God or by anything on earth or use any other form of oath but to tell the truth at all times, whether under oath or not. This prohibition on oaths is in isolation, the context not indicating exactly why swearing is forbidden. We will see the reasons when we come to Irenaeus and Clement.

Justin was martyred for the Faith around AD 165. In a book describing Christian beliefs and practices to pagan readers, he mentioned refraining from oaths as a characteristic of Christians, already well-known to pagans. He stated that this refusal to swear was in obedience to Christ’s command.²

Irenaeus of Lyons was a pastor in France who was raised and educated in western Turkey by people who knew the first disciples of the apostles. In summarizing the Sermon on the Mount sometime between

AD 182 and 188 he wrote that Jesus condemned all oath-taking, explaining that the Saviour was not overturning the Law of Moses but was fulfilling and extending it. What Moses forbade was lying under oath (perjury), said Irenaeus; for Christians to be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus prohibited all swearing in order to avoid the possibility of falling into perjury.³ Irenaeus undoubtedly interpreted Matthew 5:33-37 literally and taught other believers to do so.

From AD 190 to 202 Clement of Alexandria was the head of Christianity's most outstanding institute of learning. He taught that a model Christian always speaks and behaves in a manner that inspires public confidence in his or her honesty, so that nobody would even think of requiring an oath from him/her. Not only is his/her whole lifestyle such that he never lies or commits perjury,⁴

But he does not even swear, preferring to make averment, in affirmation by "yea," and in denial by "nay." For it is an oath to swear, or to produce anything from the mind in the way of confirmation in the shape of an oath. It suffices, then, with him, to add to an affirmation or denial the expression "I say truly" for confirmation to those who do not perceive the certainty of his answer.

Tertullian was a lawyer before his conversion. As such, he was very familiar with oaths in courts, and in his law practice may have encountered instances of people who refused to swear them because they were Christians. Tertullian left no doubt that Jesus' prohibition was taken literally by believers in his day. Around AD 210 he wrote, "Christ prescribes that there is to be no swearing"⁵ and "of false swearing I am silent, since even swearing is not lawful."⁶ He also taught against the practice of using technicalities, omissions, and evasions in appearing to take an oath in order to escape lawful contracts.⁷

Origen, Clement's successor as head of the academy, was the most prominent Bible scholar, teacher, and preacher of the first half of the third century and for centuries

afterwards. He is best noted for his allegorical or spiritual method of interpreting the Scriptures, always trying to find a deeper, spiritual, hidden meaning underneath the plain, literal meaning of the text. But despite his preference for less obvious meanings, he cited "Swear not at all" as an example of a Bible text that was to be taken in its full literal sense, just like the commandments against adultery, theft, and lustful looks.⁸ He also considered Matthew 5:34ff as among "those admirable principles which He [Christ] lays down respecting oaths."⁹

One of Origen's students was called "Gregory the Wonder-Worker" after he had become a prominent pastor. As Origen's student he wrote that Christians should "by all manner of means to avoid an oath, especially one taken in the name of God."¹⁰

Thus, for the first 250 years of the Christian era, our faith regarded oath-taking as contrary to its precepts. The 250 years after the Reformation saw persecution of Mennonites and others who refused to swear on grounds of conscience because secular courts demanded that all witnesses take an oath, using the words *God* and *swear*; and prescribed a semi-religious ceremony and use of the Bible. No exceptions were allowed, and any witness that refused to swear would not be allowed to testify, and might be jailed for contempt of court.

However, with the expansion of religious freedom in the last 250 years, secular courts and legislatures in the United States and British Commonwealth have softened the stricter rules. No longer need the word *swear* or *oath* be used; the presence of a Bible and raising a hand are optional for witnesses whose consciences do not allow them. The only requirement now is that in making a declaration to tell the truth it must be impressed on the mind of the witness that s/he is under a serious duty to tell the truth and may be punished if they do not. Believers can make "solemn affirmations" instead of oaths, as Clement of Alexandria recommended. Most, if not all, U. S. state legislatures have accommodated

persons who refuse to take an oath on grounds of religious belief and who prefer to “affirm.” For example, the State of Kansas guarantees this right in an ordinary statute;¹¹ while Indiana embeds it in both the *Civil Code*¹² and “The Bill of Rights” part of the state *Constitution*.¹³

However, you must state your religious objections to the judge *before* you testify so that His/Her Honor can find a form of declaration that will bind your conscience to tell the truth. Neither divine nor secular law allows a witness to lie under a formal oath on the pretext that because swearing is against your religion you were not bound when you used the word *swear*. Tertullian condemned tricks of this sort nearly eighteen centuries ago¹⁴ and the secular judge can find you guilty of perjury. ■

ENDNOTES

1. *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*, 12 ANF Vol. 5, pp. 536-537 (punctuation modernized). All quotations are from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by A. Cleveland Coxe (reprinted Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985; Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson). Herein abbreviated to “ANF.”
2. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 16.
3. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.13.1.
4. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 7.8 ANF 2.537.
5. Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, 23 ANF 3.75.
6. Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, 11 ANF 3.67.
7. Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, 23.
8. Origen, *De Principiis*, 4.1.19 ANF 4.368.
9. Origen, *De Principiis*, 2.4.1 ANF 4.275ff.
10. Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Metaphrase of Ecclesiastes* 8 ANF 6.14.
11. Kansas Statutes Annotated Chapter 54: Oaths and Affirmations.
12. Indiana *Code of Civil Law and Procedure*, Title 34 Article 45 Section 2.
13. Indiana *Constitution*, Article 1 Section 8.
14. Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, 23.

Michael Sattler—Author of First Anabaptist Confession of Faith

by Edwin R. Eby, Greencastle, PA

Michael Sattler was an early Anabaptist martyr. He was born in Stauffen, Germany, about 1490. Michael entered the Benedictine Monastery of St. Peter's near Freiberg, Germany, where he probably became its Prior. During the 1520s, Michael left the monastery. This was probably due to theological differences and disgust over the depraved lives of the monks and priests. Little is known about his early life or even his education, although records of court discussions during his later trial show him as intellectual and well-versed in the Scriptures and able to handle discussions of the Scriptures fluently.

Shortly after leaving the Benedictine Monastery, Michael married Margaretha, a former Beguine (a nun following the rule of St. Benedict). This action was

heresy for a monk and nun who had committed their lives to celibacy (abstention by vow from marriage). Because of the program to eliminate such heresy from the region by Ferdinand I of Austria, Sattler and his wife fled to Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525. There they met and joined the Anabaptist brethren. Michael was present at the Third Disputation in Zurich on November 6, 1525. This disputation was the separating point between Zwingli and his Bible students who had asked their Bible teacher to reject infant baptism and the Catholic Church as unscriptural. Zwingli, for selfish political agenda, refused and said, “The officials of the church will make the decision.” Zwingli then officially (under penalty of law) forbade Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz to preach. Michael was expelled