

“... God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

Galatians 6:14

NOVEMBER 2015

Meditation
Now Thank We All Our God 1

Editorial
Thanksgiving According to Psalm 100 2

The Bottom Line
Tipping the Scales 5

The Issue of Clothing 10

Are You Defenseless 13

Marriages 14

Cradle Roll 15

Obituaries 16

Observations 17

School Matters
*What Your Teachers Wish Parents Knew, but Probably Never Told You—
 Part One* 22

Musings from Martyrs Mirror
Hans Brael, Part 2 25

Where Shall I Work? 26

Full-Color Compassion 27

Mission Awareness
Planting Seeds with Seeds 29

Death’s Door 30

Helpers at Home
Heartfelt Thanksgiving 31

Junior Messages
Singing in the Visa Office 33

Youth Messages
What is Your Policy? 35

Thought Gems back cover

Now Thank We All Our God

Martin Rinkart, 1636

Translated by Catherine Winkworth, 1838

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom His world rejoices,
Who, from our mothers' arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God,
The Father now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns
With them in highest heaven.
The One eternal God
Whom earth and heaven adore,
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be ever more.

[When refugees fleeing East Germany after World War II finally reached freedom, they broke into inexpressible gratefulness, singing this song. May we acknowledge the many reasons we have for thanksgiving. And may our thankfulness result in generosity toward those in need. -PLM]



Thanksgiving According to Psalm 100

Daniel E. Mast (1848-1930)

(First published in German in *Herold der Wahrheit*, probably in November, 1914)

Have you wished that you could have talked with a pillar of the faith who died before you were born? I certainly have. While growing up, I often heard about my great grandfather, Dan Mast (my mother's mother's father), and often wished I could have met him or even heard a recording of his preaching, but that could not happen. Fortunately, his legacy is enhanced by the many inspiring articles he wrote for the German periodical, *Herold der Wahrheit*. These articles were compiled after his passing into a book, entitled, *Anweisungen zur Seligkeit*. Then in 1955, John B. Mast (a distant relative), from Weatherford, Oklahoma, undertook translating (with help from others) the German articles into English. The English compilation appeared in a book entitled, *Salvation Full and Free*. From that book (page 309), we find the meditation that follows on giving thanks to God.

Mast refers to the conflict that arose in Europe in 1914, first called

The Great War (later, World War I), which finally ended November 11, 1918. America entered the conflict in 1917. The following article was apparently written 101 years ago, before American forces had entered the conflict. -PLM

• • • • •

“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the lord with gladness: come into his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (Psalm 100).

The psalmist said, “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.” This includes us, dear reader, both you and me. Do we rejoice in the Lord for what He is doing and has done for us? Do we serve Him with gladness,

as He further stated? Do we come before His presence with singing? Do we confess Him to be the only true God? That He has made us, and not we ourselves, that we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture? No! We have not made ourselves; for He is the Creator of all things; therefore, we shall give him honor and praise for His omnipotence in creation.

This year the annual Thanksgiving Day comes on the 26th day of November, a day set apart by the President of the United States that all the people should give thanks to God for the blessings we've received from Him throughout the year. With pleasure and true love we should be exceedingly thankful to Him, for He has blessed us with many good things throughout the year. Yes, for the abundant crops of the field, and also for our healthy and able bodies so we could harvest them—all these are blessings from God. Each of us who has his own home is indebted to give Him thanks. He that has not his own home, but has clothes to wear and food to eat, he also is indebted to give Him thanks. He that is deficient in clothes and in food, but is healthy and having two eyes to see, two ears to hear, feet to walk on, and hands to work with, has reasons to thank God.

Go to a hospital and see the patients lying there. One has an arm taken off, another a leg, the third some other operation. All kinds of crippled people we see there and we

are in good health. Should we not give thanks to God for it? If all these things will not move you to give thanks, go to a mental institution. There are those who are mentally ill and know not what they do, and must be guarded by someone who has his good mind, and knows how to use it. This all is a gift from God and we are indebted to thank God for it; let us pray to Him for knowledge so that we may use our healthy minds right and to the honor of God.

There are also well-meaning brethren and even ministers of our faith who agree with me in all things heretofore written, but do not think that the Thanksgiving Day requires to be kept so specially, but that every day we should thank God for our daily blessings, which also is wholly sanctioned. For us to be subject to our government's demands, as long as it will not oppose the Gospel is just and right. To take a day off from our work and apply that day to honor and praise God for the year's blessings is certainly right.

One time I heard a bishop compare Thanksgiving Day with the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar. But read Daniel 3, and you will find it totally different from the Thanksgiving Day our President proclaimed. Read both with comparison and you will find that Nebuchadnezzar demanded his people to worship a lifeless image, whereas the President proclaimed it for us to thank God for the year's blessings. I heard the remarks made

already that the President and other officials themselves do not keep that day respectfully. But this is no excuse for not keeping it. Jesus commanded His disciples to keep all the things that the scribes and Pharisees bid them to observe, but after their works they should not do (Matt. 23:3). It is too true that most worldly-minded people misuse this day in a shameful manner.

It is stated in the 13th article of the Dortrecht Confession of Faith concerning the office of civil government that we should “acknowledge it as a minister of God and be subject and obedient to it, in all things that do not militate against the law, will, and commandments of God.” Thus it is not against the Word of God to set apart a special day that all Christians in submission toward each other may come to God in prayer and supplication. This is exactly what the Ninevites did when the king proclaimed a fast (Jonah 3:6-9). That was acceptable to God. Do we believe that God would have spared the city of Nineveh, if they had said that the king himself does not do as he commanded and would have continued in their daily work and had not taken heed to what our merciful God had commanded the king to do? Obedience brings blessings. Disobedience brings condemnation and destruction.

Jesus said that the people of Nineveh repented after the preaching of Jonah. To take the Word of God as

it states, it appears that they had all repented, but this is hard to believe. But God would not destroy the good with the wicked, even as He would have saved the city of Sodom. God graciously honored the request of Abraham to spare the city if a few righteous could be found. For the sake of ten righteous souls He would have spared Sodom. So it is the small remnant (the righteous) that God upholds and not the multitudes of the ungodly. The people of Nineveh observed the king’s command and through fasting and repentance they were spared. This was acceptable to God.

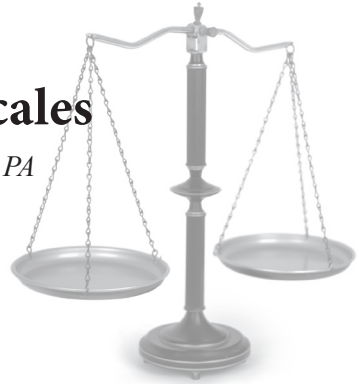
So let us keep our Thanksgiving Day as a day of giving thanks, with repentance and a day of prayer. Yes, let us thank our God for the bountiful blessings and for His many deeds of kindness, and especially for the perfect gift of His Son. Let us confess our short-comings and weaknesses and look to Him for future blessings and to help us better our lives. Let us take the view across the Atlantic Ocean into Europe and see how the blood flows for vengeance, lamentations, and misery that words cannot express. God in His mercy has so graciously spared our land from war, pestilence and famine. Who should not find himself indebted to give thanks to God and to honor and praise Him?

[Great Grandpa Mast closed this article by writing out Psalm 100 again.]



Tipping the Scales

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA



A representative view of justice is represented by the Statue of Liberty, with the lady holding an old-fashioned balance scales. She is blindfolded to represent an unbiased opinion on her part as to which way it goes. True justice has no favorites.

The handwriting on the wall interpreted by Daniel was “Tekel: thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting (lacking)” (Daniel 5:27). Wanting—coming up short. “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Muslims understand that every good deed counts for anywhere from 70 to 700 good points to one’s account. On the other side of the scales, they say, every bad deed takes away one point, or maybe even two good points. Talk about stacking things in one’s favor!

Rabbi Beryl Epstein says everyone will go to heaven. For the Jew, he is

to keep 613 laws. For all others, they are to follow the seven laws of Noah and thus all go to heaven. Epstein said God keeps a score card—both for evil and good. He also said that people can do more good than they think they can, which qualifies them for entrance to heaven.

A bus load from our Lancaster County churches went to New York City in early December. Others went deer hunting. We don’t know how the hunters made out, but we came back loaded! We sat under the teaching of a Jewish rabbi for a day. My mind was full!

Epstein said that man is 98% soul and 2% physical. He said, “We marry to get closer to God. We spiritualize everything.” Some say, “Don’t marry to be holy.” We say, “Do marry to be holy.” Amazing! Also encouraging, right? These are Hasidic Jews—orthodox. There is more than one orthodox group, so variables in

teaching can occur. We visited those in Crown Heights and they are a very large group.

What do Anabaptists say about God's justice? Anabaptists also range from ultra-conservative to ultra-liberal, even as do the Jews. One cannot evaluate any group as representative of them all, either theirs or ours. We say again, that God is fair and He has no people as favorites.

Unfortunately, some Anabaptists also view God as having a score card. Or maybe a balancing scales, that is easily tipped in one's favor. At any rate, the idea prevails among some that we must strive to do good so it will somehow outweigh the bad.

Being accepted by God on the basis of one's good works is a hallmark of false religions. There is a certain line of reasoning in all of us that God should favor me for being a Christian for 70 years, or being preacher for 40 years, or for serving Him since I was 12 years old, or because I gave multiplied thousands to missions. Then some think denying themselves of life's pleasures will surely cause God to notice and that it will evoke His mercy. This is the balance thing—the score card.

No! To every such thought, God says, "No." From the "mostest" to the "bestest" among us, the answer is "No!" Maybe the disadvantaged and poorest can make it because of

their condition. The answer is "No." How about just me as an exception? "No.": Kindly and lovingly, "No." Maybe because of His kindness and love there is a crack here where I can somehow get into God's favor by my you-know-what. Emphatically and consistently and eternally, "NO."

None can make it on his own; all are excluded by even their best merits. Peter was an eager learner and quite impetuous when it came to doing good in the short term. He said, "We have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?" This was right after Jesus told His disciples how hard it would be for the rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus told Peter that his—and the rest of the disciples—reward comes later, after this life. They will sit on thrones to judge Israel, and "everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall *inherit* everlasting life" (See Matthew 19:23-29). The word "inherit" stands out here. Not a paycheck every two weeks. Not a yearly salary from God. The inheriting comes *later*, after this life. In our case, it is after our death. In earth life, an inheritance is received when the testator dies.

Eternal life is not based on works—more good than bad—as

in a favorable score. It is not based on how long one has served, not on how well one lived in comparison to others, as in having enough to tip the scales in one's favor. It is not on how much one suffered, incurring much discomfort and pain and expense. It is not tipped in favor of those who have much more wealth than average. God's scale of acceptance is never by any person's experience or service or giving, regardless of how outstanding it may be.

One layman in our church of 60 years ago, said we should do all the good works we possibly can and then God takes it from there and makes it reach for our entrance into heaven. "No," God says, by answering, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not [for salvation], but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:4,5).

The emphasis here is on believing on Jesus Christ for right standing with God based on what He has done for us in Christ as opposed to attempting any of our supposedly good works that we might do for God. God has no need, being all-sufficient in Himself. We are the ones who have every kind of need, and lack any sufficiency in ourselves.

Another layman from my adolescent years spoke to our congregation about God almost

needing an in-between category of those not good enough for heaven but too good for hell. God is also clear here, using the previously quoted verses from Romans 3:10-12. The Bible teaches it elsewhere just as sure and emphatic. Good works do not, cannot, will not, tip the scales of God's justice in anyone's favor. The line is clear by God for every person—those saved by Christ and those not saved.

God doesn't withhold His favor and His grace in refusing our good works to tip the scales. By consistently and totally denying everyone's good works for salvation. He then can magnanimously pour out the full measure of His grace to both save all from sin and to keep everyone saved for a lifetime. Everyone is equally so; none is excluded by God in this provision.

At precisely this point in my writing, I provided taxi service for a neighbor. He is about my age. They are building a retirement house. He spoke of how much money it takes for just small amounts of material. He looked at me and in all seriousness, said he is a poor man, but he believes that increases his chances for heaven. Uncharacteristic for me, I emphatically and immediately refuted his statement. I shared a few Bible verses and he also shared some in defense—from the Bible, mind you!

The rich might assume they are favored already and they then tip the scales additionally by their giving to the poor and needy. But the poor also feel the scales of God's justice is tipped in their favor since they are not consumptive like the rich and really do suffer lack. Besides, God speaks favorably of the poor, and chides the rich.

The Bible is clear about the need and adequacy of Christ for salvation. I think Romans 8 is one of the most exciting chapters in the Bible. Although there are many other such passages, you will profit the most from the following comments if you take your Bible and open it to Romans 8:29-39.

In verse 29, God has undertaken a program of predestination of the believer in Christ Jesus. The goal is to conform believers to the image of Christ. Christ Himself is the first born among brethren. "Firstborn" in the Bible always means there will be many more.

In verse 30, those predestinated are called and justified and glorified. Justified means to be made righteous, accepted by God in Christ (by His atonement, or payment). Satisfactory payment with God is always and only by the blood of Christ.

Verse 31 has that conclusive logic, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" It is a statement that goes

beyond logic based on how God is, being without limitation. Being saved from sin by Christ is a standing no one can take from us, thus being against anyone who tries to do so.

Verse 32 shows how lavish God is with His love. God gave up His Son which shows what God would, by comparison, do for our sakes.

Verse 33 uses an earthly counterpart to say that since the debt is already paid for our redemption, who can charge us again, making us debtors again? A debt can be paid only once.

Verse 34 has another question, as in a persistent inquiry—like a judge might do in a trial by cross-examination. "Who is he that condemneth?" This is it: Christ died (payment). He rose again (validation); He sits at God's right hand and makes intercession for us (as the supreme lawyer in heaven and earth).

Verse 35: Our subject is the adequacy of salvation in Christ. The argument against the believer is forever taken away from the devil, for the enemies of the cross of Christ, from any and all objections anyone could raise—there is no separation from God.

Verses 37, 38, and 39 boldly and judicially declare that justice has been served, the Judge of heaven and earth pronounces no separation by any from above or beneath, or on the earth. Nothing in death or life can

separate us from God's love. Neither can angels do so—nor can the evil angels (usually included in the phrase “principalities and powers.”) Nothing from above us or beneath us, nothing behind us nor before us can “separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Wow! I could just shout aloud, “God be praised! Hallelujah!”

Grandpas have license to bragging rights, so here goes. Actually for the sake of illustration on point of exuberance. Three-year-old grandson, Andrei was nearing his fourth birthday. He said to me, “Grandpa, I will soon be four years old and Johann is almost seven. We are getting old fast. I could just whistle!” Then he whistled!

We also are the children of God (little in understanding), so like Andrei, we could whoop it up a bit sometimes for our status in Christ.

My brethren and I in Christ have come a long way already. But as for Andrei, he has no clue about another 80 or 90 years ahead of him in this life. Likewise, or shall we say, even much more so, do we not know what God has reserved for us in eternity for those who love Him. I can't whistle anymore, but I can shout: Hallelujah! Amen! Hosanna in the highest! Amen!

The Bottom Line is that the scales of justice are not needed anymore. It also has no need as far as God is concerned, for those who have been justified by Christ. “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). “For so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” 2 Peter 1:11).

Amen, Brother?

Yea, and Amen!



Announcement

Lord willing, the Beachy Ministers' Meetings will be held in Lancaster in Ridgeview Mennonite Church, 3723 Ridge Road, Gordonville, PA, 17529, on April 5-7, 2016. The central PA churches are planning the program.

Blessings,

Matt Peachey

mattpeachey@juno.com

The Issue of Clothing

Jonathan Profitt, Earlysville, VA

We live in a world that is ever changing and quickly falling from the truth found in the Word of God. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been given a great calling: a call to be salt and light in this world as we live in obedience to the commands and teachings of our Master.

As those who have been born and raised within western culture, we are surrounded by idolatry and vanity. A great problem within America today is the adulation of self and vanity of fashion. Men and women spend a great deal of money in keeping up with the latest fashion trends. Many churches and denominations in America have fallen for the vanity of fashion and not without great cost! It has always come at the expense of losing a clear and effective Christian witness of modesty and simplicity.

Since my last name is Profitt, many readers probably realize that I was not raised in a Beachy or plain Anabaptist setting. I was brought up among non-denominational and Baptist churches. As I reflect on my growing up years, I am greatly saddened by the immodest dress and ungodly clothing that has filled the church pews and youth groups. My fear is that if we—our Beachy churches—walk in ignorance to the snares of the devil, we too may fall

into worldly and immodest dress. Paul writes to Timothy, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thy self and them that hear thee.” We too must take heed to ourselves and the doctrine, that we may continue in them.

From my observation, since first attending and joining a Beachy church, I have noticed among various churches that there seems to be discontentment among some of our youth and younger adults about our plain and simple standard of clothing.

Throughout the Word of God, we find clear teachings and principles that support a simple modest style of dress. For a Scripture that makes this very clear, **read 1 Peter 2:4-12.**

One of the frustrations that some have with plain clothing is the fact that the world around us may look at us with scorn or rejection. If we dress like the world, it seems that the world accepts us because we look and appear like they do. But the question must be asked, If Christ was rejected of men, “but chosen of God and precious” to God, should those who follow Him expect a different experience? Shouldn’t we much rather have the world reject us and look upon us with shame, but be

accepted and precious in the sight of God, than to have the world accept us, only to have our Lord look upon us with shame?

I find 1 Peter 2:9 to be a very clear teaching concerning a distinct and different style of dress. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” True Christians are a chosen generation. That means we have been called out from the wickedness of this world. We are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. And why? “That we should shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light.” How is the world to see that we are a people set apart to proclaim marvelous light if we look like and follow the fashion trends and styles of darkness? Darkness and light cannot coexist! Where there is light, darkness flees!

We find more clear teaching in 1 Peter 2:11, which speaks of two similar concepts: “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” First, let us look at the concept of strangers and pilgrims. As Christians, we must clearly understand that there are two kingdoms: the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world. Have you ever been out of town and seen someone visiting from another country? For example, imagine a woman from India who

was shopping in the grocery store you were in. Just by the way she dresses, you and those around her can tell that she is not from the United States. If someone from a foreign country is clearly different in their style of dress, how should a Christian citizen of the Kingdom of God, a stranger and pilgrim, dress wherever we go here on earth? Our clothing will be clearly different from the styles, fashions, and trends of this corrupt generation.

The other thing to take notice of in verse 11 is that fleshly lusts war against our soul. Often we may fail to accept the fact that the lusts of the flesh can impact and destroy our soul. The lusts of dressing fashionably or desiring to dress conspicuously can war against our souls!

One argument against modest or distinctly different clothing is one that I heard often in Baptist churches. The argument distorts the Scriptures by taking 1 Samuel 16:7 out of context. They quote half of the verse, saying, “for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” There is certainly a great truth not to be missed in this passage! God sees past our outward separation and looks at the inward depths of our hearts. So while we do find that within the Bible, to then go and dress as the world does results in a failure to rightly divide the word of truth. I also heard some say, “Judge not that ye be not judged.” As a result, many

self-proclaimed Christians base their actions and choices of clothing upon these two verses alone, justifying immodest dress and failure to submit to church brotherhood and doing what is right in their own eyes.

We must not fall into this trap and believe that we can dress as the world dresses. Jesus gives clear instructions to us concerning judging fruits. (Read Matthew 7:13-20.) There are many people in churches today that say concerning their clothing, “Well, you can’t judge, only God knows my heart.” While it is true that God is the final judge, Jesus says we can know a tree by its fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. In the same way, it is contradictory for Christians (good trees) to follow after and dress in the manner of the world (corrupt trees).

Are we dressing in a way that is distinct and different from the patterns of this world? By the way, that is what the word “holy” means: *different, other, set apart, distinct.*) Can the world around us clearly see not only by our words and actions, but also by our clothing, that we have passed through the strait gate and are walking the narrow way? Is the fruit of our dress consistent with the fruit of a good tree?

In speaking of consistency, I feel it is necessary to also address another area of inconsistency. We hold that the cape dress is a simple, modest, and cost-effective way of clothing for the sisters of our churches. I

also agree with and hold strongly to this view. The area of inconsistency, however, does not rest only on the side of the sisters. Brothers, when we dress the way we do, can the world see with ease that we are of a different kingdom? When a sister walks into a store, she stands out as a Christian/Mennonite by the way she dresses. Can the same be said of us men? As one who was not raised among plain Anabaptists, I know with certainty that the world notices our inconsistency in this matter.

If we, as men, do not set the example in our churches, homes, and youth groups of non-conformity in dress, then it will not be long before our sisters will become worn out from carrying the whole load. Do we not remember what Paul wrote in Galatians 6:2? He said, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Non-conformity in dress will not be burdensome when both brothers and sisters bear the load together, yet it will quickly become burdensome if only one side carries the load.

My purpose in writing is not only for the preservation of a distinct and plain standard of clothing, but for the preservation of Christ’s bride, the Church, that when He returns, He might find for **“himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”** (Ephesians 5:27). May the Lord on the day of his return find that among us!



Are You Defenseless?

Leonard Mast, Hillcrest Home, Harrison, AR (VS Unit Pastor)

Are you feeling insecure, inadequate, threatened, vulnerable, or attacked? Don't put up with it! You need someone to "go to bat" for you! You need to appoint someone to defend you, to stick up for you in the things you can't handle. Someone should be there for you to protect your reputation and justify your "pure" motives!

If you see your need of this protection, you have access to the One who will provide this for you in every situation. He is God Almighty. He knows all about you. He will work in your best interest. And to make a good thing perfect, He does it all from a heart of unconditional love. He is doing this for me and I am convinced that He will do it for you if you ask and allow Him.

David made use of God's defense system and told us about it in Psalms 59 and 62. Check it out! "Because of His strength will I wait upon Thee; for God is my defense" "But I will sing of thy power...mercy...for thou hast been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble." "He only is my Rock...Salvation...Defense..."

Are you defensive or defenseless? You don't have to be either one! I advise you to allow God to be your defense. If you do, you will not need to be defensive. Do you find yourself

explaining your motives when your choices concerning things within your responsibility prove to be wrong? Let God be your Defense. The next time you are falsely accused, let God be your Defense. When you fear someone might accuse you, criticize you, or ask you to change, let go of your own flimsy defense system and trust His perfectly timed defense. If you don't, He will likely allow your defenses to be smashed until you learn to rest in Him, and with awe-filled worship, watch Him be God, your Defender.

Ecclesiastes 7:12 says, "Wisdom is a defense and money is a defense." I would much rather have God, the source of true wisdom and riches, be my Defense. Sometimes we think our idea or simply the fact that this is our idea provides a defense. Ideally though, if it is only our idea, we want it to be toppled. If it is God's idea, He will defend it in his time and in His way.

At Hillcrest Home, or wherever God has placed you, it is OK to "feel" defenseless. When your security is in Christ, you can get in over your head, knowing you can't handle it on your own. Then God will be your Rock, your Defense.

[From the Hillcrest Home newsletter, Vol. 63, Qrt. 2, 2015. Used by permission.]



marriages

May the homes established by these marriages be little substations of heaven, where God reigns and His blessings flow.

Lapp-Schrock

Bro. Kendall, son of Mervin and Ina Lapp, Latrobe, PA, and Heather, daughter of Bryan and Kathy Schrock, Millersburg, OH, on Sept. 5, 2015, at Sharon Conservative Mennonite Church by Mervin Lapp.

Miller-Beachy

Bro. Brendan, son of James and Carolyn Miller, Utica, OH, and Sis. Ruth, daughter of Philip and Ruth Beachy, Salisbury, PA, on August 29, 2015, at Mountain View Mennonite church, by Dave Troyer.

Miller-Mast

Bro. Vernon, son of Perry and Lydia Miller, Pulaski, TN, and Sis. Melody, of Pulaski, Tn, daughter of Jonathan (and the late Margaret) and Frieda Mast, Bloomfield, MO, at Gum Springs Baptist Church for Goodspring Mennonite Church on August 21, 2015, by Perry Miller.

Peters-Strite

Bro. Joseph, son of David and Lisa Peters, Perkins, OK, and Sis. Darlis, daughter of Darrel and Donna Strite, Itasca, TX, on June 13, 2015, at Osceola Christian Fellowship, by Corey Yoder.

Swarey-Miller

Bro. John Mark, son of Mark and Barb Swarey, Mifflinburg, PA, and Sis. Maria Ann, daughter of Delbert and Ruth Miller, Centreville, Michigan, on March 21, 2015, at Calvary Chapel, Sturgis, MI, for Pilgrim Fellowship by Jon Yoder

Weaver-Shank

Bro. Quentin, Aroda, VA, son of Chester and Barbara Weaver, and Sis. Janice, Aroda, VA, daughter of Ray and Marietta Shank, on August 1, 2015, at Oak Grove Mennonite Church, by Lamar Hochstetler.

Wengerd-Mast

Bro. Tim, son of Simon and Clara Wengerd, Whiteville, TN, and Sis. Andrea, daughter of John and Sarah Mast, Whiteville, TN, at First Baptist Church for Whiteville Mennonite Church on Sept. 9, 2015, by Kevin Yoder.

Zook-Schrock

Bro. Michael, son of David and Elsie Zook, Fresno, OH, and Sis. Emily, daughter of Bryan and Kathy Schrock, Millersburg, OH, on June 20, 2015, at Sharon Conservative Mennonite Church by Philip Miller.



cradle roll

The children which the Lord hath graciously given . . . Genesis 33:5

Beachy, Benjamin and Dorcas (Yoder), Millersburg, OH, first child and daughter, Chante Brielle, June 30, 2015.

Burkholder, Tony and Joyce (Miller), Goshen, IN, second child, first son, Liam Wyatt, Sept. 28, 2015.

Clugston, Trent and Rhonda (Brenneman), Aroda, VA, first child and daughter, Elisa Kate, August 30, 2015.

Helmuth, Titus and Felicia (Overholt), Aroda, VA, first child and son, Patrick Jae, Sept. 8, 2015.

Hostetler, Dan and Kris (Gingerich), Belleville, PA, fifth child, first daughter, Ashlyn Kate, August 21, 2015.

Hostetler, Julius and Erma (Kropf), Harrison, AR, third child, first son, Andrew Alex, August 25, 2015.

Kauffman, Mark and Rosanna (Raber), Shreve, OH, fifth child, third son, Timothy Grant, March 17, 2015.

Keim, David and Martha (Stutzman), McArthur, OH, seventh child, fourth son, Matthew David, August 16, 2015.

Martin, Andrew and Arlene (Raber), Hicksville, OH, second child, first son, Andre Noah, Sept. 28, 2015.

Martin, Lloyd and Priscilla (Yoder), Covington, TX, third child and daughter, Charilynn Grace, July 24, 2015.

Miller, Devon and Mary Sue (Garber), Brookfield, MO, fourth child, second daughter, Jennifer Diane, May 30, 2015.

Miller, Jason and Esther (Byler), Titusville, PA, third child, first daughter, Lindsay Renae, August 9, 2015.

Miller, Jonathan and Emiline (Yoder), Millersburg, OH, first child and daughter, Samantha Kate, August 25, 2015.

Miller, Lavern and Rachel (Miller) Baltic, OH, third child, first son, Cole Matthew, August 2, 2015.

Miller, Laverne and Ruth (Yoder), Stuarts Draft, VA, fourth child and son, Gabriel Eugene, August 2, 2015.

Miller, Loyal and Arlene (Zook), Partridge, KS, second child and son, Vance Patrick, Sept. 9, 2015.

Mullet, Terry and Jeanette (Coblentz), Sugarcreek, OH, third child, second daughter, Leah Grace, Sept. 1, 2015.

Nissley, Stanley and Rose (Weaver), Cottage Grove, TN, third child, second daughter, Destinee Joy, August 18, 2015.

Schlabach, Martin Daniel and Kristina (Yoder), Cochran, PA, first child and son, Kaden Trey, July 28, 2015.

Schmidt, Walter and Miriam (Jantzi), Sebringville, ON, third child, second son, Kyson Logan, Sept. 22, 2015.

Troyer, David and Fannie (Troyer), Brinkhaven, OH, third child, first son, Zachary, March 24, 2015.

Vargas, Mervin and Martha (Miller), Covington, TX, fourth child, second son, Andrew David, June 24, 2015.

Villalobos, Charles and Loretta (Miller), Itasca, TX, second child and daughter, Kristynn Lelia Charetta, June 27, 2015.

Yoder, Isaac and Vicky (Yoder), Cross Hill, SC, ninth child, fourth son (one


son deceased), Franklin Dean, July 21, 2015.

Yoder, Joshua and Lillian (Nissley), Dundee, OH, third child, second daughter, Gena Amaris, June 14, 2015.

Yoder, Luke and Esther (Smoker), Free Union, VA, first child and son, Christopher Luke, Sept. 7, 2015.

Yoder, Noah and Arvilla (Weaver), Linneus, MO, fourth child, first son, Eric Andrew, July 10, 2015.

Yoder, Steve and Carolyn (Fisher), Mifflintown, PA, seventh child, fourth daughter, Charise Naomi, August 17, 2015.

Yoder, Steve and Colleen (Headings), Hutchinson, KS, third child and son, Spencer Cole, Sept. 24, 2015. 

obituaries

Hostetler, Mary, 91, of London, Ohio, died August 19, 2015, at Laurels of Hilliard. She was born July 1, 1924, in Madison County, OH, daughter of the late Dan A. and Sarah (Frey) Hostetler.

She was a faithful member of Canaan Fellowship Church.

On Nov. 30, 1943 she was married to Freeman Hostetler. He died Feb. 22, 1986. She is survived by nine children: six sons, Joe E. Hostetler, Foley, AL;

D. Perry (Emily) Hostetler, Sulphur Springs, TX; Henry Hostetler, Port Republic, VA; Ray Hostetler, London, OH; Fred (Tammy) Hostetler, London, OH; Dale (Kim) Hostetler, Plain City, OH; three daughters, Wilma (Ervin) Yoder, Plain City, OH; Martha (Mark) Yoder, Sarasota, FL; Becky Kurtz, Irwin, OH; 28 grandchildren and 41 great grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by one

grandson, Troy Thomas; one brother, Henry Hostetler; four sisters, Alta Mast, Katie Ann Zook, Fannie Gingerich and Susie Hostetler.

The funeral was held on August 22, at Canaan Fellowship Church, with Robert Beachy officiating. Burial was in the church cemetery.


Miller, Alvin Lynn, 70, of Crossville, TN, died suddenly on a construction job site of natural causes on August 31, 2015. He was born in Madison County, Ohio, Dec. 30, 1944, son of the late LeeRoy and Elizabeth (Troyer) Miller.

He was a faithful member of Mount Moriah Mennonite Church, Crossville, TN. The fervor and zeal of his life-changing conversion experience at age 19 never left him until he went home to be with his Lord and Savior.

On Feb. 24, 1968, he was married to Fannie Miller. She survives. Other survivors include five sons and three

daughters: Caroline Grace, Conrad Alan, Lynn Alvin, Leroy Arlan, Leanna Beth, Edwin Anthony, Luella Fannie Miller, all of Crossville, TN, and Walter Alfred Miller of Clifton, TN; four grandchildren: Gracie, Makenzie, Casey Miller and Alexia Sherrill; three brothers, Eli (Wilma) Miller, Ralph (Cathy) Miller, all of Plain City, OH, and John (Mary Ellen) Miller, Sturgis, MI, six sisters, Emma Kauffman, Susie Miller, Fannie (Abe) Troyer, Mary Gingerich, Katie (Alvin) Yoder, all of Plain City, OH, and Arie (Daniel) Hoschstetler, Goshen, IN, and a sister-in-law Anna Miller of Middlebury, IN.

He was preceded in death by two brothers, Clarence and Wyman and two brothers-in-law, Raymond Kauffman and Joe Gingerich.

The funeral was held on Sept. 4, with John Mast, Howard Kuhns, John Miller, and Lester Gingerich serving. Burial was in the church cemetery. 

observations

A long-time friend of mine who lives in Ohio tells me that their state governor recently visited Kidron, Ohio. That town is part of the Holmes/Wayne county complex of Amish and related groups. Some person complained to the governor that the school attendance laws were unfair. Amish students are not held to the same

standards of school attendance as are non-Amish students. The governor replied that as a group they were not considered a financial liability to the state. They are not on welfare or other public assistance programs. The person was told that if he became Amish and lived like they do, he could be eligible for the same consideration.

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1 Corinthians 6 makes it very clear that Christians should not resort to civil law to settle their differences. This does not mean that people in church are ethically free to engage in illegal behavior toward other church members. It seems that Sam Mullet and his beard-cutting cohorts may have overlooked this detail.

Illegal behavior is worthy of legal intervention. To knowingly shield a person whose behavior is hurtful and illegal is questionable to say the least.

It is shameful when a member of the church is involved in illegal behavior. But the law is part of God's provision to keep order in unruly society. If the church is unable to deal effectively with inappropriate behavior sometimes legal intervention is necessary for the offender's benefit. It would also benefit the purity of the church.

Let us not forget to pray for those in authority. Let us pray that the church would not need civil authority's intervention to solve its problems.

• • • • •

Isn't it interesting that most of the plain communities seem to have certain individuals who are noticeably more successful financially than others? A possible response to such persons is that this prosperity is evidence of the Lord's blessing and

good management in material things which should then be recognized in the fellowship of Christian believers.

It is true that such a person may be very useful in the decision-making processes of the church. But his usefulness depends on his humility and sensitivity to the Lord and other members of the body rather than financial success.

Lest we think that financial success is the evidence of right standing with God let us note that in the non-church community there are always some who stand above average, though they may not be Christian. That seems to support the fact that God can bless sound management of non-Christians.

This idea comes to me from Paul's words to Timothy 6, when he reminds us that it is misguided to think of gain as the evidence of godliness (1 Tim. 6:5). He says "from such withdraw thyself." Verse 6 says that godliness with contentment is great gain..

I am grateful that the diversity of gifts by the same Spirit instructs persons whose gifting is a blessing to the entire body in material ways. My concern, quite simply, is that we do not confuse material success with godliness.

The larger passage in 1 Timothy 6 has much to say about undue attachment to material wealth:

•We are told that we will leave this world with the same amount of goods that we brought in (v. 7).

•Contentment should be realized in having basic needs met, rather than excess (v. 8).

•The desire to become rich is foolish and extremely dangerous (v. 9).

•The love of money is thoroughly evil and contrary to sound faith and can cause many sorrows (v. 10).

•Christians are enjoined to fight the good fight of faith, to be actively engaged in activities that have eternal significance (v. 12).

•We are to keep the commandment without spot until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 14).

•Paul’s burden on the subject is addressed in verse 17 and following: Rich persons should not be “high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”

•Rich persons should be rich in good works, eager to share. They should store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life (v. 19).

I am aware that this subject is taking up quite a bit of space. But I notice that Paul also considered this a subject worthy of serious attention. I sometimes wonder if we are a bit

selective in our teaching and practice of non-conformity.



Hutterites limit the size of their communal communities to 150 people. There are nearly 500 colonies in six states and four Canadian provinces. South Dakota has the most with 54 colonies.

At Arlington, SD, avian flu wiped out 6,000 turkeys and 40,000 chickens. Their financial loss is estimated at \$600,000 to \$700,000. Nine colonies were affected resulting in the loss of about half a million birds. An estimated 45 colonies produce all of South Dakota’s turkey production. (*Mennonite World Review*).

-DLM



Recently, while my wife and I were walking through a shopping mall, I was taken aback when a man rather forcefully interrupted our conversation by asking where we were feeling pain that day. I wasn’t sure what kind of pain he was inquiring about, but he explained that he could show me how to remedy muscle and joint pain, gesturing toward his kiosk. I replied that I wasn’t feeling any such pain at that time and tried to convey to him that I wasn’t a good candidate for his sales pitch. He responded in a way that made both my wife and me think that he felt we

were being somewhat insincere in not owning up to needing what he had to offer.

This encounter reminded me of something I heard Lynn Miller with Mennonite Mutual Aid say some years ago. He said one of the most important ingredients of effective sales resistance is when we understand and grasp the concept of “the power of enough.” When we really have enough, we realize that having more won’t contribute to the meaning of life nor our ability to enjoy it.

I recently read of a missionary family who found themselves in “the American hamster wheel of more is better,” according to their description. They decided to try to live an entire year of avoiding all non-essential purchases. One of the things they tried to change was the way they talked to their children about items they chose not to purchase. They tried to switch from saying, “That’s too expensive.” to “We don’t need that.”

The former reinforces the concept that we need more money, while the latter helps them to understand that more isn’t necessarily better. I think they’re onto something, don’t you?



Thanksgiving is just around the corner. It’s possible to say “Thank

you” without actually meaning it. I would like to propose that genuine thankfulness is borne out of an understanding of how the situation would be if we lacked the thing we are thankful for. It is easier for those who know hunger to be thankful for food, for those who have been sick to be thankful for health, for those who have walked barefoot in the snow to be thankful for shoes, for those who have carried a guilty conscience to be thankful for God’s forgiveness, and the list goes on and on.

Since thankfulness implies that something has been received it should also generate a reflexive response of sharing in the heart of the child of God—a sharing borne out of an attitude of stewardship rather than entitlement. Both gratefulness and sharing produce great joy in the heart of the child of God. We are joyful that we have received and joyful that we are able to share with others and point them to “The Source.”

I do not wish to promote the idea that punishing oneself leads to godliness. However, let’s be reminded that our bounty and our plenty tends to build a sense of entitlement in our hearts. We should look for ways to push back against this entitlement that dulls our ability to be genuine in our thanks, in our sharing, in our understanding of stewardship, and

our joy. None of us relish the prospect of being deprived of things that we are grateful for. However, self-deprivation in the form of fasting, whether from food or something else, can build our awareness of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:7, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou dost receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

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Kim Davis serves as an elected county clerk in Rowan County, Kentucky. Part of her job involves issuing marriage licenses to lawful applicants. She testifies that her understanding of God’s design for marriage means that she will not issue a marriage license to a same-gender couple. This stand has thrust her situation into national news. Several same-gender couples have traveled from distant states to obtain a marriage license that she has said

she won’t issue. She has been jailed for non-compliance with a court order to issue such licenses. Sad to say, some details of this saga provide rich irony and grounds for vigorous ridicule from her scoffers. Mrs. Davis is in her fourth marriage, and says she was converted about five years ago.

This story should serve to sharpen our awareness of the “two-kingdom” concept. Citizens of the heavenly kingdom seek to avoid alliances with earthly kingdoms that invite compromise to our primary loyalty. Those alliances can come through inappropriate government employment, the election process and using the courts of law for selfish purposes. We ought to obey God rather than men. I have a hunch that we will increasingly find ourselves needing to move this belief from the comfort of theory to the arena of practice, in spite of our non-involvement with government.

-RJM



***Faith is like a toothbrush—
everyone should have one and
use it regularly, but that doesn’t mean
we can use someone else’s.***



What Your Teachers Wish Parents Knew, but Probably Never Told You— Part One

Gerald Miller, Guys Mills, PA

Over the years, I have found that teachers who stay in the classroom over the long haul feel called to do so, and enjoy their work. As with any vocation, though, there are “elephants in the room” that are difficult to talk about. This month, I have chosen to talk about some of the elephants in a particular room, the classroom. Some of these comments are more lighthearted than others. In all of them, I want to be clear that this does not come from a a critical spirit or heart. In fact, as a teacher, I do what I do because I have embraced all parts of the work even when it is not as I wish. I am certainly not mapping the following ideas in reference to any particular community or school. I intend this as “food for thought” and “if the shoe fits, wear it.” My goal is to sensitize us as parents (we have

children, too!) to the challenges of teaching in hopes that we can hear each other better in working together.

1. Teaching is a real job.

I have not been asked for about five years now when I plan to get a real job. I will admit I am glad it hasn't happened recently, although I don't hold it against anyone who has asked me. The reality is that teaching at least feels like a real job. Our job is not 8 to 5, and we get (considering it's not a real job) really tired at the end of the day. We find it demanding because of the intensity of relationships, coordinating each moment for 3 or 5 or 20 students all at the same time, and the fact that we are responsible to be an extension of your hand as parents, and we aren't perfect.

We freely admit that we lose our calluses during the school

year. And yes, we feel like wimps sometimes. And no, we can't take a bundle of shingles up the roof like we can after we've had a few weeks in the summer to get our muscles conditioned again. But, given the fact that I am pretty tired at the end of each day, teaching seems to be at least a job.

2. We secretly like and appreciate occasional snacks after school.

It means a lot to be remembered and provides a natural way to function as a team as we stand around and drink diet Coke or munch on a cookie. There's something good about that and we feel remembered, cared for, and appreciated when parents do that on their own volition.

3. We crave your involvement in your child's education.

We crave your involvement in school life. Granted, we don't think it is helpful for parents to "hover" at the school like a helicopter parent. When you talk with us, when you volunteer in the school, and when you drop by the classroom of your child, we know you care about your child. And that makes us feel cared for, because we know for certain that we care about the same thing: your child.

4. Complaining about the cost of the school makes us wonder if we are worth the cost to the church.

We're not quite sure what to do about the cost of education. We know that education is a significant investment. We also know that most of the money in the budget is going into teacher pockets. When we hear complaining about the cost of operating the school, we're not sure what to say. It can be hard not to think about the beautiful homes and vehicles that exist in our communities. Unfortunately, we tend to think about the community's priorities.

5. Please don't believe quite everything you hear from your children.

If you don't believe everything you hear about me, I won't believe everything I hear about you. There are usually two sides to a story. We appreciate when you take the time to figure out what the other side is, before you take sides. We try hard to give parents the benefit of the doubt (we do make mistakes, of course). We always appreciate when you give us the same benefit of the doubt.

6. We don't enjoy talking about sensitive matters with your children right around you.

When a teacher is talking with you as a parent, and your children are close by and very engaged with their ears, we don't know quite what to do. We don't really want

your child there when we talk about whatever concerns you have about the classroom. We want to hear the concern, but we're not sure it's good for the child to hear your concern in our presence. When this happens, we aren't sure who is in charge. It makes everything more uncomfortable for you to send them off. When you don't, I will look a bit uncertain, and will look evasive. You are going to wonder, "What is wrong with this teacher? There must be some problem here." That's mostly because we don't know what to say. What we should have done is said, "Joe and Jack, could you go play over there?" But we hate to do that because it is your child. We know that some children know more than they should, and we don't want to "add fuel to the fire."

7. Back up the teacher.

It's easiest to train children when you let your children know the teacher is right. Even when we're wrong, back up the teacher if you would, please. We'll come back and we'll tell you that we were wrong. And if we don't, we have an issue that you should address. We don't mind being asked, "Are you sure you handled that right?" Sometimes children will come home from school and say, "Mr. Miller did this and this and it's just not fair!"

If you respond with, "You mean he did **that**? I can't believe it. I'm going to give him a call right now." And when you give me a call while I hear your child in the background, my heart sinks. I've lost part of my battle already. I might have made a mistake. I probably did. But if you can back us up, we'll back you up. Actually, we'll back you up, anyway. That's how it works.

8. Teachers are normal people.

Teachers are normal. Well, mostly. Talk to us. Foster a relationship with us. It's sometimes awkward to know what to talk about and what not to talk about at church. We're not sure, should we be talking about your children? You're not sure if you should talk about your children to me at church. We're not sure where work and church and Sabbath all come together.

There aren't many of us in your congregation. We're a minority and sometimes we struggle to know where our common ground is. We enjoy discussions with other teachers, just like dairymen and business owners and gardeners and housewives like to "talk shop" with each other. However, we really do enjoy being involved in your world. We like when you see us as normal human beings who enjoy relationships.

(To be continued)



Hans Brael, Part 2

Tim Miller, McKenney, VA

For his fourth interrogation, Hans was examined by priests for three days in a row. At the end, the lord of the castle became exasperated at him and said, “O you obdurate dog, I have tried all possible means and ways to work with you, and will still do so, and place you on a sharp post, and see how you will trust God in this trial.” Hans answered, “I shall not suffer on account of any wrongdoing, but only for the truth and the faith.”

Hans was then placed in a dungeon so deep that no light could penetrate. He could tell the difference between day and night only because it became a little cooler in his dungeon at night. The place was so damp that his clothes rotted on his body and he went without clothes for a long time. He had only had a coarse blanket to wrap himself in “and thus sat in misery and darkness.” His clothes rotted so completely that he had only a shirt collar left, which hung

on the wall.

His dungeon stank so badly no one could stay for very long. “When they brought him in, they instantly had to go away from him again, yea, the councilors said themselves that they had never smelled such a horrible stench.


“There were many vermin and loathsome reptiles, so that at first he for a long time protected his head with an old hat, which had been thrown to him out of pity. The vermin were very numerous, and they caused him much terror, until he got used to it. The vermin sometimes ate his food, so that when they let down his food, he had to eat it all up, before he set down the dish; otherwise the vermin so covered it that he could not well eat it. When he got a dish of soup, and set it down but once, they ate it up in a moment. He could keep neither bread nor anything else; for as soon as the vermin smelled it, instantly they were at it. However,

this was his least care, inasmuch as he was so tormented with hunger, no great abundance being given him. The vermin sometimes got also into his drink, and drowned therein, until he finally obtained a large stone, which he placed on top of his pitcher.” He was kept in this dungeon from about early June “until after Michaelmas, in autumn, when they saw that frost was approaching.”

The next sentence reads, “His chief affliction, however, in this great trial was, that he could get no tidings from the church or the brethren.” (*Martyrs*

Mirror, pp. 561-562)

How does my love for the church and the brethren stand up alongside an example like that? How often do I let petty disappointments, a busy schedule, or an individualistic mindset rob me of what God has intended to be one of my greatest assets and sources of encouragement; a committed and likeminded brotherhood of which to be a part.


“That the trial of your faith might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). 

Where Shall I Work?

Author unknown

“Where shall I work today, dear Lord?”
And my love flowed full and free.
He answered and said, “See that little place?”
Tend that place for Me.”

I answered and said, “Oh no, not there;
No one would ever see.
No matter how well my work was done;
Not that place for me!”

His voice, when He spoke, was soft and kind,
He answered me tenderly.
“Little one, search that heart of thine.
Are you working for them or Me?
Nazareth was a little place;
And so was Galilee.” 

Full-Color Compassion

James D. Hershberger, Stuarts Draft, VA

Amazing grace was extended to a white killer on July 17, 2015, in South Carolina. After about an hour of sitting in a Wednesday evening prayer meeting and Bible study at the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., Dylann Roof, the alleged killer—a white racist, 21-year-old—suddenly started spewing racially hateful speech and opened fire, killing nine African Americans (including a state senator) with whom he had supposedly been worshipping.

Relatives and friends of the slain responded with magnanimous Christian character. Instead of asking for the death penalty these African Americans asked to meet with the killer face to face to tell him they forgive him. They also invited him to turn his life over to Jesus and receive salvation. This is pacifism at its best.

It seems that Roof sought not only to vent his monstrous, evil racial hatred but to incite venomous hatred between the

racers. Instead, because of this tragedy, there was a march through Charleston in support of the benevolence shown by the victims' relatives. There were more whites than blacks among the marchers, which is quite a testimony for the Deep South.

In the wake of the killing, the governor of South Carolina asked that the Confederate flag be removed from flying on the State House grounds. It was seen as important enough that both *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* carried the story. After considerable debate the South Carolina assembly rose to the occasion and removed not only the flag but also the flag pole. The governor of Virginia asked that the Confederate emblem be removed from Virginia license plates. To help appreciate the significance of these actions it is very noteworthy that a history professor, Barton Meyers, Washington and Lee University assistant professor of Civil War history said, "The Confederate flag was quickly appropriated after the

Civil War by the first order of the Ku Klux Klan and other terrorist organizations, which included many former veterans of the army of Northern Virginia and the army of Tennessee. Separating any of these Confederate symbols from the issue of race and racism is impossible.”

It is helpful to consider that during the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, to integrate schools blacks would sometimes need to walk the gauntlet of shouting Confederate flag-waving white men, women, and even children hate mongers. Often even though they would face this intimidation, the black students would walk sedately and directly to the front door of the previously all-white school. Today this freedom is too often taken for granted.

We might compare flying the Confederate flag (a symbol of holding fellow humans in slavery) to flying or displaying the German swastika. Both causes and symbols are deemed to be hurtful to other groups. That is why the Confederate flag was removed from the Capitol grounds and placed in a museum.

While we are on this subject, let us consider arguments for the causes of the Civil War. The late professor John Heatwole

said, “Pose the question, ‘If there had been no slavery in America, would there have been a U.S. Civil War?’” For careful students of history the answer seems obvious. Historian Gary Gallagher says that the book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe may rightly be considered America’s most important novel. Read it for an unforgettable educational enrichment experience, for it depicts conditions between the races prior to the Civil War.

These African Americans and the families of the victims in the Nickel Mines shootings in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in recent times are examples of the biblical injunction, “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you and pray for those who mistreat you.” We owe much to these people. What noble examples!

We would do well as Mennonites to remember that God is a colorful God who has created all races of His children to be appreciated, loved, respected, and treated equally. It is interesting to note that about 8% of all Beachy Amish Mennonites are African. May we be gracious and encouraging to all our brothers and sisters in the Lord.



Planting Seeds with Seeds

Bruce W. Jantzi, Chernovtsi, Ukraine

(Serving with Master's International Ministries)

Back in the 1900's there was a spiritual vacuum in the hearts of many Ukrainians. This came after the fall of Communism so that a crowd readily gathered when we preached the Gospel in street meetings or in community centers in villages. Though many people in Ukraine did come to Christ in that decade, since then many have filled that vacuum with dead religion and enticements of the world.

The Lord has opened another door which we as the churches under Master's International Ministries (MIM) in Ukraine use as our annual winter evangelization program. Holding garden seed distribution in conjunction with evangelization services is one of our most effective ways presently to gather a large group of unbelievers together to present the Gospel to them.

We hold our Seed Meetings close to our four Mennonite churches across the Ukraine. The scene of our youth toting bags of seed

packages containing different kinds of garden seeds and lugging many boxes of Christian literature and New Testaments is replayed many times as we set up in each village's Culture House (Community Center). Helping each local church is a team of American youth who have come to Ukraine for five weeks to package the seeds, which are supplied by Christian Aid Ministries (CAM), and to sing at the meetings. The general procedure is to have a few messages, followed by several songs sung in Russian or Ukrainian and at the end of the service, distributing seed packages and several Christian magazines and booklets, for those who came for seed packets, to take back to their home village.

Let me share some highlights of our Seed Meetings this past winter in the Chernovtsi area. Our first meeting was in the village of Sopov, where about 70 people gathered. After the preaching of the Gospel, and while the seeds were being passed out, a

stranger named Peter approached me to request prayer because, in his words, "I am a great sinner!"

After the meeting was dismissed, Peter came to the front saying that he would like to repent of his sins and commit his life to God. A few of us knelt with the man and his wife, Vita, at the front of the room. When we suggested that Peter pray, he said he cannot pray, but that he wanted to pray by reading Psalm 51, the repentance prayer of King David. With deep feeling, he slowly read, "...*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*"

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight..."

We rejoice that Peter allowed God to work in his heart. His wife also was not able to pray, but we trust that her "Amen!" was sincere. We gave Peter a new Ukrainian Bible as a memory of the day of his repentance.

About 220 people, most of them unbelievers, gathered in the school gymnasium in the village of Dzhurkov at our second meeting on that day. Again there was preaching, singing, followed by distribution of garden seeds and Gospel literature. This is the eighth consecutive year that we have held these evangelistic meetings here.



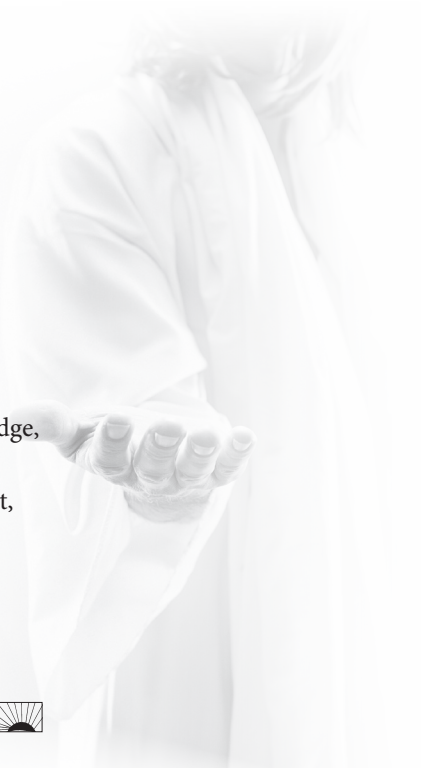
Death's Door

Jordana Graber, Age 15

To die, we are all destined,
To leave this world's allure,
Our wealth can alter nothing;
We shall cross death's door.

What time we have no knowledge,
The how we cannot tell.
These mysteries hold no weight,
For go we surely shall.

If I should go this evening,
If you should cross that door,
Would we be glad and ready
To meet on yonder shore?



Heartfelt Thanksgiving

Mary June Glick, Seneca, SC

The word “thanksgiving” conveys several different images and thoughts. Thanksgiving Day which we will celebrate this month is a day set aside by our nation to thank God for the many blessings God has given to us.

Thanksgiving is an expression of gratitude. God desires our expressions of thanksgiving. However, He yearns to see thanksgiving and praise lived out in our daily lives and actions. God has been working in my life in the past years, teaching me to be content and grateful for all the good things (and sometimes not so good) He brings into my life. I believe growing in the art of gratefulness will be a lifetime experience.

We have been privileged to travel into many different countries and have experienced diverse cultural backgrounds. We have also observed social and economic disparities within our own country and

communities. One thought that has impressed me many times is that real contentment is more often found among those who have much less than I do. Allow me to share some of those contrasts with you:

Water. Most of us enjoy water coming directly at the turn of a faucet in our kitchen, laundry room and bathroom. Do we even think about thanking God for our water? Yet there are people in third world countries who are very grateful for a new well in their village center where they can draw water to carry to their homes, rather than carrying it from the river. In countries that have experienced severe drought in the past years, where does their water come from? Here in the U.S. people often buy water because it may be a bit purer. Who is the most thankful?

Food. Our pantries and freezers are supplied with enough food that many of us could eat quite well

for a long time with that supply. I challenge you to see how long you can live well without going to a grocery store. I remember lean times in our lives when we did that, not just for fun, but because we had to. Our children enjoyed those meals when Mom needed to get them through another day. I remember times living in Belize when people shared food with us when they barely had enough for themselves. Most of those people had a genuine spirit of thankfulness for what they had.

Home. Often when Mel and I return home from traveling, I express my thankfulness for the security of our home, a place where we can relax and enjoy the comforts of life. I am reminded of the homeless people even in our own country who have no home waiting for them, people who sleep under bridges in the cold of winter or heat of summer, people who are thankful for a blanket or a coat to call their own. Many people live in thatch-roofed homes or in simple one-room houses. Others live in a house made of cardboard, constructed in a dump where they salvage for things daily just to survive. Yet, I have seen people in these conditions express deep gratitude for what they have.

Books. I enjoy reading and our house is filled with books. I learned to

read at a young age. I am grateful for my **Bible** in my own language which I can hold in my own hands. Not only can I read it, but I can understand much of what it means because I know the Author of the book. Many people in the world do not have a Bible in their heart language. They have never heard about Jesus. Many people have not learned to read. They have no schools in their village.


I read an article recently about the risk many parents take to get their children to school. In one area the children need to cross a ravine while tied to a rope and a pulley to pull them to the other side. Our granddaughter is in Zambia teaching in a boarding school where children live during the school term, since their villages are too far away to walk to school. I wonder, *Who appreciates books—especially the Bible—the most?*

Money. Most of us have a checking account with money in the bank. Our bills are paid on time so our electric and telephone service continues. We have a church family who will help out with medical bills or pressing needs, if we cannot manage them. However, there are people living around us without anyone to help them. They may not have had the privilege of a good job or even of having learned to work and manage

finances. They may be stuck with large medical bills or be laid off from a job. It may be a single mother with children to provide for by herself. Who will help them?

We tend to complain about government handouts. I know they can be easily misused. Nevertheless, for those people who need assistance, they are probably grateful for food stamps, medicaid, or social security benefits. The next time you see

a mother using food stamps in a grocery store, breathe a prayer for her, or better yet, befriend her. It may be very humiliating to be using those food stamps. Only God knows her heart and situation. Until we have walked a mile in her sandals, we do not understand. Thank God for the ability to provide for your family.

Contentment comes from a grateful spirit. 

junior messages

Singing in the Visa Office

Mary Ellen Beachy, Kisumu, Kenya

It was time for the Marvin Miller family to renew their yearly visas. This had to be done to allow their family to continue working for God in Romania. The mission staff of 70 foreigners living in Romania at that time who needed to have their visas renewed was a big job for Marvin. It took much time and patience.

One day his family needed to have their seven visas renewed. The youngest, seven-year-old Esther, held tightly to her mother's hand.

Each child had to have an application submitted and their picture taken.

This visa office was in the upper story of the police department. Police officers and other officials walked through the area where the family was waiting. The two ladies on duty looked stern in their dark uniforms. When Marvin asked to have the family's pictures taken, he was informed that his wife and three daughters would need to remove their veils to get their visa photos.

Marvin did not think that was

wise at all. He believed the scriptural teaching that Christian women should be veiled. The officials insisted, even asking mockingly if his wife and daughters were born with these veils on their heads.

Marvin kindly and firmly told them that his wife and daughters had previously worn their veils for their passport pictures. This did not seem to help. They thought that Marvin was lying. The officials were very unhappy with Marvin. They were not pleased that he would not obey their orders. Marvin saw that they were not about to change their minds.

Suddenly the surprised officials heard a lovely song of praise ring through their office. How unusual!

God had given Marvin a wonderful idea. He said to his family, "Let's sing!" Their voices rang out loud and clear, "Our God, He is alive," in the Romanian language. Everyone in that office could understand what they were singing. They heard this tribute to God in song! Such wonderful singing had probably

never been heard in the police department.

The ladies working there started giggling nervously. They did not know what to think or what to do with these strange Americans who were singing while waiting for their visa pictures.

A police officer walked through but he did not seem to notice the Millers' singing. But before the song was finished, a tall supervisor came out of his office and sternly told the visa clerks that they had no right to ask the ladies to take off their veilings since this they are worn for religious reasons. That settled the matter. The visa photos were taken, the applications filled out, and and so, finally their visas were renewed.

Marvin breathed a prayer of thanks to God. God had helped them. The power of a Gospel song had moved the officials to action! The children would never forget how a song from God helped the family that day. God honored the song of His obedient children.



***To create, God only needed
to speak, but to bring salvation,
Jesus needed to suffer and die.***



What is Your Policy?

Gideon Yutzy, Hutchinson, KS

I saw him, shirtless and covered with tatoos. He was standing outside the second-class hotel in which we had taken lodging the night before. If a passersby as much as glanced at him, he waved wildly for help.

He had a dead car battery. Umpteen others were ignoring him but I, remembering my Christian duty toward shirtless people with dead car batteries, decided to try a different tack. I offered to give him a boost.

Then my new friend, who was also sans battery cables, tested my Christian virtue by asking me to go buy him battery cables. He would, he assured me, reimburse me later by mail. I told him that's fine but I would prefer helping him but then keeping the battery cables.

Here's the part of the story I want you to know. It was early in the day when I went to buy those battery cables. Walmart was the only store that had opened yet for business. Well, you ask, why is that noteworthy?

The problem is that my wife and I had made a policy three years earlier never to buy anything from Walmart—not even for shirtless men with dead car batteries. We had absorbed too much propaganda about Walmart being an evil corporation that enslaves its employees, a monster that turns the masses into sedate consumers.

Nevertheless, on that morning I decided to compromise. Per the hotel manager's directions, I found a Walmart—with words emblazoned on the iconic sign.

Beside Walmart, promisingly, was a Lowe's hardware store. I checked the opening time: 8:00. That was in five minutes. What a no-brainer! I waited, made my little purchase at Lowe's, and with a clear conscience headed back to the hotel. Our policy remained intact.

Of course, the policy has several flaws. Isn't Lowe's also an evil corporation? Does a Good Samaritan need a bunch of silly

rules to hamper his altruistic acts? I concede those excellent points. Yet I remain convinced: humans need binding policies.

Yes, I said *binding*. Soon I will explain. And soon I shall try to put forth, in proper fashion, why policies are important. First, though, let me clarify what I do not mean.

I am not talking about adopting policies in order to become hyper-productive and hyper-efficient. In the past year I read Steven Covey's *The Seven Secrets of Highly Successful People*, a sort of manifesto on the value of policies. I had one main complaint: the book seemed to promote policies as a means of one-upmanship. People should have a policy of sleeping eight hours per night, yes, but only so they can be wide awake as they climb the social ladder.

Thus Type II personalities like me resist the word policy because it suggests competition and drive. Young people may resist it because it denotes restriction. Does it have to mean either of these? Choosing and binding ourselves to the right policies will make us fully alive and, as St. Irenaeus said, a human fully alive is the glory of God. Policy, in the way I use it here, is life-giving and joyous, like the songbird which has plenty of singing in the grove every morning.

The policies Christians choose should be based on one criterion alone: that in practicing these policies, Christ's healing comes to the world.

How then do policies benefit us? First, when we bind ourselves to carefully chosen policies we find order. And it is order, not a constant re-evaluating of major life issues, that brings us the most profound peace.

When we married, my wife and I purposed that we would never, barring circumstances beyond our control, spend a night apart from each other. In four years of marriage that policy has stood every night.

During those four years, we lost six grandparents. With each passing we had to reason it out. Traveling with small children is stressful and expensive. On the other hand, a grandparent's funeral is an event that doesn't repeat itself. How convenient if one of us would stay home with the children.

But the policy has always stood. True, we had to miss funerals of three grandparents. True, we experienced sadness because of it. Interestingly though, we never experienced guilt. We were simply keeping a policy. That policy has cemented our marriage beyond our expectations and has impressed upon us the permanence and intimacy of marriage. Time and

again, we have been grateful for the order a single policy has brought us.

Second, when we are bound by policies, we learn self-discipline. Evaluate the following statement: *A Christian can use the internet acceptably without having policies.* Before answering, consider the internet's tremendous, unprecedented power in engrossing the senses. Consider the studies that have shown the internet's ability to reshape neural pathways. The internet is no plaything.

If we use the internet with specific policies in place, however, the results can be positive. On the internet, we will either master or be mastered. Those who master the internet only visit sites that serve their legitimate needs—sites they had intended to visit well before logging on to their computers.


Finally, policies make for harmonious community life. The way it's used here, the word policy might be interchangeable with tradition. Well-chosen traditions, or policies, have been a great strength for Amish-Mennonite people. Granted, not all policies are created equal and sometimes they need to be replaced. Overall though, policies have enhanced community life for us.

Consider the traditional Amish frolics (work bees). Though imperiled because of the times we live in, frolics

have been a time-honored, beneficial practice among our people. There, the bishop works alongside the teenager. There, a fellow church member's affairs are more important than one's own. Such is the beauty of a good policy—it produces many positive, even unintended, consequences.

Then also, cults are often born when a single person gains undue amounts of power. Policies settled on by an entire body of people can guard against that. These policies can then be perfected in years to come by a variety of perspectives throughout multiple generations.

In a classroom where I was once the teacher, a beleaguered yellow poster hung on the wall. I purposed in my heart, upon arriving, that the yellow poster should come down. But somehow the first quarter slipped by, then the first semester, and finally my first year had passed. Still the poster had not come down. It became a fixture and stayed on the wall the next year and another.

On it was written a simple message, as undeniable as it is cliché: *Stand for something or fall for anything.* And that is the eloquent summary of all this. Take a stand. Adopt policies—good ones, of course. As you stick to them, you will see rewards that exceed your investments. And you will grow. You will never fall. 

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Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

It is said that when two pessimists met at a party, instead of shaking hands, they shook their heads.

• • • • •

Dignity is not well-preserved in alcohol.

• • • • •

One of the worst deficits is the man who has lost his enthusiasm.

• • • • •

Comparing oneself with an impenitent sinner does not make one a saint.

• • • • •

If we don't live holiness we don't have it.

• • • • •

Let us live so that people will want our autographs, not our fingerprints.

• • • • •

The best place to teach obedience to authority is the play pen, not the state pen.

• • • • •

Experience is not available on an easy payment plan.

• • • • •

Success is not measured by what men attempt, but what they finish.

• • • • •

The best thing to spend on children is time, not money.

• • • • •

Don't move a fence until you fully understand why it was put there.

• • • • •

Deal with others' faults as gently as if they were your own.

• • • • •

Let us live so that we need not fear tomorrow nor regret yesterday.