

# Questions & Answers and Letters to the Editor



For the last year or so we have not included any letters to the editor in the magazine. Thanks to all who have written, offering encouragements, corrections, questions, and plain old disagreements about what we have published. In this issue, we will include a couple of questions and concerns (some were not addressed specifically to *The Heartbeat of the Remnant*, but touch on the issues we have touched). This provides an avenue to discuss the issues at hand so that even those who were too timid to write can partake of the responses. Keep writing us! ~

## Why the swords?

**Q.** My question is this: how do we answer a person who gives us Luke 22:36 in answer to the verses such as ‘love your enemies’? “Then said he unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his bag: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.” I would appreciate your thoughts on this topic.

**A.** Concerning that verse, if it were the only one in the Bible, it could easily be seen as a call to arms. But, take notice of the scene in which one of those two swords are used, and of the fact that Jesus said two swords are enough.

Now, why were two swords enough? Precisely because Jesus was not planning on using swords for a defense, but in fact, as a way to show that He did not need swords. When the sword was used, and an ear lies upon the ground, the work of the sword was finished ... and Jesus then *healed* the damage of the sword. How could He better have shown His attitude towards using a sword than to fix the damage done by one used in His defense, and by telling Peter to put it away? Yes, Jesus needed a sword on that occasion to show that He *could* have used one if He had wanted. Had there been no swords on the scene, others could have accused Him of not using the sword only because there was none available to Him. But with two swords on the scene, and at least one of them in very active duty, Jesus says, ‘Put that thing away ...’

It becomes absolutely established that Jesus does not use swords in self-defense! How could He have established that so clearly, if no swords would have been on the scene? That is why Jesus needed the swords ... to clearly establish that He had absolutely no desire to use them. They were avail-

able, but He essentially said, “No, thank you. My kingdom doesn’t need swords for defense.”

The rest of the Scriptures are pretty clear about nonresistance and are unanimous against resisting evil with evil. For that reason, I think we can only conclude that Luke 22:36 must be looked at as described above. ~

## Why Anabaptists?

I want to say thank you for all that you people have done and for the many ways that you’ve reached out to the world around you. My wife and I have been blessed many times by your publications and your tape messages. However, I’ve been deeply troubled by your emphasis on the distinction between so-called Anabaptist doctrine and Evangelical doctrine in the last two issues. As someone who has experienced both camps, I can tell you they both have their full set of issues and problems. I would never say that Evangelicals have it right, to be sure, there are many things they don’t have right. But I can say with equal certainty that the Anabaptists don’t have it together either. I don’t believe that it really matters to Christ. What really matters is whether or not we are doing what His word says. Please stop acting like there’s something special about the Anabaptists. There’s only one special thing, and that’s Jesus Christ. There’s a whole world of people out there who need Christ and as long as they see the infighting and finger pointing within what they see as the church, they won’t be interested. Christ’s body has been sliced and diced up into indiscernible pieces over myriads of ‘doctrinal issues’ that in my opinion are insignificant. Christ said that the world would know we are His by the love we have for each other. I have close friends in both camps and can have equally deep fellowship with either one. Please lock arms with all people who genuinely love Christ and want to do what He says and ignore the fictitious lines that have

been conjured up by our finite and fallen minds. Please just tell the truth from the Word of God and let the chips fall where they may. Don't draw extra-biblical distinctions.

Respectfully, A brother in Christ  
P.S. Please remove us from your mailing list.

**Reply:** The reason why we at *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* use the Anabaptist writings so often is quite simple: In all our studies of church history we recognize the Anabaptist revival as having achieved the closest return to apostolic Christianity as any revival that has happened. A perfect movement? No! Do we worship the Anabaptists? No! Are we ashamed to lift the Anabaptist movement up as an example from which we can learn from? No!

And the reason why we publish articles like we have, comparing Anabaptist and Evangelical doctrine, is actually spelled out in your letter: many people fail to see that there is a great foundational difference between the 'camps,' if you want to use that term.

If the 'doctrinal issues' were truly 'insignificant' as you write in your letter, then we are truly in error to be focusing on them. But it is for this very reason that we *do* focus on them; they *are* significant. In fact, very significant. Perhaps the following, excerpted from a newsletter written by Bryce Geiser of Caneyville Christian Community in Caneyville, KY, will make a point:

A few days later, we ... went to Carrolton, Kentucky, to a gathering of Plain or ex-Plain people, sponsored by Michael Pearl.

Michael began the 3-day session by telling us that he had spent many hours in the Plain church meetings, "stinking, hot, and seemingly endless," being bored to death by our preachers. Now it was his turn, and he intended to get revenge. He gave us a schedule of seven meetings totaling around 15 hours of preaching.

Could Michael do it? Indeed he could. He could hardly stop talking when the time was up. And what did he talk about?

Well, Michael is as close to a modern-day Martin Luther as you can get. We spent hours going through Romans and the Protestant "faith alone" doctrine, but we were never bored. Mike is an

entertaining speaker with clear and firm grasp of his subject. We liked him.

I was glad for the chance to spend most of three days trying to understand Protestant theology.

I was surprised at how little I disagreed with the actual words he preached, and yet how vehemently I disagreed with his summaries and conclusions. Perhaps our greatest disagreement was the way we approached the New Testament. Michael wanted us to skip past the four gospels, ("that's Old Testament stuff") and start at God's "premier" book to the non-Jewish people, the book of Romans. Romans was, for Michael, the window through which he saw the rest of the Bible. Romans was, in fact, the Gospel.

In sharp contrast, for us Anabaptists the teachings of Jesus and his announcements of the Kingdom is the actual Gospel. We see the Gospel as the 'turning upside down' of our lives and inviting us to participate in the kingdom struggle. We read Jesus' accounts of end-time judgment and believe it to be a judgment of fruits and works, not theology.

Michael doesn't agree. "Our salvation is based on grace, through faith alone and not of works." Period. All that stuff about not swearing, not resisting evil people, doing violence to no man, and so forth belongs to a works-based salvation.

By the end of three days it was clear to me that Martin Luther had distorted the gospel message and robbed it of its fruitfulness. Not so much by the exact things being said, but by an overall imbalance of Scripture and a gross misunderstanding of what the Gospel message was.

I watched for my chance to question Michael in a nonthreatening setting between meetings. Finally, on the last day, I found him outside all alone.

"How is it," I asked, "that there can be absolutely no works in salvation when the Bible includes such things as 'calling upon the name of the Lord' to be saved? Even simple belief itself is called a 'work' by Jesus in John 6:28-29. 'What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' My brain, my mouth, my 'giving up'—are they not the works of my organic body?"

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Michael is never stumped. “Those are what we call non-meritorious works,” he said. “That’s not what we mean; not what Romans means when it speaks of works.”

Oh ... Maybe we aren’t so far apart as our etymology suggests. If we could find different words, would our worlds draw closer? But then I think of the crisp advice given by John: “Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”

... [Evangelicalism] has adopted a way of believing the Bible which ultimately becomes friendship with the world and its values. The way of the cross, so central to Anabaptist theology, does not dominate their doctrine and thus does not cramp their lifestyle either.

... By faith we believe that these moments, this transitory work, is being reserved in heaven ready to be revealed in the last time. It is the fervent desire of this community to be fellow-builders of His Kingdom, inviting His will to be done *on earth* as it is in Heaven. Is it too childish to imagine that we work to restore one small farm [on which live several families in Christian brotherhood] in these short years, for the Kingdom?

Isn’t this our missionary work? To give our lives to the struggle, the glorious struggle, of regaining territory taken by the enemy? To forsake all, and to copy the heavenly things of Christ’s kingdom in this life on this earth in very real and tangible ways?

As the economics of the nations totter and local communities disintegrate, we see an opportunity for Christians to explain the far different economics of Christ’s Kingdom, and to show glimpses of what could be *if* brotherhood and equality would triumph.

What can we at *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* say about those who call the four Gospels “Old Testament stuff”? Or practicing the Sermon on the Mount as “a works-based salvation”? Or having a “Gospel” that does not include the necessity of taking up the cross and following (obeying) Jesus? What can we say, other than what the Apostle Paul said?

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Ph. 3:18

And yet, as Bro. Bryce explains, the actual phrases being used and the Scriptures being quoted by Evangelicals are the same ones that the early church and the Anabaptists used ... but they came to entirely different conclusions than what the Protestant Reformers came to. Thus, an Anabaptist and an Evangelical can both say “We are saved by grace, through faith,” and mean something entirely different. They can both sing the same hymns, in the same church pew and in perfect harmony of voice, and yet be on entirely different wavelengths spiritually.

So as long as we continue to see the influx of Protestant doctrine destroying God’s remnant here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we will continue to publish articles exposing the error. It is the firm belief of the editorial staff that this influx is one of the biggest dangers in our settings. ~

### Quit [act] ye like men

**Q.** When does a boy become a man?

**A.** I would like to consider the testimony of the apostle Paul: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” 1 Co. 13:11

So when does a boy become a man? When he puts away boyhood! I feel driven, compelled in all kindness

and in no condemnation to anyone, to say the following: As long as you want to be a child, you can be one. If you want to be a man, you can become a man.

I want to touch on the area that has become an idol in many young people’s lives: playing. I play with my two and four-year-olds. We push a ball around on the floor. I probably don’t do enough of that with them as I should. But, I think if you are going to become a mature man in Jesus Christ, you will want to put the ball down. Bro. David Cooper shared in his personal testimony that when Jesus became the center of his life, playing took on another perspective; he no longer wanted to play.

One of the things that helps people determine when a boy has become a man is by how much playing he does, how much drive he has for play in his life. I have to bless the young person who wrote on his application for Youth Bible School: “I am weary of volleyball in our circles.” I think that is because it has reached a point where it has become an idol in the life of many youth. People are more given to playing than seeking God; they are more concerned



**If you want to become a man, put the ball down!**

about how much playing they have in their life. They are more concerned about playing than about going deeper with God. You cannot go deeper with God while you are playing, while you are worried about the ball or worried about who gets this point. You cannot go deeper with God when you are concerned about who wins this game. You will not become a man that way.

If you want to become a man, put the ball down!

[This question was given for the Panel Discussion at the 2010 Youth Bible School at Ephrata Christian Fellowship. Bro. Dean Stump gave the above answer.]

### **What options are there?**

**Q.** Bill married Susie, and after several years they divorced. Both of them remarried. Later Susie came to Christ and after a while realized that she was living in adultery. She separated from her adulterous marriage, but her second husband wants her back really bad, and her first one has no interest in reconciliation. What are her options?

**A.** There is only one option that we can offer, and it is called taking up an ugly, painful, and [to the world looking on] disgraceful cross, and following Jesus in denial of what the natural man/woman craves by nature. In her case, it is to “remain unmarried or be reconciled” to her first husband.

It is not easy for us to offer such a painful option; we wish we could offer an easier path. But all we have to offer is what the apostle Paul called “the preaching of cross.” Yet in the end this comes out best, even though the cost and pain in the beginning is great. Paul continues by saying, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” 1 Co. 1:18

The reason Paul could call taking up the cross “the power of God” is because when we submit ourselves to following Jesus, cost what that may, God will pour out grace into our lives to bear that cross until He decides—He and not we—to exchange that cross for a glorious resurrection.

And so while we can only offer a cross to Susie, we are in fact offering her a glorious resurrection! Someday, when God decides it has been long enough, He will grant Susie the beautiful opportunity to experience something that no

one else can give her—beauty out of ashes. The only condition is that she faithfully carry the cross of Christ until that wonderful day. For there are no resurrections without cross-bearing. Humanity has been searching for 2000 years for a way to resurrect without first taking up the cross of Christ and allowing it to kill our natural instincts. But there is no other way. ~