



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

Galatians 6:14

FEBRUARY 2004

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 To propagate sound Biblical doctrine;
 To stimulate a deeper study of God's Word;
 To anchor and fortify the faith of Christians;
 To point lost and dying souls to Christ the Saviour;
 To welcome prodigals back to the fold and family of God;
 And to help defeated Christians find victory in Christ Jesus.

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Give It To God

Shirley A. Lebold

Millbank, ON

What's done is now past, O give it to God,
He's brought you through all of the griefs that you've trod.
Let's forget all the pain that those sorrows have caused.
Yes, give them; O give them to God.

The present now here, may I live out each day.
How God wants me to; He'll show me The Way.
If I ask Him and trust Him each moment today.
I give it; yes, give it to God.

O give it to God, your future, dear friend,
Just trust Him to lead on ahead, and depend,
Reach out, trust Him, and give Him your hand,
O give it; yes, give it to God.

The middle verse of this poem was penned as I was going through a very real trial. I struggled to give each moment to God. -SAL [Poetry from life like this, that speaks heart to heart, is meaningful. Note how this poem and this month's editorial, "Hands" both fit with the song writer's earnest prayer, "Take Thou my hand, O Father, and lead Thou me." -PLM]



Hands

Let's think about hands. The psalmist said, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath **clean hands** and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord" (Psalm 24: 3-5a). In Scripture, "heart" speaks of our worship and devotion to God and "hands" usually symbolize our work and our relationship to our fellowman. Sometimes they mean something more.

Hands have stories to tell.

Our hands tell what we've been handling. After I change a failed bearing on a machine, I use a solvent to neutralize the grease on my hands, then wash my hands with soap and water. When we milked cows by hand, our hands smelled like the cow stable and were quite unwelcome in the kitchen. So we washed our hands before we proceeded to the table, where a pitcher of milk, chilled and delicious, often awaited us. In harvesting food from the garden and preparing it for the table, we always wash the produce,

then our hands. Our hands just always get into our work.

Our hands symbolize our dealings. We must respect other people's rights and property like we want ours to be respected. When we make a business deal with a neighbor, he is glad when "our fingers" are not "hooked" and grasping, but open to give him a good deal. "It's not a good deal, unless it's a good deal for both of us," is our motto.

When we lift a burden from someone's shoulders, we try to be gentle. The Master of our salvation is "meek and lowly in heart," and we endeavor to have the same attitude. With hearts full of devotion for God, our hands reach out unselfishly to our fellowman. That's how we express our supreme devotion to God, for "inasmuch as [we] have done it unto one of the least of these, [we] have done it unto [Jesus]" (Matt 25:40).

Our hands indicate our feelings. If we keep our hands in our pockets when it's not cold, we are probably keeping most of our thoughts to ourselves. If our hands are clenched, we may be struggling with self-control.

Sometimes when law officers arrest a man, they demand upraised hands. Such hands are usually presented with the palms forward—indicating surrender. The young child, however, spying a parent, runs and reaches up, expecting welcome. Unlike the person under arrest, he eagerly stretches out his hands. Once lifted, he views the world around him as he rests securely on an adult arm. He may snuggle onto a strong shoulder and place his hands comfortably around the parental neck.

I recently witnessed a situation in the life of a man past middle age that I interpreted to be like that child's confident trust in his earthly parent. This man, a Christian, was dismissed from his job without proper explanation. It was most unfortunate. He desired recourse and redress, but was denied. After some time, he turned to fellow believers whom he had come to know on his job. In that setting, I saw how he rested on God.

He grieved as he explained to us his disappointment, yet he did not seem angry. Even though he did not expect us, his counseling brothers, to help him correct the injustice, he wanted to make himself accountable to us in his struggle against sinful responses. As he spoke, I watched his eyes and his hands. It was beautiful. His eyes seemed tender and his hands did not fidget while he explained what had

happened to him. Sometimes close to tears, he never made a fist while he talked, never jammed his hands into his pockets, never gestured for emphasis. His hands were at rest.

Maybe I make too much of his hands, but I interpret their relaxedness to mean that he had truly surrendered himself “to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:23b). Apparently, he had wrestled with God about the injustice dealt him and had given the situation to God. He had placed his hands “around God's neck.” His mind had arrived at calm acceptance but he needed brotherly support as he struggled to bring his heart to the same place of quietness before God.

I felt sorry for this Christian brother because of the unfair deal he got. But he was less to be pitied than those who had wronged him. He was also less pitiful than if he had not released the injustice to God. I rejoiced for him that he had found God's enabling grace to surrender his rights to God. Just think, had he insisted on holding onto other persons' sins in unforgiveness, that in itself would have placed his own soul at risk.

Praise God that He enables us to forgive! We serve a Savior whose love is boundless and free. Someone once said, “I asked Jesus how much He loved me. Then I remembered

Him on the cross with his arms extended and his hands opened wide. That image seemed to say, "This much."

May God give each of us sanctified hands. May He help us consider others in every interchange, whether verbal, financial or otherwise. May we find grace to serve others selfless-

ly and commit every burden to God. When we do that, we will find His yoke easy and His burden light.

Thus you and I are set free by and in the grace of God, for **"if the Son...shall make [us] free, [we] shall be free indeed"** (John 8:36).

-PLM



reader response

On The Beard

Dear friends,

I want to say a hearty Amen to the article on the beard. I feel the article is according to the Scriptures. I am wondering where churches are that uphold this practice.

Thank you!

Joyce Hartman
300 Hart Rd.
Shelbyville, TN 37160

Editor's note: *Who will contact this inquirer? Perhaps readers from Tennessee would follow up this request.*

On Healing for the Broken in Heart

I really appreciate the article, "Healing for the Broken in Heart." It seems insightful and sympathetic. Since the writer chose anonymity, can you pass along my appreciation? Thank you.

It is possible that the writer chose

to remain anonymous because she has been a victim of abuse and doesn't want to deal with the blame that is sometimes assigned to such sufferers. Let us never add an unfair burden to the problems such people face.

Carol Chaney, M.D.
Harrison, AR

[From a telephone conversation with the editor, 12-13-03.]

On Nonconformity

I think nonconformity has become an orphan in the Mennonite church.

Wilmer Swope
Leetonia, OH

[From a telephone message, Dec. 22, 2003.]

[An orphan seems to belong nowhere. It requires special measures of rescue if it is to survive. Who will help with this task? -PLM]



A Church Splitting Issue

Simon Schrock

Fairfax, VA

As we scan across the landscape of the church it does not take long to discover that the people who profess Christ are split into many splinters. The issues they split over are about as numerous as the splinters.

One issue that surfaces as a reason for splitting is disagreement over when to baptize those who profess faith in Christ. Some point out that in the book of Acts, the early church baptized as soon as the person “accepted Christ.” The argument is in favor of baptism without a period of instruction and, in some cases, without requiring a commitment to Christ’s body through the local church. “It’s the way they did it in the Bible,” they say.

The account of the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40 is one example. The Lord sent an angel to instruct Philip to go to Gaza and meet a man of Ethiopia. He obeyed and met the man sitting in a chariot reading from Isaiah 53. From that Scripture, Philip “preached unto him Jesus.” The man responded with true belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Upon this confession Philip baptized the man, after which the Spirit of the

Lord took Philip away and the man saw him no more. From this account the case is made that there was no instruction period or covenant to church membership.

Before concluding that this account of church history should be the pattern for today, consider a few things:

First, this occurred in the first year of the church. To “rightly divide” or “accurately handle” the word of truth, this account needs to be understood in light of later written commandments for the church.

Second, Philip did not have the written New Testament with over one thousand commandments for the church. The Gospels and Epistles were not written. God had not yet revealed all His will of “all things pertaining to life and godliness” for the church.

Third, the Ethiopian was not a newcomer to God. He was returning from worship in Jerusalem. His heart was already with God, and he was reading the Scripture. Philip explained that the Ethiopian was reading about the long-awaited Messiah. Therefore, he responded by moving from first-covenant faith to believing

the new covenant of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. This further step of faith was followed by baptism.

Fourth, to bring people into the new-covenant faith, God spoke through angels, visions, and miracles. In this account the miracle of God connected Philip to this man to explain that he was reading about the Messiah. Then there is the miracle of Philip being caught away right after. Those who attempt to duplicate the Ethiopian's baptism by baptizing immediately upon "accepting Christ" lack the duplication of the miracles.

Saul's Baptism

Isn't Saul's baptism a good model for today? Just months after the eunuch's conversion, Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the followers of Christ. The Lord met him on the way in such a startling and dramatic way that he fell to the ground, lost his eyesight, and heard the definite call of Jesus Christ. He responded with surprise and trembling and said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6)

Through a vision God instructed Ananias to go to Saul and put his hand on him that he might receive his sight. Ananias obeyed; Saul received his sight, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and was baptized. In this account, the transition from

the first covenant with Israel (Old Testament) into the new covenant of the church came through miracles and visions. Saul saw a bright light, heard a voice, was blinded, and conversed with the Lord. Through a vision, God instructed Ananias to go to Saul and baptize him into the body of believers.

Should the church today use this account for the pattern without a period of instruction? Before deciding that this is the way it should be done today and that it is worth splitting a church in order to do so, I again appeal for further consideration.

First, it is not possible to repeat the transition from the first covenant into the New Testament church that took place at Pentecost. We should not expect God to continue the transition miracles such as Saul and Ananias experienced.

Second, God used this specially called apostle Saul, now known as Paul, and other apostles to write His will for the church. These writings, inspired by God, gave us the New Testament. The church today should be diligently searching the Scriptures to discern the will of God. Remember what Jesus taught in the account of the rich man in hell who wanted to send a message back to his five brothers? "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them" (Luke 16:29). Today we have the Word of

God through the apostles. Let us hear them and diligently follow their commands and teachings.

Third, some twenty-five years after Saul's conversion and baptism, God used him (now Paul) to write further instructions to the church on baptism. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3,4).

Other New Testament Scriptures

The testimony in the writings of the apostles is that baptism signifies the burying of the sin life and the resurrection into a new life of righteousness. A footnote in *Martyr's Mirror* on this passage of Scripture indicates that the concern in the early church was that there be true repentance before baptism. "He that is to have his sin buried through baptism must first have died to it through repentance," (page 65). Evidence of true repentance should precede baptism.

Let's look at the parable of the seed and the sower. An applicant for baptism should pass the test given in this parable. Jesus said, "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God."

He said some fell upon stony places. "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet he hath not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matt. 13:20,21). The parable indicates "other seed fell on good ground and sprang up, and brought forth an hundred fold" (Matt. 13:8). Furthermore, "that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

Should baptism take place before there is evidence that the Word of God was received in an honest and good heart, bringing forth fruit with patience? Should baptism take place with seed that "fell upon stony places"? Those are the ones who make a profession of faith with joyful fanfare, but soon fall away. They "accept Christ" without counting the cost of truly denying self and following Christ and the New Testament teachings for His church. Should they receive baptism before there is "fruit with patience"? Patience implies perseverance.

Personal Experiences

I have been involved in leading seekers to "accept Christ." While

there were initial rejoicings, disappointment came if the profession didn't last. I think of a young man who made such a confession. It was a joyful moment. Though it all seemed real and sincere, the spiritual interest didn't last. He began counting the cost. He realized that truly to follow Christ meant changing behavior. He let it be known that he did not want to give up getting into fights. His spiritual aspirations ended only a few weeks after his joyful experience. Prompt baptism without "fruit" of repentance and "newness of life" may have given him a false hope.

To truly follow Christ means being part of His body, the church. Baptism should connect the applicant to the visible, functional church. Connecting with Christ means connecting with His body.

A Historical Perspective

Who introduced a period of instruction before baptism? Was it the idea of some strict church leader in the last 200 years?

According to history, the Apostle Mark, in about 52 A.D., focused on instruction before baptism. On page 60, in *Martyr's Mirror*, I read, "When St. Mark, the great apostle of Christ, saw that Awabius had a desire for Christ, and that he was believing and instructed, he descended with him into the pool and baptized him."

This is the first example of which we read in history, outside the Holy Scripture, of those who were incorporated into the church of Christ, through baptism upon faith."

Martyr's Mirror also records the testimony of early church leaders requiring a period of instruction before baptism. In the year 95, Clemens, bishop of the church at Rome wrote, "that the candidate for baptism is to be examined three months previously." Clemens taught that "no other baptism obtained in the church, than that which was administered after preceding instruction."

Clemens also wrote in another letter, "Let him that desires baptism, go to the priest, or teacher, and hear from him the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; let him exercise himself diligently with fasting, and examine himself well in everything, so after three months he may be baptized." (page 67) Of Clemens Alexandrinus we read that at Alexandria he presided over the school in which the Calachumens, that is those who received instruction preparatory for baptism, were taught the principles for Christian faith." (page 103)

A second century leader, Straho, "speaks thus concerning baptism: we must know that in these first times baptism was administered only to those who, in body as well as soul, were washed clean and white, what

benefit there was to be obtained in baptism, what was to be confessed and believed, and finally, what was necessary to be observed by the regenerated in Christ.” (page 103) In the same place, it is recorded, “the candidates for baptism were first instructed in the school, in the principles of Christian faith before they were baptized.”

According to Martyr’s Mirror, instruction or baptism continued century after century. It was an important ingredient in the life of the church. In many cases becoming a candidate for baptism was becoming a candidate for death.

A Final Appeal

Before you argue and split a

church for “baptism just like in Acts,” check out what the Scriptures teach that were written after the birth of the church. Be aware that instruction class before baptism is not an idea introduced by leaders of the church in recent time. If you are not in harmony with instruction before baptism, then consider the miraculous covenant-transition settings of New Testament baptism accounts, and also the danger of losing out. (See Matt. 13:20, 21.)

“Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8b) That may depend on how faithful the church is in instructing applicants before they baptize them.



When you were born,
you **cried**
and the world **rejoiced.**

Live so that when you die,
*the world **cries***
and you
rejoice.

Patriotism: An Anabaptist Perspective

Frank L. Reed,

From the Brethren Revival Fellowship Witness, Vol. 38, #3.

The United States of America is [seen by many to be] the greatest nation in the world.

It is likely the greatest [most powerful] nation that will ever be in the world. [I believe] the United States of America has provided more freedom and more opportunity for more people—than any nation ever has. Untold millions of people of all races and religions have found refuge at these “golden shores.” America has fulfilled the dreams of millions of individuals. In America, as nowhere else, opportunity, prosperity, and happiness have been offered and have been realized.

America has shared its wealth with the world. Every year billions of hard-earned United States dollars are given to needy nations. Every year millions of bushels of American grain are given to hungry peoples of the world. Israel receives nearly two billion American dollars per year. Egypt gets more than one billion. Many more countries are also beneficiaries of American largess. Even the United Nations receives a large share of its budget from the USA. The former USSR would have faced severe

food shortages without the heavily subsidized grain shipments from the United States of America.

America has not only shared its currency and food but also its wealth of knowledge and expertise. Many countries of the world send their brightest...minds to American universities for education and training. America sends many teams of experts to foreign countries for assistance in agriculture, medicine, and many other areas. American scientists have developed treatment and cures for many diseases. The whole world benefits from these medications. American engineers have built [some of] the best aircraft used all over the world.

As we have noted, America is [probably] the greatest nation in the world. But we must not forget that America is a nation in the world. America is not a Christian nation. It never was and it never will be. This is not to say that America was not founded on some biblical principles. It was established on some Bible truths. And certainly William Penn’s “Holy Experiment” was an attempt to use biblical principles to order

relationships between peoples. But America is a nation in the world and it behaves like a nation in the world. The United States Constitution does not contain the words Christian or Jesus or Bible. Many of the founding fathers were deists. The power of the United States government rests in the “consent of the governed,” not in the Word of God.

How can America justify having displaced and destroyed the native peoples when this continent was “discovered”? How can America defend her own revolution against England with massive loss of life and property just to save some taxes? Is taxation without representation really a reason to shed blood? Canada received her independence without a war. These events are generally not taught this way in American history classes.

What about the reparations against Germany after World War I? Were they really necessary? Those reparations were [probably] the real cause of World War II. Germany was so oppressed that her people fell for the lines and lies of a nationalistic socialistic dictator—and the rest, as they say, is history. On the subject of World War II, why did the Allies bomb the defenseless German city of Dresden, Germany, after Germany was essentially defeated? And why did America spend eleven years and

55,000 American lives in Vietnam? Still nobody seems to know.

America is a nation in the world and it behaves like a nation in the world. It uses the worldly policy which says, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” And so it arms and feeds one country to control another, only to find a few years later that the tables are turned and America faces its own guns. America sets up and puts down leaders in smaller countries...to protect American interests in the world. American businesses exploit people in the poor nations so they can profit from sales of products at home. Does this sound like genuine Christianity?

Do these facts mean that we should be anti-American? The answer is, “No, not at all.” What it does mean is that we, as Bible-practicing Anabaptist believers, need to recognize that America is a nation of the world and act accordingly. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome (and others), each in turn, ruled the world. Where are they now? Empires rise and empires fall. There is only one Kingdom that stands forever.

Christian allegiance can only be to that one kingdom—the Kingdom of God. The second chapter of Daniel illustrates the kingdoms of the world and the final one kingdom that will rule the world in righteousness—the Kingdom of God. True disciples of

Christ respect the flags of all nations but give allegiance to the flag of no nation. Our allegiance is to a kingdom that will never fall. (Daniel 2:44).

As Christian believers, we are not first and finally citizens of our homeland. We are citizens of Heaven. It is best not to speak of America as “our” country. It is not our country. It is the country [for many of us] in which we were born. None of us had a choice about where we should be born. What if you had been born in Pakistan or North Korea or Cuba? Would you be patriotic there? Probably not. Then why should you be patriotic here in the USA?

During World War II, Lutherans fought for Germany and Lutherans fought for America. They killed each other. Why? For patriotism and for the glory of God. Does that make sense to you? They were, each in turn, patriotic for their own country. Mennonites fought in the German army and Mennonites fought in the American army. Does that make sense to you? Do you think that such conduct can be the will of God? Fifty percent of the Mennonite boys who were drafted entered the United States military. Ninety percent of the Church of the Brethren young men chose military service in World War II (page 474, Durnbaugh, Fruit of the Vine).

Those who are sincere Anabaptist believers should not speak of national events by saying that “our country did this or that.” Japan did not attack the Mennonite Church at Pearl Harbor, and Germany was not at war with the Brethren. Thus “we” (Anabaptists) were not attacked by the Japanese, and we were not at war with Germans. We are citizens of a different country and we are not at war with anyone except the powers of darkness. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal” (2 Cor. 10:4).

Many of us believe that we should not fly the flag of this or of any country. A flag is the representation of the political interests of a political area. We should not pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. Instead, we should stand respectfully for the recognition of any flag (or any dignity) of any country, because God has established human government. Our lives and allegiance belong only to God and His kingdom, and not to any earthly realm.

Many of us believe that we should not vote in political elections. In a republican democracy a vote is not a simple choice. A vote consists of a citizen’s placing authority in a representative to act for the citizen. So, if we vote, we are selecting a representative to act for us as indi-

viduals. When that representative makes choices and decisions, we are then obligated to support them. This could include going to war. If he declares war, that blood could well be on our hands. Those citizens who participate in the process of selecting civil officials (governors and presidents)—are then obligated to support the decisions of the officers when they are in office.

We are concerned about the influence of evangelicalism upon the Anabaptist community. Modern evangelicalism supports many good projects, but what they do is compromised if they don't make Jesus Lord in all areas of life. We are not saying evangelicals do not have anything good to offer, but we are saying that when they support military action, that does not exemplify the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Another concern in the Anabaptist community is the influence of pacifism. Modern pacifism is an unrealistic idealism that attempts to force Christian ideals upon an unregenerate society. The commands of Jesus and the Bible cannot be generalized to include directives to the state. It is not wrong to bring the claims of God upon the lives of individuals, but to expect a worldly nation to follow the Son of God is unrealistic. [Nowhere in in the New Testament is the responsibility of confronting

civil government with the claims of Christ placed upon the Christian church.-PLM] The Sermon on the Mount is the outline for behaviors and attitudes in the Kingdom of God, not the kingdoms of the world.

This subject has been discussed recently in the Evangelical press. With names like James Dobson and D. James Kennedy on one side, and names like Jerry Falwell and Cal Thomas on the other—a very warm debate [continues]. Dobson and Kennedy are pressing for more evangelical participation in all levels of government. Falwell, once a political activist, in his book, *Strength for the Journey* (1987), details his return to his first call—preaching the Bible. In Falwell's words, "The local church is the front line in the war that God is waging with the Enemy. The real action does not take place in the Supreme Court chambers or the marble halls of Congress or even in the Oval Office." Cal Thomas [coauthored a book with Pastor Ed Dobson] titled *Blinded by Might*. His famous line is that "the Kingdom of God will not arrive on Air Force One."

James Dobson, in particular, has taken issue with the approach of Falwell and Thomas. The issue resulted in a publicized debate between Cal Thomas and a representative of Dobson's Focus on the Family. So, even in evangelicalism this issue is

far from resolved. What is a biblical perspective on this situation?

When Abraham and Lot lived in the environs of Sodom and Gomorrah, it was Lot who sat in the gate. “Sitting in the gate” is thought to have a position of political significance. Abraham, on the other hand, lived away from the city life. When the time came for the judgment of God to fall, who was it that had power relative to the disposition of the city? Was it the politically active Lot or the spiritually active Abraham? All of us know the answer. The prayers of Abraham were all that stood between the people of Sodom and the judgment of Almighty God.

What is patriotism as understood from an Anabaptist world view? It was Elder John Kline who said, “My highest conception of patriotism is found in the man who loves the Lord his God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. Out of these affections spring the subordinate love for one’s country; love truly virtuous for one’s companion and children, relatives and friends; and in its most comprehensive sense takes in the whole human family. Were this love universal, the word patriotism and its specific sense, meaning such a love for one’s country as makes its possessors ready and willing to take up arms in its defense, might be appropriately expunged from every

national vocabulary” (page 311, *The Brethren Encyclopedia*).

Even Abraham Lincoln [president during the Civil War, 1860-1865] lent his support to our nonresistant lifestyle. He said that Brethren and Mennonite people should not be required to participate in the military. His reason was that “These people do not believe in war. People who do not believe in war make poor soldiers. Besides, the attitude of those people has always been against slavery. If all our people had held the same views about slavery as these people hold, there would be no war” (page 129, Rufus Bowman, *The Church of the Brethren and War*).

What if good men “do nothing”? Good men (or women) never “do nothing.” Elder John Kline prayed and preached and wrote letters. Abraham lived an exemplary life and prayed. No one can do [much] more than that.

We are responsible to live as citizens of the world, and not of any one country. The Kingdom of God has no geographic boundaries. How then can members of the Church defend geographic boundaries with military power? Believers in all political areas are citizens of the Kingdom of God, and are all members of the body of Christ.

What does the Bible say about our citizenship? Philippians 3:20

clearly tells us that our citizenship is in Heaven. Hebrews 13:14 says that God's people are looking for a country because they have no continuing city here. The Bible further says that we are ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador does not participate in the politics of the country of residence. He or she represents the home country.

What is the biblical perspective on the question of good citizenship? Our responsibility can be easily summed up with three words. We should pray, pay and obey. We are exhorted in the Bible to pray for those who have the authority over us, knowing that "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Proverbs 21:1). We are also to pay our taxes. Most of us do not like to pay taxes but it is a biblical command. Jesus said, "Render to Caesar that which bears his inscription and image." The Bible clearly says that we are to pay taxes (Romans 13:6,7). We're also to obey. We are to be "subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1). This command is mitigated, of course, by Acts 5:29 which instructs us to "obey God rather than men." So we obey unless the commands of God conflict with the commands of the government, in which case we obey the commands of God. The classic illustration of

this is military service. Our money is printed with the image of Caesar, so we render money to Caesar. Human beings, on the other hand, are made in the image of God so we are not at liberty to place our bodies at Caesar's disposal. Our bodies belong only to God.

Does our worldly citizenship in the United States mean anything? Yes, it does. Our citizenship in the USA makes us responsible. We can make a living in a very short time. What do we do with the balance of our time and money? Believers all over the globe need assistance that we can easily provide just by lowering our standard of living a little bit. We have much and we need to share. We do not demand but we can use privileges to be responsible in heavenly stewardship by wisely distributing what God has given us.

Does our citizenship in the Heavenly Kingdom mean anything? It should be important to us. We should be so busy being the church that we have little time to involve ourselves in the politics, sports, fashions, etc. of this world. Our songs should drown [out] the siren song of the world's music. We are rightly so committed to God that we note the events of politics or worldly affairs with some detachment. Our discipleship should be continually increasing the kingdom of God. Our churches

should be places reverberating with the worship of the King. Our affection for God's Word should be the controlling factor in our lives.

If America falls, I believe it will not be the result of too small an army or too little patriotism. It will be the result of godlessness—the movie and entertainment industry gone to wasteland; the sins of abortion and homosexuality accepted as normal; professional sports mania gone wild; business corruption becoming more commonplace; infidelity to family and marriage vows more and more accepted as the norm. The professing Christian community is becoming [nearly] as worldly as the world. The Bible says (Psalm 33:16,17) that “no king is saved by the multitude of an army.” Proverbs 14:34 says that “Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.” Bible reading and prayer were neglected at home a long time before they were taken out of schools. If America falls it will not be for too little patriotism. It will be the result of godlessness.

We must remember who we are, and that Christians have what this nation and the world need, and they need what we have. We should be the best citizens this country (or any country) has. We should be the examples of all that is right and godly.

Our lives should give evidence that we are not looking at that which is temporal but at that which is eternal. We should keep in mind John Kline's concept of patriotism. We need to continue in Abraham's practice of prayer and intercession for all who are in authority.

The New Testament makes it clear that believers are to think of themselves as aliens and ambassadors. Paul says that we are “the offscouring and filth of this world” (1 Corinthians 4:13) as we live here. That is because we are citizens of a different country. Hebrews 11:13-16 says that God's people desire a better country. Let us live so that the desire for a better country is obvious to all who know us. Our lives should give evidence that we are from a different country.

We are blessed to live in a country with many freedoms. We are blessed to be able to share our blessings with believers all over the world. But we are more blessed to be members of the kingdom of God and to anticipate living with Him in that kingdom forever.



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How to Pray for Missionaries

Floyd Stoltzfus

Narvon, PA

“I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men” (1 Tim. 2:1).

Intercession denotes “a lighting upon, meeting with: a technical term in approaching a king; seeking the presence and hearing of God on behalf of others” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary) It is a strong word with deep meaning. It carries a sense of urgency, desperation, and fervor. It means to plead earnestly (not in a demanding sense) and to make request in behalf of another. Intercession is like “holding the ropes” in behalf of others so they do not sink into despair, extreme grief, and eventually surrender to the will of the devil. Are we holding the ropes by urgent intercession in behalf of our missionaries?

1. The Importance of Intercession

Morning comes. Another day dawns fresh, pure and spotless! How shall we invest the precious early moments of this new day? Shall we fret idly about our mistakes

of yesterday? We will never be able to undo the past. Can we afford to be carried away in a state of anxiety by the cares of tomorrow? No! Not in the light of a long glorious eternity. Time is entirely too short to be wasted.

God gives us one day to live at a time. At the judgment a strict check will be made as to how we invested our time. Redeeming our time in prevailing prayer is a heavenly investment that will last forever. Investing time in prayer may actually be saving time for work. It is the safest, the surest, the most rewarding investment that God and His kingdom can offer.

Intercessory prayer is the least glamorous yet the most honorable work in the kingdom of Christ. Prayer and fasting may be the least talked about subject, but the most important work of the church. Persevering prayer is the hardest engagement for the flesh, yet the Spirit is always ready. A durable prayer warrior is Satan’s worst enemy, but God’s closest friend. Prayer is the greatest, most unused power

in the world.

We must realize that it is not in prayer itself where the power lies. Craig Satterlee, a Bible teacher from Chicago, has been legally blind since birth, with a mere 20% of normal vision. He doesn't complain that God has not answered prayer for healing for his eyes. He believes that God has given him something better. "I am whole," he testifies, "even though I am legally blind." He further explains, "I don't believe in the power of prayer. I believe in the presence and in the power of God, so I pray."

2. The Interruption of Intercession

Because praying to our Heavenly Father is the strongest and most fortified weapon to defeat the devil, he will exert his most strenuous efforts to annoy a person in prayer. Satan doesn't care if you pray a little, but he hates prevailing fervent prayers in private.

He will attempt to get your mind to wandering primarily to keep you from getting close to God. Awake and pray! The harvest is nearly past. Watch for the wiles of the devil! Wait on the Lord. Remember, we are helpless. Especially when we don't feel like praying then is the time to pray fervently.

3. The Intensity of Intercession

Intercessory prayer is an ago-

nizing exercise. Of our great high priest, we read, "Who in the days of his flesh,...offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears...." (Heb. 5:7a). Paul prayed with a note of praise and compassion unceasingly. "Wherefore I also...cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (Eph. 1:15,16). "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy," (Phil 1:3,4). "...night and day praying exceedingly..." (1 Thess. 3:10). Romans 15:30 is amplified thus: "I appeal to you, brethren for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the love (given by) the Spirit to unite with me in earnest wrestling in prayer to God in my behalf." (AMP)

Paul was not one to cross off his prayer list the names of faithful saints. More frequent reference is made in the New Testament to pray for saints than for sinners. However, this does not minimize the need of weeping for the lost. Some have felt that because Jesus said in John 17:9, "I pray not for the world," that there is no need to pray for the salvation of the sinner. Jesus' primary interest in the High Priestly prayer was for the disciples and all believers. "Holy Father," He prayed, "keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one,

as we are” (John 17:11).

Five times in that prayer He intercedes, “that they may be one.”

Jesus could not pray like that for the lost. He did intercede for the cruel soldiers, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” That attitude is also reflected in Stephen’s prayer, for he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” (Acts 7:60). Could it be that this prayer brought conviction to Saul? Later, on his way to Damascus, the Lord approached him with these words, “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”

A changed Paul later describes his deep and compassionate longing for his fellow Jews who did not believe in Jesus, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have...great sorrow in my heart. For I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: ...Brethren my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved” (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1).

4. The Involvement of Prayer

Make a prayer list. Pray for ministers of the Gospel, that we may be rooted in doctrine and practice, lest we be swamped by the tide of worldliness. Our young people who are confronted with extreme social

pressures to compromise with unwholesome speech, fashionable attire and hairdos, and the soft breeze of worldly pleasure need the touch of God. Pray that they would be willing to be sent forth as workers in sacrificial Christian service.

How shall we pray for missionaries? Pray for their spiritual stability, emotional encouragement, and physical protection. Blessed are the missionary children who have praying grandparents that the Lord would protect them from evil influences around them. Pray Paul’s inspired words, “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.” (Eph. 6:19). Also use Ephesians 3:14-21 in praying for individual believers by name. This can be a rich blessing!

Broaden your prayer range. We are living in a world of unparalleled political confusion. It is urgent to pray for our government and other world leaders. Crying needs exist in war-torn Afghanistan, Liberia and Iraq. Pray for Christians in these lands and that many more would come to Christ. Pray also for Christians in Muslim countries, where they are often times persecuted severely.

John Slater was our accountant in my father’s business. He was a Spirit-filled man in a small com-

munity church. His godly manners and devotion to Jesus Christ left an indelible impression on my young life. Years later I, along with my sister and her husband who were missionaries in Belize, visited him. John said he would put their names on his prayer list. He had nearly one hundred names for whom he prayed regularly. He also sent personal let-

ters to many, along with tapes of Gospel messages.

Don't think you have to use eloquent phrases in your prayers. Do not worry as to how God will fulfill and answer your prayers. Leave it to Him. Pray in simplicity, with faith and a humble, broken heart, overflowing with praise and thanksgiving.



Ministers' Meeting Tapes

Bro. Noah Petersheim of SON Recordings, made recordings of the workshops at last spring's ministers' meeting in Lancaster, PA.

I failed to mention these workshops and tapes in my message reports which were published in *Calvary Messenger*, from August to Dec, 2003. I also failed to mention that both the sermons and the workshops are available on tape. I'm sorry for any disappointment and inconvenience this has caused.

Even though I chose not to review the workshops in *Calvary Messenger*, they are well worth your time. These workshops included a lot of valuable group interaction and discussion. Sample topics include: Setting Goals in Personal Life, Home Life, and Church Life; Administrative Procedures for Member's Meetings and Men's Meetings; Communicating Redemptively to Those Who Have Failed to Support the Church; as well as several for and by sisters: Supporting Your Minister Husband; and Cultivating a Meek and Quiet Spirit. A total of 10 topics are addressed.

The 10 tapes of the workshops are priced at \$32.50. The 6 tapes of sermons are priced at \$30, prepaid. Order from:

SON Recordings
4614 Holly Ave.
Fairfax, VA 22030

—PLM

Bontrager-Schlabach

Bro. Craig, son of LaVerne and Velma Bontrager, Middlebury, IN, and Sis. Leanna, dau. of Abe and Amanda Schlabach, Millersburg, IN, on Sept. 13, 2003, at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church for Woodlawn A.M. Church by Elmer J. Miller.

Brubacher-Gerber

Bro. Lester, son of Erla Brubacher, Elmira, ON, and Sis. Christine, dau. of Wilmer and Marjorie Gerber, Wellesley, ON, Aug. 9, 2003, at Fair Haven A.M. Church by Melvin Roes.

Farmwald-Miller

Bro. John, son of Owen and Anna Mae Farmwald, Monticello, KY, and Sis. Katherine, dau. of Lonney and Mary Miller, Crossville, TN, on Nov. 28, 2003, at Dripping Springs Baptist Church for Mt. Moriah Fellowship by John Mast.

Hostetler-Mast

Bro. Glenn, son of Lee and the late Mary Ann Hostetler, Cottage Grove, TN, and Sis. Kristina, dau. of Mervin and

Erma Mast, Belvidere, TN, on Nov. 7, 2003, at Winchester First Baptist Church for Belvidere Mennonite Church, by John Mast.

Miller-Mullet


Bro. Lucas, Aroda, VA, son of Alvin and Edna Miller, Nicaragua, and Sis. Julianna, dau. of James and Ruth Mullet, Sugarcreek, OH, at Maranatha Fellowship for Living Waters Fellowship, Sugarcreek, OH, on Nov. 22, 2003, by James Mullet.

Schrock-Miller

Bro. Ivan Dale, son of Simon and Polly Schrock, Fairfax, VA, and Sis. Nicole Dionne, dau. of Clarence and Lois Miller, Sugarcreek, OH, at Sharon Mennonite Church, on Oct. 25, 2003, by Simon Schrock.

Troyer-Beiler

Bro. Joel, son of David and Emma Troyer, Leesburg, OH, and Sis. Loretta, dau. of J. Omar and Naomi Beiler, Leesburg, OH, at Heritage Memorial Church for Faith and Light Christian Fellowship, Oct. 24, 2003, by Perry Troyer.

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

There is no better tranquilizer than a clear conscience.

cradle roll

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

Beachy, Daniel and Salina (Kanagy), Richfield, PA, second child and son, Cody Daniel, Sept. 30, 2003.

Eicher, Marvin Joel and Gina (Hershberger), Millersburg, OH, first child and dau., Hannah Grace, Dec. 3, 2003.

Fisher, Abner and Sarah (Petersheim), Kinzers, PA, tenth child, fourth son, Keith Lamar, Nov. 18, 2003.

Hershberger, Paul and Sarah (Miller), Yanceyville, NC, third child and son, Micah John, Oct. 18, 2003.

Hochstetler, Jay Dee and Rosetta (Miller), Middlebury, IN, fourth child, second dau., Makayla Rose, Dec. 12, 2003.

Hostetler, Erin and Freida (Stoltzfoos), Martinsburg, OH, second child, first son, Tucker Daniel, Nov. 25, 2003.

Hostetler, John and Twila (Peachey), Belleville, PA, third child, first son, Kevin Dwight, Nov. 20, 2003.

Jantzi, Wayne and Judy (Miller), Aroda, VA, fourth child, third son, Jonathan Duane, Nov. 26, 2003.

Kinsinger, Milt and Faith (Yoder), Hartselle, AL, first child and dau., Victoria Faith, Nov. 24, 2003.

Knepp, Adin and Miriam (Stoll), Loogootee, IN, first child and son, Malachi Lavon, Dec. 8, 2003.

Kurtz, Arlan and Linda (Peight), Belleville, PA, fourth child, second son, Jeremy David, Nov. 14, 2003.

Lambright, Mark and Regina (Gingerich), Roodhouse, IL, third child, first son, Anthony Paul, Nov. 30, 2003.

Mast, Jonathan and Sarah Etta (Troyer), Leesburg, OH, fifth child, second son, Trent Jonathan, Dec. 12, 2003.

Miller, David and Wanda (Troyer), Martinsburg, OH, fifth child, third dau., Ilona Kris, Nov. 12, 2003.

Miller, Eli and Diana (Miller), Crossville, TN, second child, first dau., Keisha Danae, Dec. 18, 2003.

Miller, Lavern and Rachel (Nissley), Middlebury, IN, third child and son, Isaiah John, Dec. 30, 2003.

Miller, Mark and Judy (Miller), Sugarcreek, OH, fourth child, third son, Clement Elliot, July 15, 2003.

Slabaugh, Dennis and Anna Fern (Mast), Bourbon, IN, eighth child, third dau., Melissa Ann, Dec. 13, 2003.

Spicher, Marlin and Mary Ann (Esh), Belleville, PA, third child, (one son deceased), first dau., Denise Michelle, Nov. 20, 2003.

Stoltzfus, Mervin and Nancy (King), Honey Brook, PA, seventh child, fifth son, Linford Dale, Dec. 14, 2003.

Wagler, Michael and Lisa (Wagler), Cannelburg, IN, first child and dau., Jenna Ryann, Dec. 4, 2003.

Wagler, Tommy and Marjorie (Overholt), Hartville, OH, second child, first dau., Chyanne Elyse, Oct. 5, 2003.

Weaver, Ben and Sheryl (Stutzman), Auburn, KY, first child and dau., Sierra Dawn, Oct. 30, 2003.

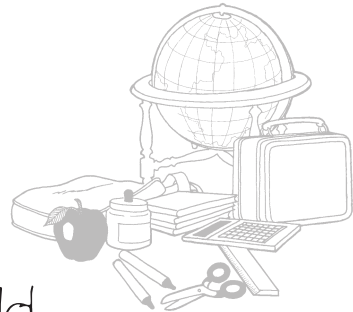
Weaver, Levi, Jr. and Glenda (Stutzman), Russellville, KY, first child and son, Drew Weston, Dec. 9, 2003.

Weaver, Matt and Tracy (Knepp), Leesburg, OH, second child, first son, Braden Matthew, Dec. 7, 2003.

Yoder, Michael and Kathy (Hostetler), Montezuma, GA, first child and dau., Meredith Ruo Huan, Dec. 18, 2002. Received for adoption Oct. 19, 2003.



A child educated
only at school is
an uneducated child.



ordinations

Bro. Willard Hochstetler, 57, Hicksville, OH, was ordained to the office of bishop at Hicksville Christian Fellowship, Dec. 7, 2003. Preordination messages were given by Elmer J. Miller of Goshen, IN.

The charge was given by David Yoder, Jr., assisted by Elmer Miller and Raymond Kauffman. Samson Eicher was also in the lot.

Bro. David L. (Dave) Miller, 32, was ordained to the office of deacon at Melita Fellowship, Martinsburg, OH, on Dec. 7, 2003.

Preordination messages were given by Perry Troyer, Plain City. The charge

was given by Nelson Beachy, assisted by Perry Troyer and Homer Zook.

Bro. Duane Weaver, 27, Stuarts Draft, VA, was ordained to the office of deacon at Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, Dec. 21, 2003. Preordination messages were given by Wayne Schrock of Sioux Lookout, ON.

The charge was given by Bennie Byler, assisted by Tim Miller, Ivan Beachy and Chester Weaver. Also in the lot were Simon Schrock and Ivan Swarey.



May the grace of God be upon our brethren as they minister faithfully. Let us pray for them.

obituaries

Graber, Samuel D., 88, Goshen, IN, died Dec. 4, 2003, at Greencroft Nursing Home, Goshen, IN. He was formerly of Shipshewana and Millersburg. He was born July 27, 1915, in Mylo, ND, to Daniel J. and Edith (Schrock) Graber.

He was a member of Woodlawn A.M. Church.

On Oct. 29, 1940, he married Mabel Eash, who preceded him in death on Jan. 6, 1998.

He is survived by four daughters:

Elmeda (Mrs. Raymond Bear), Amelia, VA; Erma (Mrs. Willard Mast), Hutchinson, KS; Ellen (Mrs. Larry Brown), Dunnellon, FL; and Marlene Miller, Elkhart, IN; five sons: Vernon (Karon) Graber and Lester (Joann) Graber, both of Goshen, IN; Danny (Rhonda) Graber, Elkhart, IN; Richard (Wilma) Graber, Hutchinson, KS; and Maynard (Kathy) Graber, Mongo, IN; 24 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren; three sisters: Anna Lambright, Shipshewana,

IN; Ada (Mrs. Ora Nisley) Goshen, IN; Fannie (Mrs. Melvin Mast), Shipshewana, IN; and a brother, John Graber, Middlebury, IN.

He was preceded in death by his parents, a sister, Lizzie Schrock, and four brothers: Levi, Melvin, Milo and Tobe Graber.

Funeral services were held at Woodlawn A.M. Church on December 7, with Clarence Bontrager and Elmer Miller officiating. Ed Yoder served in the committal at the church cemetery.

Miller, Sara E. (Miller), 74, Middlebury, IN, died at her home Oct. 7, 2003. She was born Nov. 10, 1928, daughter of Edward J. and Lizzie Ann (Miller) Miller in LaGrange County, IN.

She was a homemaker and member of Woodlawn A.M. Church, Goshen, IN.

On March 20, 1949, she married Thomas H. Miller.

Surviving are her husband, three daughters: Beulah (Mrs. Nelson Hege), Broadway, VA; Naomi (Mrs. Wayne Gingerich), Plain City, OH; and Sharon (Mrs. Wayne Miller), Belvidere, TN; eight sons: James Miller, Laban (Joyce) Miller, Daniel (Carol) Miller, and Paul Miller, all of Goshen, IN; Emanuel (Joann) Miller, Nathan (Wanda) Miller, both Middlebury, IN; Alpha (Lauranna) Miller, Monterey, KY; Adin (Marisol) Miller, Tyler, TX; a sister, Viola (Mrs. Chris Rogich), Limon, CO; five brothers: Eli (Jeri) Miller, Rocky Mount, MO;

Alvin (Mary) Miller, Middlebury, IN; Freeman (Mary) Miller, Nappanee, IN; Omar (Barbara) Miller, Jeffersonville, IN, and Truman Miller, Goshen, IN, and 32 grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents; a son, Mark; two brothers, John and Wyman Miller; and an infant sister, Alice.

Funeral services were held at Woodlawn A.M. Church on Oct. 10, with Elmer Miller and Glen Miller officiating. Burial was in the Miller Cemetery, Middlebury.

Yoder, Rufus L., Sr., 81, Montezuma, GA, died at his home Oct 21, 2003. He was born Dec. 9, 1921, in Norfolk, VA, son of the late Lloyd and Amelia (Tice) Yoder.


He received Christ as his Savior and was a member of Montezuma Mennonite Church, Montezuma, GA.

On Dec. 19, 1944, he was married to Mary Weaver, who survives.

Other survivors include eleven children: Melvin (Laura); Robert (Mary Lois); Jesup, GA; Dorothy (Mrs. Mart Schlabach); Irvin (Beulah); Pauline (Mrs. Stanley Yoder); Rufus, Jr., (Naomi); Floyd (Prudence); Marvin (Bertha); Barbara Ann (Mrs. Milton Yoder); Merlin (Shirley); all of Montezuma. Raymond (Luella), Falkville, AL; sixty-eight grandchildren and fifteen great-grandchildren. Brothers and sisters surviving are: Menno, Viola (Mrs. Lloyd Swartzentruber), Montezuma, and

Elva Beiler of Virginia Beach, VA, and many nieces and nephews.

Preceding him in death were one daughter, Bertha, one granddaughter, Rhonda, brother Melvin, and sister, Bertha Brenneman.

Funeral services were held at Montezuma Mennonite Church on Oct. 24, with Eli Kauffman, Donnie Swartzentruber, Daniel Yoder, all local, and Donnie Brenneman, VA, serving. Burial was in the church cemetery. 

observations

Thanks to several readers who have called attention to an unusual situation concerning religious freedom in France. A presidential commission is backing a ban on the wearing of Islamic head scarves in public schools. If the measure becomes law it would also ban other religious symbols such as Jewish skullcaps and large Christian crosses.

Bernard Shaw, who heads the commission, said the proposed law was aimed at keeping France's "strict secular underpinnings intact..." France covets its secularism and apparently values it above free exercise of religious freedom.

On a related note, it seems strange to me that North American Anabaptist missionaries are sometimes unashamed to wear conventional western garb that is an affront to the national culture in which they serve. To conform to New Testament standards of Christian identity seems right from both a scriptural and practical perspective.

Carl F. H. Henry recently died at age 90. He was founding editor of *Christianity Today*. He is seen as having been an able scholar who was theologically conservative. He, with other conservative leaders, initiated a movement in the 1940's that became known as "neo-evangelical." As I understand it, this was an effort to uphold the basics of orthodox Christian faith and doctrine. It was also meant to provide an alternative to the fundamentalism that is sometimes seen as exclusive and contentious.



Low German is the mother tongue of most of those referred to as "Russian Mennonites." Presumably the "Low" has reference to the Netherlands (Holland) where most of these people lived before they lived in Russia. It was more than 90 years from the time that the first settlers went to Russia until they began to leave in 1874. During that time they maintained the use of their Dutch dialect in their homes and colonies. Some Mennonites,

especially women, did not learn the Russian language during this time. Later when the Mennonites fell out of favor with Russian mainstream this added suspicion and tension to a growing conflict.

Language remains an important cultural/religious feature of the more conservative descendant groups of these people. Mastery of “their” language is a significant advantage to any who are interested in communicating with them regarding spiritual matters.

Mennonite Weekly Review (12-22-03) reports that a translation of the Bible into Low German has just been completed. Pastor John Wiebe is quoted thus: “I can give them the Scriptures in the language of their heart.” It is hoped that this will enable a revival of learning in Low German communities in Mexico and Paraguay.



James Yoder, MIC missionary at Sioux Narrows, Ontario, sent me an article from the *Winnipeg Free Press* which presumably is of interest to the readers of this column. Columnist John Longhurst reports on a visit to a Mennonite church in the U. S., where he experienced a first in his lifetime. He witnessed the blessing of separation for a couple whose marriage had come to an end.

The congregation read a brief litany that invoked God’s blessing on the former couple as they go their separate ways. The writer comments that other churches are offering similar “rituals of healing” in similar circumstances. What next?

According to pollster George Barna Christians who consider themselves to be born again are just as likely to get divorced as the general population. This is a classic example of how the influences and pressures of a fallen society, lead away from Christian foundations of truth and righteousness. Any effort to Christianize sinful practices is an exercise in futility and self-deceit. Only to the extent that we recognize the authority of the Word and the lordship of Christ are we protected from such tragedy.

It is wrong to suppose that couples for whom divorce is not an acceptable option may not sometimes experience serious difficulties. The Christian church should be willing and able to provide support and counsel to strengthen such marriages. Even good marriages can often be improved. We commend various counseling and marriage enrichment efforts to our married readers.



This reminds me of something John Drescher wrote in the 9-2-03

issue of *The Mennonite*: “The church must get serious about strengthening marriages. No congregation is stronger than its families. There never was a marriage that could not have been a failure. The elements of disharmony are in every marriage. But there are few, if any marriages that could not be a success if both husband and wife want the marriage to succeed. One authority on marriage writes, ‘There are at least 10 irreconcilable differences in every marriage which spouses need to live with if they are to be happy.’ Marriage must have repentance, humility, love and grace which are absent in separation and divorce.”

Drescher says that we must do more in preventive care. Some years ago all the clergy in Modesto, California, agreed never to marry a couple without a series of premarital counseling sessions. Four years later there had not been one divorce among those they had married. Drescher reminds us that preventive care is needed at each stage of marriage and that it is much easier than remedial care.



Beef producers in the U. S. have been enjoying unprecedented high prices. This was partly due to the

discovery of a single case of “mad cow” disease in Alberta, Canada, early last summer. Recently an infected dairy cow was found in the U.S., near Yakima, Washington.

The shock waves of this discovery have been felt throughout the industry. Beef prices are sharply lower. Some 30 countries have banned the importation of U.S. beef.

A reader of *The Hutchinson News* (1-3-04) addresses the matter in an effort to put things into realistic perspective. This disease first surfaced in Europe, mostly Britain. He notes that 183,000 cases in cattle have been reported to date. Very large numbers of cattle were destroyed to eradicate the disease. To date, 153 cases of the human form of the disease have been reported. So in Europe there was one person affected for every 1,196 animals with the disease. It looks unlikely that there is significant danger to human health from the single case that has been discovered in this country. This pattern of over-reaction has brought widespread ruin to the beef industry in Canada. This illustrates once more how difficult it is to be reactionary and objective at the same time.



-DLM

· He who forgets the language of gratitude can never expect true happiness. ·

The History Test

PART 2

Chester Weaver

Grandview, TX

Lesson 2

Division has too often been a ready answer to solve Anabaptist problems. Even though this has become almost a tradition among us, it remains unscriptural. God's Word would teach us to communicate, to prefer our brother above ourselves, to be humble, to seek to understand, to be meek, and so on. We have not done so well applying the old Anabaptist ideal of *Gelassenheit* (yieldedness). *In Tradition and Transition*, Paton Yoder discusses the nineteenth century American division between what became the Old Order Amish and the more progressive Amish.

Let me say it carefully, division can be a last alternative if other scriptural options have been exhausted. But for a division to be God-honoring, it needs the mutual consent and blessing of both sides. The best example of this that I know about was the separation of what is now Eastern Pennsylvania Conference from the old Lancaster Conference in 1968. An article appearing in the

Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage magazine, chronicling that division, called it "the amiable schism."

Lack of respect for one another has placed church aside of church in the same community. This arrangement invites trouble and confusion. It continues to produce many negative effects, especially among the young people, to say nothing of the negative witness in the community. [Amen! PLM]

Lesson 3

Tradition does not automatically answer present day questions. Freezing the past and applying it to the present is a good way to fail as a church. On the other hand, change and accommodation do not automatically answer present day questions. In fact, constant adjustment is a good way to fail as a church. What is a good way to succeed as a church? A simple answer is: Have congregations full of Bible-loving, Bible-living people led by the Holy Spirit of God.

One of the toughest challenges to Anabaptist churches has been coping with change. Being people who distrust change, Mennonites have too often opted out by flatly rejecting cultural or technological change. Sometimes they ignored it, hoping it would go away. By taking such an approach, shepherds have also failed their people. Read the record.

In reaction other segments have rebelled against this reticence by aggressively embracing change and panting after nominal Christianity. In turn, that has only further convinced the bulwarks of conservatism that change will always cause the Bride to flounder. Historically, they can point to quite a few illustrations of that. Read the record.

Survival lies in proactive preaching. We go back to the inverted V in last month's installment. We must anticipate [potential] change, evaluate the possible effects, and deal with the problem positively long before the problem is permanently lodged within the brotherhood. The man at the top of the list in my mind who provided a good example of how to do this was John S. Coffman. He had every reason to be discouraged by the state of affairs in the Mennonite church in the late 1800's. But he did not succumb to despair; he proactively preached and modeled God's

truth. Another man, John F. Funk, did the same with the written word, publishing *The Herald of Truth*. Later, Daniel Kauffman did the same kind of thing in the opening decades of the 1900's.

Too often leadership has been by default. The answer has come from behind instead of in front. What do I mean? Pressures come, issues are not addressed, people wonder, people talk, people pressure leaders (some one way, some the opposite way), and finally after much dissension, leaders feel forced to make a decision. By that time, many people are wounded and confused. And some people do not make it spiritually. God alone knows how many people have been lost to the Anabaptist churches in America because of failure like this. In the 25-year span after 1850, three-fourths of the Amish community in Croghan, New York, united with the Apostolic Christian church. Why? Read the record.

The church needs godly men, spiritual men, objective men, men who can impartially research issues to discover the facts, men who are trustworthy as neither reactionaries nor compulsive innovators. These men must be critical thinkers. They must be close to the Word of God. They must know God and be known of Him. Daniel Kauffman was such a man. He served his generation

well and his work reaches down to us many years later. His story is told in *The Life and Times of Daniel Kauffman*.

Proverbs teaches us that when a man answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him. Church leaders must be godly, discerning, informed men. Congregations are sensitive to these matters;

they do not want time to prove their shepherd wrong. A shepherd has the best support when his congregation believes him to be fair, just, and balanced with current issues. Spiritually healthy congregations want shepherds who understand the times and sense what “Israel” ought to do!

(to be continued)



helpers at home

God's Design for Young Mothers

Mary June Glick

This month we want to talk about God's design for the young women, especially young mothers. I love my role as wife, mother and grandmother, and I hope you do, too. Let me encourage you young mothers that when you get to my stage in life you will have forgotten the fussy babies, the irritable two-year-olds, the endless dirty diapers and runny noses. You will, however, remember the happy times with your family.

Titus 2:4 and 5 gives us eight guidelines:

1. Be sober. This has the meaning of an earnestly thoughtful character; unhurried, calm, temperate, well-balanced. It talks of a woman

who will not be easily upset by the interruptions and frustrations of a busy, demanding day. I wish I had learned to be more relaxed, to laugh easily instead of expecting so much of myself and my family.

2. Love your husbands. This should be our greatest priority. Love is a commitment. It does not depend on romantic feelings. Love does not demand. Love gives; it cares about the other. A loving wife accepts her husband without trying to change him.

3. Love your children. A mother's love comes naturally. It is instinctive. Love nurtures, but love will also discipline, and sometimes needs to be tough.

4. Be discreet. We must show good judgment in conduct and especially in speech. A wise woman is kind, blessing her family and friends. [She often leaves unsaid what may be true but not helpful. -PLM]

5. Be chaste. We are to be pure, modest and decent. Young women need to teach these virtues to their children by their own words and actions. [She is unmistakably a one-man woman. -PLM]


6. Be keepers at home. What joy for a mother to be able to be at home, enjoying her family and turning her house into a home. I realize that there are times when a mother needs to work outside the home because of financial difficulties. But I believe she

can still be a keeper at home as she makes her home her first priority.

7. Be good. A good woman is agreeable, pleasant, kind, loyal, sound in judgment and wholesome. She is full of good works.

8. Be obedient to your husband. An obedient woman is submissive and eager to fit into her husband's plans. [When she offers her viewpoint, she does so with respect for her husband's rightful place of leadership in their marriage. -PLM]

May each of us desire to be a woman who pleases God, and follows His design.

[Forgive me for adding a man's perspective. The above additions are not corrections. -PLM] 



Love

*Trevor Gerber, age 10
Gadshell, ON*

What love will do 'tis very true
If you love the Lord our God
Someday you'll live on heavenly sod.

What did Jesus do for us,
That He died on the cross without a fuss?
He died on the cross at Calvary
I'm glad He saved my life for me.

So if you love the people here
Some far away are very dear.
God loves you every day and year
So trust the Lord and don't have fear.

The Plan

Anita Yoder

Ligonier, IN

Chapter Two

Klaas Wenger had discovered the plot that the Mennonite men of the village of Shumanovka planned. This is part two of the continued story occurring among the Mennonites in Russia in 1930.

As Klaas observed the activity in his village, he began to see the plan unfold. The men unified to work in the forest. It appeared that they were using the winter months to work for the good of the state. Klaas decided against revealing this secret to anyone. He knew that the secret police, the GPU, would be happy to take them as captives. If the plan didn't go through and the border guards saw them cross, the same would hold true.

Klaas worked steadily but often in deep thought. Would the plan succeed? What if other people of the village didn't want to go? What if the secret were found out? Would it cost them their lives? Would they die? Then what? I'm only fifteen, am I ready to die and meet God? Klaas's thoughts always ended with a plea.

God, if You are God, here I am. You can see me here in Your forest. I am so small beside this big tall tree. Please help me!

He often worked with Peter, his trusted friend. Today a heavy fog hung over everything. They worked at a slower pace, allowing time for conversation.

"What point is there for us to be working for the state like this?" demanded Peter. "I just don't understand."

Klaas didn't know how to respond. He had to say something quickly, but what?

"Well, Klaas, what are you thinking?" Peter questioned.

"You know Jacob Siemen wouldn't have us out here for nothing. I trust his judgment. He has been a very good administrator for our village. Besides it does benefit the farms a little. Didn't the state give each farm another team and sled?"

"I really don't enjoy working out here in the cold. It all just doesn't make sense," continued Peter.

Should I tell Peter? Klaas's thoughts allowed him no peace. *No,*

I will not tell anyone. I will not tell or give away the plan. If it is ruined, I will not be the one to do it.

Several weeks later Klaas and Peter worked together again. That day they had gone deeper into the woods.

“Guess what I overheard yesterday,” whispered Peter. “I heard about a plan to leave our village and flee to China, using these teams and sleds. You know about it, don’t you, Klaas? That’s why you said what you did the other week, isn’t it?”

“Yes, I heard about it,” Klaas had to admit.

“I heard that a Chinese guide is already hired and two of the men of our village went over to China at night to arrange things once we get there. The guide is asking the best horse of the team from every family for payment.”

“That much for payment? Well, if he does his job well and we make it across I guess it’d be worth that much. But Peter, you and I had best not let this secret out. We must let the men see that we can be trusted. It all seems far too scary to me. I’m glad I’m not the person responsible for such a big group. How many people have consented to go?”

“Yes, I agree with you, Klaas, we can’t let the secret out. I have no idea how many are going. I’m sure my family would go, but my parents haven’t told me anything yet.”

Klaas couldn’t help thinking about what Peter had told him. Fear tightened his chest. How was this going to work out? Should I talk to Father about it?

(to be continued)



For Christian Conduct,

when alone, guard your thoughts;

when at home, guard your temper;

when with friends,
guard your tongue.

I Shall Return

Craig Eicher

Butler, IN

General Douglas MacArthur stood on the deck of a heaving ship and watched Bataan Peninsula disappear from sight. Of all the important decisions he had made in his lifetime, this was probably the hardest. You see, he was leaving behind men he had grown to love, the men he had fought beside and lived with for months. Now he had received an order from his superior to abandon the Philippine Islands to the Japanese and leave behind a group of his soldiers as guerrilla fighters.

Douglas MacArthur knew well the terrible rigors of battle his men would endure in the months ahead. He knew that they could run out of food, medicine, and ammunition. He expected many of them might be shoveled into unmarked graves. He knew all too well the heartbreak, the loneliness, the sense of betrayal would grow almost unbearable at times and so he promised, "I shall return."

"I'm leaving you for now," he told his men, "but some day I'm coming back to take you out of here." For 34 months, a small group of ragtag

American forces survived and fought on the Philippine Islands while they waited for their general to come back. They had the assurance that some day he would return to rescue them. Every day they scanned the watery horizon, watching and waiting for those coming troop ships that would signal the return of their master.

MacArthur was not the only man who left men in tough circumstances with a promise to return. Nearly 2000 years ago, another Commander left his dear friends behind enemy lines and went on to complete an important mission. Like MacArthur his heart ached for the courageous soldiers He was leaving behind, and like MacArthur, He promised them, "I shall return."

His name is Jesus. He is the Son of God and those men and women He was leaving behind were Christians whom he had grown to know and love. But his promise was not only for the disciples of that day. It was—and is—for every true believer who has ever done battle with Satan's temptations. At the time of our darkest misery, when it seems

He has forgotten what He promised and has utterly forsaken us, we must remember that He has promised, "I shall return." Like MacArthur's troops, we must scan the horizon diligently and be ever prepared for His return.

Yes, McArthur did return to fetch his troops, and some day our Commander-in-Chief will also return to take us home. The Apostle Paul says it clearly in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are

alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Oh, glorious promise! No matter how dark things may get here below, we know without a shadow of doubt that we have not been abandoned. Some day at the Lord's appointed time, the eastern skies will light with a brilliant glow, and with a triumphant shout the One Whom we've awaited for so long will return to take us home.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"
(Rev. 22:20b).



Midnight Meditations

Dianne Overholt, Auburn, KY

Twinkling stars,
Moon so bright,
Crickets chirping
In the night.

Creaking swing,
Gentle breeze,
Here I sit
Beneath the trees.

Midnight beauty!
Oh, how sweet!
It's here that I
My Savior meet.

Quiet thoughts
My Savior hears.

He whispers softly,
"I see your tears."

He whispers, "Child,
Just trust in Me
I'll see you through
Life's troubled sea.

Let Me lead you
By the hand,
Until we reach
That heavenly land."

So in my Father's care,
I rest so sweetly now.
Because I know that He
Will see me through—somehow!

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- **Nurses:** RN—Now

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- **Kitchen:** 3 Now; 1 in May

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e-mail address:

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Markwebb4@juno.com

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THOUGHT GEMS

When a man is wrong and won't admit it,
he typically gets angry.

• • • • •

People forget how fast you did a job,
but they remember how well you did it.

• • • • •

Two things can bring down a tree:
a strong wind outside or rot and decay inside.

• • • • •

He knows not God's strength in him who has not met adversity.

• • • • •

You quickly lose interest in the church if you invest nothing there.

• • • • •

Conscience, like a pencil, needs to be sharpened occasionally.

• • • • •

Guidance means that I can count on God.
Commitment means that God can count on me.

• • • • •

Choice, not chance, determines human destiny.

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