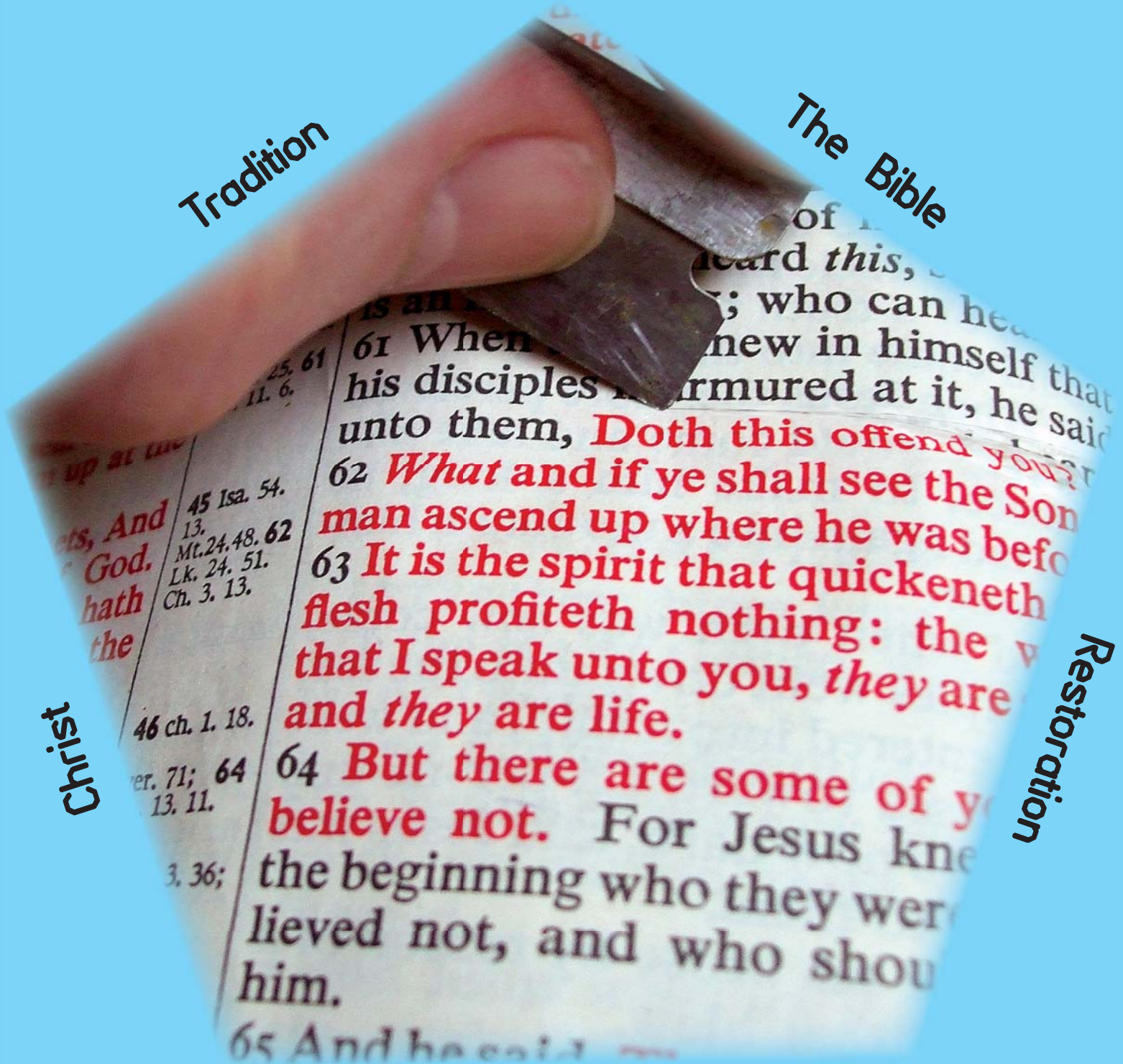


# The Remnant



**Pentagonal Christianity**  
and Thomas Jefferson

# The Remnant

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# C O N T E N T S

- 3 FROM THE EDITOR
- 4 MAXIMIZING YOUR TEEN YEARS
- 6 PENTAGONAL CHRISTIANITY
- 8 CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS
- 11 THE JEFFERSON BIBLE
- 14 THE CAUSE OF DIVISION ... AND THE CURE
- 17 WE ARE WORLD CHRISTIANS
- 18 GELASSENHEIT—PURPOSEFUL DETACHMENT
- 23 SISTERS' CORNER—POISONED PAPER
- 26 BOOK REVIEW—COALS OF FIRE
- 27 KING OF THE EARTH
- 28 VOICES FROM THE EARLY CHURCH
- 29 WHEN KINGDOMS CLASH
- 34 GOD'S PEOPLE KEEP SINGING
- 35 GOD'S SAVING GRACE

## From the Editor

A few months ago, a young man named Michael Izbicki made quite a stir in the headlines. The excitement originated from the voice of protest over this young man's application for conscientious objector after graduating from the prestigious US Naval Academy. This was a particularly hard blow to the military because Izbicki was a bright, talented cadet near the top of his class. As always, the "Christians" said the hardest things. One of his Navy commanders said that the "pacifist strain of Christianity that Mr. Izbicki embraced was inconsistent with mainstream Christian faith." The same commander even said that the Quakers who supported Mr. Izbicki were like "the Rev. Jim Jones and his People's Temple, a suicide cult." Coming from a guy who makes a career out of commanding floating airports and nuclear submarines all capable of ushering in Armageddon at the touch of a button—I find his comments a bit ironic. What I find interesting and even scary is to see how the media is portraying peaceful, genuine attempts to follow Jesus.

I wonder how many people ever even take the time to consider what they say they believe. The change for Michael Izbicki came when he was taking a psychological exam after graduation from the naval academy in 2008. A single question on the psychological exam did it—would he launch a missile carrying a nuclear warhead? When he actually thought about it ... he said "no." After this, everything changed for him.

Just last week I saw posted on the wall at work a political cartoon parodying the Statue of Liberty in an unusual pose. Instead of the normal torch perched in her right hand, some artist had placed a gruesome head of Osama Bin Laden. Underneath the statue were written the words "Game Over." You would think that the combined intelligence of 6000 years of human history would tell us that this "game" is not over.

The "game" will only be heating up until the end of the age. "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she

hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." The way to win this "game" has never changed, and it never will change until that day. Christ showed us the way: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Re. 12:5-6, 11

In this issue we look into having well-rounded (if a pentagon can be called round) view of Christianity. We humans tend to react instead of act, sometimes causing divisions with other believers who are approaching Christ and His teachings with a different emphasis. And speaking of divisions, take a look at the article called "The Cause of Division ... and the Cure."

Division would probably make little inroads in the church if we would all practice *Gelassenheit*. For those unfamiliar with the term, it is a German word that the Anabaptists often used to describe their "letting go" of the old life. This article is an overview of a little known tract by a relatively unknown author who helped ignite the Anabaptist revival in the early 1500s, but later he drifted back into a sort of compromise. Hence, Karlstadt's writings are not well known today, even though he had a strong influence into early Anabaptism.

Then we look at books. Both the negative ones that need to go to the burn pile, and one that needs to be in the lap of your child. Origen then speaks to us about dying with Christ and baptism.

Next we consider the doctrine of the two kingdoms. As those who have experienced a spiritual rebirth, we are now citizens of Christ's kingdom. But ...

we also have to deal with the governments of this world, whose laws and values many times clash with Christ's law and values.

And we end up with a poem on grace. Grace that keeps us living and portraying the implanted character of Jesus.

May this issue of *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* stir you to love Him more! ~Bro. Dean



A submarine patrols the seas above, while below a Quaker hugs a native in Pennsylvania.  
Which picture represents Jesus better?



# Maximizing

Your

# Teen Years

Abner Showalter

*How normal teenagers  
can make the most of their youth*

**Y**ou only get to be young once, so get everything you can out of it! In baseball, you get three strikes before you are “out.” So, if you are up to bat and you miss the first swing, it is no big deal—you still have two strikes left. However if you “zoom out” from your daily routine and view the scope of your life objectively, you will realize that you do only get to be young once. You only get one try at it. Once you reach your twenties you can’t say, “Wait a minute, let me have a second try.” Once it’s gone, it is gone forever. This sobering reality behooves us to gird up our minds and apply ourselves to maximizing our precious teen years.

If you are just a normal young person, then this article is for you. It is not my intent to raise an unrealistic standard that can only be attained to by a few “superspiritual” people who are unhindered by jobs or responsibilities. I know what it is like to grapple with the mundane realities of education, chores, and a job. And it is to those teenagers—normal teenagers—that I present a few practical suggestions from my own experience on how to maximize your youth.

Foremost in my mind is the subject of private prayer. No doubt, you have heard numerous sermons on this very topic. I have no doubt but that most of you could give an in-depth exposé on the need for, and benefits of, a vibrant, secret prayer life. However, in spite of all I’ve been taught on this, at times I have felt despair as I listened to or read stirring accounts of great men of prayer. Oh yes, it was a wonderful story ... what a prayer warrior he was. Yet, how does that relate to my life? I feel like a cow in a barren pasture wistfully looking across the fence to the lush green grass on the other side. However, whenever I make an attempt to move in that direction, I become painfully aware of the barbed wire that keeps me from it.

I don’t know if you have ever felt like that, but I sure have. Let’s say you read a biography of a man of God and think, “I want to be like that!” Suddenly your reverie is broken by the realization that you were supposed to start your schooling seven minutes ago. So you sigh and say, “Well, I guess there is no way for me to attain to such a level.”

All of that being said, I would like to point to a way that I have found to deal with this tension. “Spare” time is something every teenager has—in greater or lesser degrees. As a teenager I began to realize that (even though I can’t be a John Hyde right now) I can begin to use my “spare” time to get alone with God. Life on a farm has a tendency to keep one perpetually busy, but I discovered that Sunday afternoons were my time off. Instead of frittering away the hours in frivolity, I would slip away into the forest. There, free from inhibitions and distractions, I would pour out my soul to God. There, alone in His presence, God did many deep things within me ... things that have affected the course of my life. It is impossible for me to overrecommend this to you. If you would maximize your teen years, then you must find the time and place to get alone with your Lord.

Let me be the first to warn you: if you choose this path, it will not be easy! Should you decide to spend some of your “spare” time seeking God, you might as well expect ninety-nine good reasons why *now* is not the time to begin. Even after you overcome that pack of excuses, you may still feel strange. What does one pray about for two hours anyway? Most times we run out of things to say after ten minutes. Actually, that is a good thing. Prayer is not only about reciting a list of requests; it is a two-way communication with the God of heaven.

Learn to be still before God. Many times as I have stayed in His presence, I have felt uncomfortable at my own carnality and shallowness. Most people call it quits right there. Trust me, I have been there ... too many times. But my dear teenager, it is *there* that you must persist. Allow that uncomfortableness. Allow God to stir you and show you your needs. You will never maximize your youth by sticking your head in the sand, i.e. burying yourself in busy hustle and bustle of a “Christian life,” so that you never face up to your needs. If you persist and go through these deep searchings of your heart, you will also come to a place where God will begin to give you ideas and aspirations for the future.

Many times we mistakenly suppose that the course of our life is shaped by a few momentous decisions at times of crisis. In reality, our lives as teenagers are shaped by the many small decisions that we make every day. A lot of times these decisions are made even unconsciously. However, they are made in line with our values. As you get alone with God from time to time, He will change your *values*. As your values change, you will begin making godly decisions that

will shape your life. In short, you will be making choices that will maximize your teen years.

I currently live among a people where illiteracy is common. Because of this, I am constantly aware of the large difference that exists between those who are academically educated and those who are not. However, if you ask any student when he arrives home from school, "What did you learn today?" most likely the child will not be sure that he actually learned anything on that particular day. Does that mean the day was spent in vain?

We all know from personal experience that after eight to twelve years of going to school day in and day out (in spite of the fact that daily progress might not be realized) the result will be that you can read, write, do basic math, and hopefully a lot more besides. The graduate stands in stark contrast to the dropout who quit in first grade because he couldn't see a measurable change each day. Finally, after years of consistency, the one stands ready to be a productive part of society, while the other can't even write his own name, much less read instructions. Clearly, this difference is not happenstance. No, it is a direct result of how faithful they were in their studies.

The same is true concerning spending time with God. Many teenagers don't make it a regular habit because they can't tell any major difference right away. Should we not be able to learn something from school students? We must learn to persevere like they do! If you choose to devote your "spare" time to seeking God, you may not notice any immediate change in yourself. If you don't give up at that crucial moment, and continue to habitually seek your Lord, I assure you that God *will* change you!

Joshua did not just *happen* to be chosen by God to lead Israel. No, it came about because as a young man he stayed behind in the tent of meeting. It was there in the presence of Jehovah that one of Israel's great leaders was made. God will do the same with you. If you seek Him in secret, you will become more Christ-like, your goals will be replaced by His, and He will keep you from wasting your youth. If you persevere with studentlike consistency to get alone with God in your "spare" time, your life will be radically different than if you had done otherwise. One course of action will bring you to a place where you are "approved unto

God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed ..." The other, when the time comes that "ye ought to be teachers," you will find that "ye have need that one teach you again ..."

Satan knows that he cannot stop a teenager who has a deep, vibrant prayer life. You may be sure that he is working overtime to keep you from this holy exercise. One of his favorite tactics is to keep you so busy chasing your tail that you can never find the time to get alone and quiet before God. It reminds me of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Moses arrived on the scene with a desire to lead the people of God out to worship the Lord. Realizing that he would be in trouble if that happened, Pharaoh set out to nip the plan in the bud. What was his method? Exodus 5:6 says "that same day" Pharaoh issued a decree to the slave drivers to quit supplying the Israelites with straw used in manufacturing bricks. Yet he insisted that the production quotas not be reduced by a single brick. "Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words."

Pharaoh planned to make them forget their desire to go and worship God, by swamping them in incessant activities. This story precisely illustrates the devil's plan for us youth.

He knows that if he can manage to keep us distracted by endless things to do (even benign things) to the point that we never break free to get out into the "wilderness" to worship God, then he has nothing to fear from us.

O that we would be like Moses! For him, Pharaoh's tactics were ineffective. Moses refused to let the brick-making keep him and his people from the call of God to the wilderness. O that we youth would do the same! Let us refuse to be swept away in the flurry of activities that prevent us from getting alone with God. Dear teenager, if you would maximize your youth, learn to redeem your time by getting alone with God.

And remember ... you only get to be young once, so get everything you can out of it! ~



**Should you decide to spend some of your "spare" time seeking God, you might as well expect ninety-nine good reasons why now is not the time to begin!**



Mike Fisher

## Introduction

My purpose here is to think about five distinct approaches to biblical Christianity that can be observed in conservative churches today. This short list grew out of various conversations that I have participated in. There are certainly more aspects, but in this article we will concern ourselves with these five ideas as themes, perspectives, or approaches:

- \* Biblicism
- \* Revivalism
- \* Traditionalism
- \* Christocentrism
- \* Restorationism

Sometimes churches make their attachment to one or more of these ideas obvious. The phrase “Bible Church” is common in church names. The sign at the little country church beside my house says, “Independent, Bible-centered.” It’s fairly obvious in these cases what approach is being taken. Other times, the focus of a congregation (or person) is seen by what they talk about most in their sermons or literature. For still others, a theme is not stated, but is nevertheless made quite clear by priorities or lifestyle choices.

As we think about each of these themes or approaches in turn, we will first attempt to briefly define them in generally understood terms. We will also look at the scriptural basis that exists for each perspective. Finally, each approach will be critiqued.

In the end, we will look at three attitudes that we can take in relation to these things.

## Biblicism

What is biblicism? A short definition is “*adherence to the letter of the Bible.*” For a little more depth, let’s look at the definition of *sola scriptura*: “*Sola scriptura (Latin ablative, “by scripture alone”) is the doctrine that the Bible contains all knowledge necessary for salvation and holiness. Consequently, sola scriptura demands that only those doctrines are to be admitted or confessed that are found directly within [the Bible] or indirectly by using valid logical deduction or valid deductive reasoning from Scripture.*” (Wikipedia)

This approach would attempt, then, to make the Bible the standard for everything. Biblicism means sticking to what the Bible says; anything more may be unnecessary. That seems to make sense in terms of being a solution to our problems. The Bible has the final word, and we ought to use it as the standard by which we test everything. Biblicism sees the Bible as the source of timeless truth, the discovery of which is one of our most important tasks as Christians.

Something interesting lies buried in the above definition. In the view of *sola scriptura*, not only the doctrines that are “found directly within” the Bible are to be admitted, but also those which may be found “indirectly by using valid logical deduction or valid deductive reasoning from Scripture.” This seems to hint that some work may be necessary in mining out the doctrines of Scripture that are not immediately apparent. The “valid logical deduction” which allegedly is necessary to do this work might be thought to be best exercised by those who make it their business to study the principles of logic and the science of hermeneutics, as well as the original languages of the text.

The fact that most Christian denominations today expect their ministers to have spent years studying the Bible in an academic context demonstrates the pervasiveness of this particular approach.

What, then, does the Bible say about biblicism? It’s in some ways a strange question, since the Bible as we know it did not exist until hundreds of years after the last book was written. We do, however, have many statements in the Bible that refer to other portions of the Bible. For example:

*Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. Je. 1:9*

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruc-*

**Biblicism: The Bible says it, and that settles it!!**

tion in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Ti. 3:16, 17

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Lu. 24:44

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. 2 Pe. 3:15-16

There are many more examples. But we can understand from these passages that the writings contained in the Bible include the very words of God. They include prophecy that will be fulfilled. They include things that are hard to understand, but we are warned not to distort what it says. We are also instructed to read and understand its words. Re. 1:3

There seems to be a strong basis for the Biblicism approach, because the Bible is the authoritative source of Christian doctrine. But there are a few potential problems with this approach.

Biblicism might possibly lead to a kind of elitism, which hands over interpretation of the Bible to an elite class of people (theologians and scholars), in which the common man is not considered capable of understanding Scripture.

An inordinate focus on biblicism might also lead to idolatrous views of the text of the Bible, such as the error of believing that a particular version is the only divinely inspired text, or that the physical book itself is a sacred object.

Also troubling is the reality that many groups strongly professing biblicism strongly disagree with one another about what the Bible actually teaches. It would seem that biblicism as an approach has not helped the church arrive at any kind of unity. In fact, some have argued that the Protestant Reformation, with its theme of *sola scriptura*, has led to the fragmentation of the church.

Finally, a focus on biblicism in some ways might be seen as a wooden, legalistic approach to what should primarily be, perhaps, a vibrant and spontaneous experience. In fact, the academic or intellectual overtones of biblicism might be

what cause some to call for another approach—one that is centered more on the heart, or the spirit.

## Revivalism

A heart-centered or spirit-focused approach might be called “revivalism.” What is revivalism? “Revivals are seen by many Christians as being the restoration of the church itself to a vital and fervent relationship with God after a period of decline.” (Wikipedia) *Elwell Evangelical Dictionary* defines revivalism as “a movement within the Christian tradition which emphasizes the appeal of religion to the emotional and affectional nature of individuals as well as to their intellectual and rational nature. It believes that vital Christianity begins with a response of the whole being to the gospel’s call for repentance and spiritual rebirth by faith in Jesus Christ. This experience results in a personal relationship with God.”

When I think of an approach that “emphasizes the appeal of religion to the emotional and affectional nature” of people, I think of all the things that churches do for the purpose of stirring the heart or reaching the emotions. Such things come to mind as special revival-focused meetings, exuberance in worship, trained worship leaders or

praise bands, altar calls, and emphasis on personal devotional time. It is an approach that focuses on the heart or the inner man. It speaks much of seeking God or the presence of the Holy Spirit. Revival is often spoken of as the answer to the church’s problems ... “We need revival!”

As the above dictionary entry puts it, revivalism emphasizes the appeal of Christianity to the emotional nature of people as well as the intellectual and rational. (The biblicism approach would seem to emphasize the intellectual and rational, whereas the revivalist approach would emphasize the emotional or spiritual.)

What does the Bible say about the thought of spiritual renewal?

*But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. De. 4:29.*

*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 2 Ch. 7:14*



**Revivalism** is an approach that focuses on the heart or the inner man.

*Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Ps. 85:6*

*O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy. Hab. 3:2*

We can understand from these passages and many, many others that the Bible clearly shows the need for times of spiritual renewal. It is possible to leave our first love. Re. 2:4 We understand that it is critical to seek the restoration of that love if it has been left. There is no question that spiritual life and vitality are lacking in many churches. History illustrates the fact that vibrant love for Christ can quickly become distorted by hollow formalism or shallow worldliness.

Are there any pitfalls along the exciting path of revivalism? As with previous approaches, it is my opinion that there are potential problems. Emphasis on following the Holy Spirit and on the heart can and has led to some people discounting the Bible as a guide for life, in favor of a more subjective standard. It is not entirely uncommon to hear the claim “the Lord told me” or “the Spirit told me,” followed by a conclusion that seems entirely out of keeping with Scripture.

Emotionalism can overwhelm revival, with individuals being caught up in a movement by peer pressure or the sheer emotion of the moment. Subsequently, there may be a lack of real depth or substantive change—made obvious by

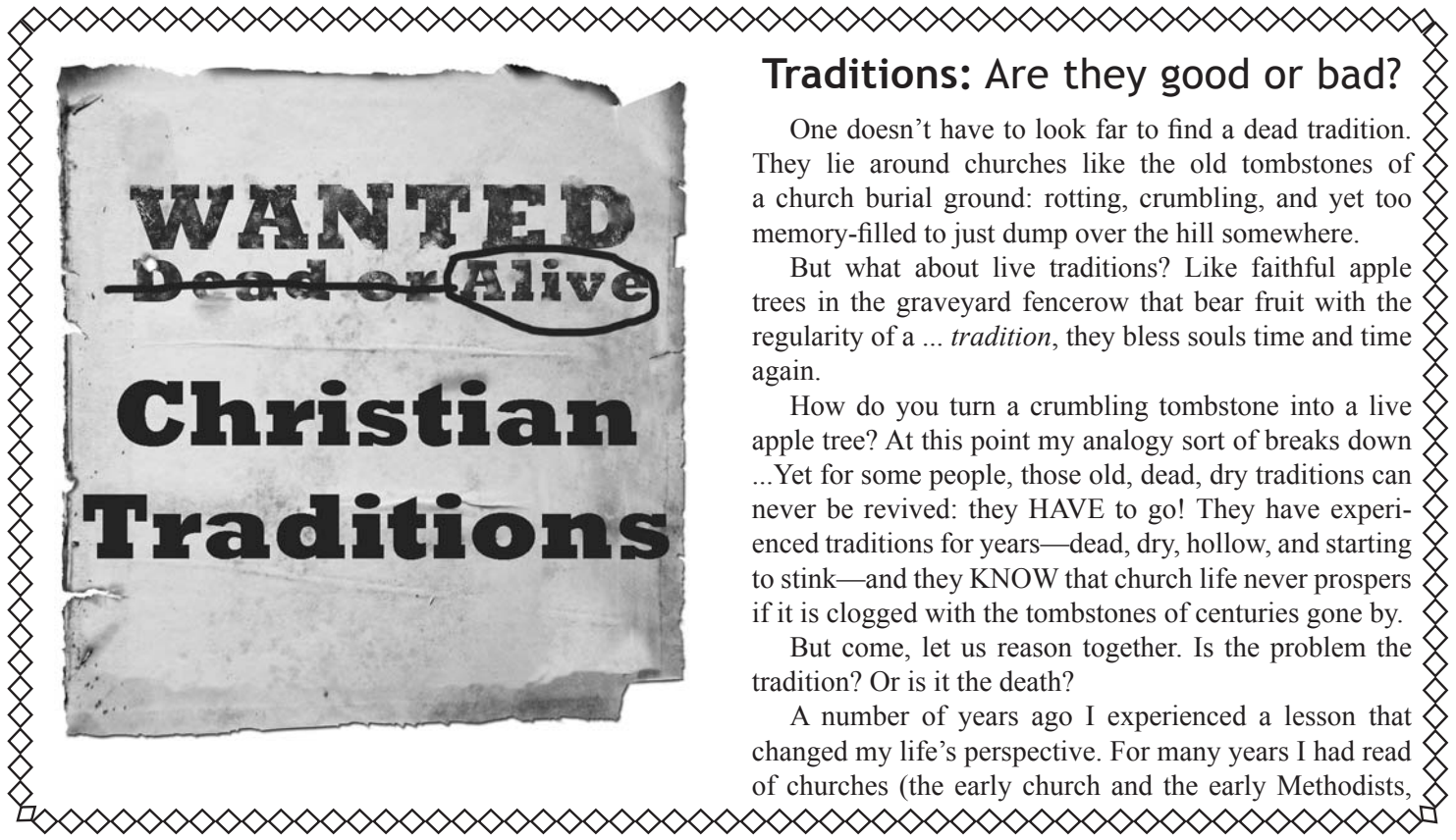
nearly immediate reversion to the state previous to the time of “revival.”

The fervor of revivalism and the excitement of new or rediscovered truth can cause the indiscriminate throwing out of everything that is deemed old, dry, legalistic, and nonessential to the newly-revived believer. It is quite possible for the zeal that accompanies spiritual renewal to be unaccompanied by wisdom and discernment. Those rejoicing in the glow of newly discovered spiritual life and freedom may have the attitude that they cannot be bothered with the cautions and admonitions of those more experienced. Within a revival movement, disregard for tradition and lack of awareness of or appreciation for history can result in native pride or directionless floundering.

## Traditionalism

Some churches, possibly seeing a need to temper such abuses of revival movements, might be thought of as having a heavy focus on tradition, or on being “conservative.” What is traditionalism? Traditionalism is the systematic emphasis on the value of tradition. Traditions are beliefs or customs taught by one generation to the next.

As an example of traditionalism, here is an excerpt from an article from [www.catholic.com](http://www.catholic.com) titled “Scripture and Tradition”: *Protestants claim the Bible is the only rule of faith, meaning that it contains all of the material one needs for theology and that this material is sufficiently clear that one does not need apostolic tradition or the Church’s magis-*



## Traditions: Are they good or bad?

One doesn't have to look far to find a dead tradition. They lie around churches like the old tombstones of a church burial ground: rotting, crumbling, and yet too memory-filled to just dump over the hill somewhere.

But what about live traditions? Like faithful apple trees in the graveyard fencerow that bear fruit with the regularity of a ... *tradition*, they bless souls time and time again.

How do you turn a crumbling tombstone into a live apple tree? At this point my analogy sort of breaks down ... Yet for some people, those old, dead, dry traditions can never be revived: they HAVE to go! They have experienced traditions for years—dead, dry, hollow, and starting to stink—and they KNOW that church life never prospers if it is clogged with the tombstones of centuries gone by.

But come, let us reason together. Is the problem the tradition? Or is it the death?

A number of years ago I experienced a lesson that changed my life's perspective. For many years I had read of churches (the early church and the early Methodists,



terium (teaching authority) to help one understand it. In the Protestant view, the whole of Christian truth is found within the Bible's pages. Anything extraneous to the Bible is simply nonauthoritative, unnecessary, or wrong—and may well hinder one in coming to God. Catholics, on the other hand, recognize that the Bible does not endorse this view and that, in fact, it is repudiated in Scripture. The true “rule of faith”—as expressed in the Bible itself—is Scripture plus apostolic tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic Church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles, along with the authority to interpret Scripture correctly.”

This is the classic Catholic critique of Protestant biblicism. The Protestants say “the Bible plus nothing” is quite enough; Catholics say it should be the Bible plus tradition. There is probably some truth in the Catholic claim that Protestants discount tradition too much; but, on the other hand, most of us are aware enough of what the Catholics mean by tradition and the “living teaching authority” of the Catholic Church to interpret Scripture, to find ourselves quite outside of their camp.

Traditionalism would say that it is a mark of humility and a sign of wisdom to accept, or at least seriously consider, the accumulated knowledge and experience of those that have preceded us before throwing it out. Conservatism, a close relative of traditionalism, is “a political and social philosophy that promotes the maintenance of traditional in-

stitutions and supports minimal and gradual change in society.” (Wikipedia)

Just a few more dictionary definitions of traditionalism: “adherence to the doctrines or practices of a tradition; the beliefs of those opposed to modernism, liberalism, or radicalism.”

Traditionalism highly values the collective wisdom and experience of the community, and is skeptical of individualism. Traditionalism is solid, perhaps stubborn, adherence to a set of beliefs or practices, a love of consistency, a desire to affirm things that are proven and sure. It is reluctance to take foolish risks; it is respect for history and the experiences of others; it is opposition to radical departure from time-honored principles.

What does the Bible say about tradition?

*Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. Je. 6:16*

*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 2 Th. 3:6*

*Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. 2 Th. 2:15*

*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ... 2 Ti. 3:14*

for example) and individual Christians who held the tradition of fasting on a certain day a week. “How formal that must be,” I told myself. To have a spiritual discipline like fasting become a weekly tradition?

All I could see was some musty, crumbling tombstones in a churchyard.

But one day the Lord granted me the ability to see a truth that has redeemed me from my suspicion of all things traditional: *traditions are what we make them to be.*

Fasting once a week on a scheduled day can either be a tombstone or an apple tree. Once I was liberated from my fear of tradition, I picked up the old (and it is *very* old, dating back to the first centuries of the Christian church) tradition of fasting once a week on a certain day.

And it was like a faithful old apple tree that bore me many blessings! The tradition became alive!

Now I am sure that I could easily turn that tradition into a tombstone. All I have to do is start doing it because I *have to* instead of because I *want to*. But as long as I have kept it alive, I have never regretted it. (And I will add that due to schedule issues, I have not kept it up at all times since I began.)

I write these words with a burden. For many years I have watched people react against traditions with the zeal of a religious reformer. Sometimes, yes, traditions do need to go. Or at least it certainly would not hurt anyone if they would disappear. But the problem is not always the tradition. Many times—in fact probably the majority of the time—the tradition is *not* the problem. The problem lies in the heart of the ones practicing the tradition with the deadness of an abandoned graveyard.

What happens when you sing a Gregorian chant with all your spirit tuned to the singing of it? It becomes alive! What happens when you give a holy kiss to a brother, with all the holiness and charity within you? It becomes alive! What happens when you revive the old custom of “love feast,” practiced with lots of love? It becomes alive!

Let’s be careful about reacting against traditions, and let’s be careful about maintaining them.

Church traditions are what we make of them. Do it because you have to, and it is a dead tradition. Do it because you want to, and it may become a lifelong, living blessing!

~ Mike Atnip

*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. 2 Tim. 2:2*

As we all know, there are plenty of passages that strongly condemn traditions that contradict the gospel of Christ. However, the above verses show that there really are traditions which ought to be kept and passed on from person to person and from generation to generation. The idea of apostolic tradition may seem distasteful to some because of how Catholicism has co-opted it, claiming the decisions of its popes and councils as authoritative, almost at the level of the Bible. However, the concept comes from Paul's words in passages such as those above.

What, though, are the potential issues that come with traditionalism/conservatism?

There is the strong possibility that traditions not directly spelled out in Scripture take on a life of their own and even possibly become more authoritative than the Bible. We probably all know of times when Christian churches and institutions discouraged or outright forbade the study of the Bible because of the threat that this would have represented to their body of tradition.

Sometimes traditionalism, which, as we mentioned before, is defined by awareness of and respect for history, actually does the opposite and obscures history. In Christianity there are probably movements that have a high view of their own history and that believe they are really representing historical Christianity. In reality, however, they may not be as close to historical Christianity as they think, and maybe not even as close to the history of their own movement as they would like to think.

Traditions can construct a standard for Christian living that is easier to attain to than the biblical standard, giving people a false sense of security. Traditions can be highly deceptive. They can militate against faith and against the good news of Christ.

Jaroslav Pelikan said it well: "Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. Tradition lives in conversation with the past, while remembering where we are and when we are and that it is we who have to decide. Traditionalism supposes that nothing should ever be done for the first time, so all that is needed to solve any problem is to arrive at the supposedly unanimous testimony of this homogenized tradition."

Conservatism can hinder much needed change from happening. It can stifle genuine revival. And, it can well be argued that Christianity is not about maintaining a precise list of doctrines or practices; it is about a person. It is *Christianity*.

That leads us to think about another approach to Christianity that some embrace.

## Christocentrism

What is Christocentrism? Christocentrism can be defined as having as the theological focal point the teachings and practices of Jesus Christ.

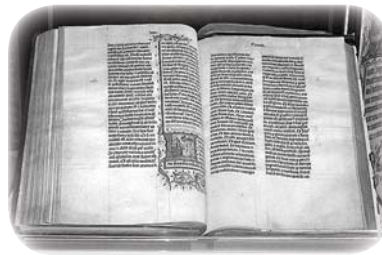
It is the attempt to read all of Scripture through the lens of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Christocentrism could be thought of as being distinct from biblicism and traditionalism in that it is a focus on a person rather than a book or a list of doctrines and practices. When Christianity is seen in terms of the centrality of Christ, the Bible becomes primarily the way to Christ, who is the Word of God. Scripture is a means to an end. "Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee, Lord." Tradition is to be measured against the standard of the life and teachings of Jesus. Revival is valuable if it renews in us the love and pursuit of Christ.

Simply put, Christocentrism says Christianity is about following Christ. Christ is the end purpose and goal of Christianity. He is the guide and standard. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and will lead us to Christ if we follow His guidance. The Old Testament is seen through the lens of Jesus' teaching.

What does the Bible say about the centrality of Jesus Christ?

*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first-*



**Christocentrism:**  
"Beyond the sacred page,  
I seek Thee, Lord."

*begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. He. 1:1-8*

*Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Ep. 1:15-23*

Both of these passages are rapturous about the supremacy of Jesus Christ. It seems more than logical to understand Jesus Christ to be the primary focal point of the church. Surely the church could not go wrong by approaching ev-

erything in the light of the supremacy of Jesus' life and teachings. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Still, I can think of a few possible ways that the Christocentrism approach might go astray.

The Old Testament seems to teach and exemplify a different approach to evil than that which was taught and demonstrated by Jesus Christ. The Old Testament very clearly represents God as calling the Jewish people to engage in warfare. Christocentrism starts with Jesus and looks back to Old Testament accounts in light of the fact that Jesus is God's best revelation to mankind. The apparent disparity between God's word for the Israelites and Jesus' word to His followers on the question of dealing with one's enemies is striking.

In the end, some Christocentrist thinkers simply discount the validity or accuracy of the Old Testament accounts. God in Christ, as we know Him in the New Testament, has shown us that evil is to be overcome by love, not violence; therefore the God of the Old Testament cannot be one and the same as the God of the New—so the argument goes.

Another problem of some Christocentrists has to do with apostolic teaching. There are those who see the teaching of Christ as central and essential—as opposed to the teachings of the Apostles, which may be optional. For example, there are Paul's teachings concerning the role of women. It is presumed that this is a nonessential, culturally informed bit of advice that need not "restrict" or "repress" Christian women today.

## The Jefferson Bible

We must reduce our volume to the simple evangelists, select, even from them, the very words only of Jesus, paring off the amphibologisms [ambiguities] into which they have been led .... There will be found remaining the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man. I have performed this operation for my own use, by cutting verse by verse out of the printed book, and arranging the matter which is evidently His, and which is as easily distinguishable as diamonds in a dunghill.

So wrote Thomas Jefferson about his project of purging the Bible of misconceptions and false interpretations given by the writers of the four Gospels themselves. By the time he was finished with his razor (yes, he literally used a razor to cut and paste together the sections he wanted!), Jefferson had successfully eliminated any reference to angels, genealogy, prophecy, miracles, the resurrection, and the divinity of Jesus. The final words of The Jefferson Bible are, "Now, in the place where he was crucified, there

was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus. And rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."

A Bible without a resurrection! Thomas Jefferson picked and chose what he wanted to believe. He wanted a Bible stripped of everything not directly related to Jesus.

Percival Everett tells what really happened:

He decided that the rules of the club to which he wished to belong were not the rules he wanted to play by. So instead of changing clubs, he changed the rule book by literally cutting and pasting together only the sections that he found relevant to his interpretation.

Did you catch that? Instead of creating a Christocentric Bible, Thomas Jefferson created a Jeffersoncentric Bible!

While none of us probably literally take a razor to our Bibles, do we in our minds? Do we strive to change the rules of the club (the kingdom of God), or do we seek to change clubs (be born into the kingdom by the power of the Holy Spirit)? ~

An example of this sort of “Christocentrism” is the beliefs of Thomas Jefferson, one of the “Founding Fathers” of the United States. He literally took a razor to the New Testament and cut out everything except what he thought were really the words and deeds of Jesus, carefully eliminating all miracles and “distasteful” teachings. Jefferson distilled the New Testament down to the nice words and kind deeds of a mild-mannered man from Galilee named Jesus—it’s known as the “Jefferson Bible” and is still in print today. This kind of “Christocentrism” is hardly Christocentrism at all, but is held in various forms by many professed Christians today who do not want to align themselves with this or that teaching in the epistles.

“Only Jesus” can be another error of Christocentrism. It is a theme that everyone from hippies to scholarly skeptics can embrace. Many are happy to embrace Christ, or the caricature they think of as being Christ. In the words of an old Country song:

“Me and Jesus got our own thing going.  
Me and Jesus got it all worked out.  
Me and Jesus got our own thing going.  
We don’t need anybody to tell us what it’s all about.”

The “Jesus only” theme can be twisted to mean tossing out such valuable things as Scripture, tradition, apostolic teaching, and (as might be implied in the last line of the song above) the wisdom of the body of Christ.

The “Me and Jesus” theme leaves out something that is a large part of the plan and purpose of God: the church. This little verse of song speaks of individualism, perhaps even rebellion—or at least intractability.

## Restorationism

What is restorationism? “In Christianity, restorationism (or Christian primitivism) is the belief that a purer form of Christianity should be restored using the early church as a model.” (Wikipedia)

Restorationism looks back at earlier times when, from our perspective, the church was more aligned with what Jesus taught than it is today, and seeks to turn the church toward what it once was. Some seek, for instance, to restore the church to the days of the early Anabaptists. The Anabaptists themselves, of course, were also restorationists who longed to restore the church of the earliest days.

Restorationism has been “in the air” for a long time (probably ever since the time of the early church). In the last several decades it seems to have influenced the perspective

of many conservative Anabaptists, house-church groups, and other like-minded folks. There are many excellent new resources that have helped make the writings of early Christians accessible to the average reader.

What does the Bible have to say about restoration? “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Re. 2:5 This warning was given to Ephesus, and indicates that something had decayed within the congregation that needed to be restored. Obviously, the Bible only contains the story of the earliest days of the church. The Bible sometimes speaks of various congregations as a model for others. For instance, Paul tried to provoke Christians in Corinth to generosity by telling them about what Christians in Macedonia had done.

The study of the early church (or of the church at other times and places in history when it seems to have been in a particularly pristine or pure condition) can be challenging, inspiring, embarrassing, and even life-changing. Those who see Christianity through restorationist glasses are likely to spend a lot of time criticizing what the church has become, pointing back to times when it was something much more simple, vibrant, powerful, or united.

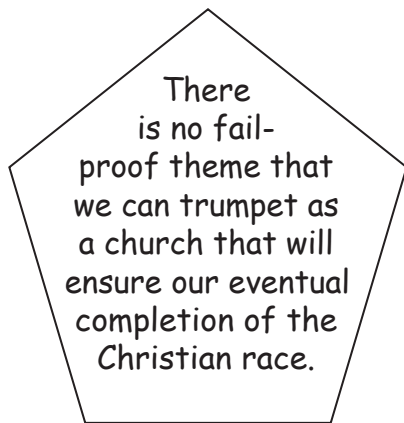
There is a view that the early Christian writers, particularly the ante-Nicene writers, were close enough to the apostles to give us a sense of what the apostles would probably have taught and practiced in relation to many different issues. Their proximity to the apostles and to Jesus Himself is such that it would seem sensible to at least pay some attention to what they had to say.

Are there any problems with restorationism?

Clearly one of the problems with restorationism is the fact that the early Christians, whether the ante-Nicene writers or even the churches in Acts, were people just like us who also experienced disagreements, sin, and other problems. They were prone to error, heresy, and falling away from the faith. When we think of restorationism, we need to ask ourselves whether we really want to restore the church of Antioch, Zurich, Rome, or second-century Alexandria. They were imperfect followers of Jesus who had struggles understanding and obeying Jesus, just as we do.

The desire to take the Christian church back to what it once was has birthed many restorationist movements. Major cults have been founded through restorationist attempts (the Mormons, for example). The teachings of Jesus and the apostles must be the pattern for restorationist movements.

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Taking a particular Christian writer, a certain revival movement, a favorite theologian, or a dynamic speaker or leader as a pattern for restoring the church will have mixed results at best.

In our study of the early church, of revival movements, or of any other exemplary Christian individual or Christian movement, it is possible to forget Paul's words, "Follow me *as I follow Christ*." We must approach the study of the church in other times and places, which is potentially very valuable and edifying, with the clear understanding that we cannot blindly follow a man or movement. We follow them as they follow Christ. To not pay attention to history is a great loss. But to blindly follow or pattern ourselves after a historical movement or great person, rather than Christ, is also a great loss.

## Conclusion

There is a lot of tension among these different approaches to Christianity. Historically, the tension between traditionalists and restorationists in Christendom at large has caused bloodshed. Today most of the conflict is not physical. Endless debates like the one between Catholics and Protestants about the place of the Bible and tradition continue.

Within our own Anabaptist framework, there is plenty of friction. There is tension, for example, between revivalism and traditionalism/conservatism. Each of these approaches seems to pull a certain direction; some of them seem to pull in very different directions than others. The tensions are real and they divide the church. There is criticism of one approach by the others. Often the criticism has some justification.

There is also some unity and overlap among the different approaches. Most importantly, there is something to be said for each of these approaches in terms of biblical support. There is Scriptural basis for seeing the Bible as God's authoritative word to us, the need of spiritual renewal, the value of tradition, the idea that Jesus should be the center focus, and for the idea that we can learn from Christians of the past.

However, we also noted that it is possible to run off the tracks while taking any one of these approaches. There is no failproof theme that we can trumpet as a church that will ensure our eventual completion of the Christian race. Unfortunately, that is what we tend to do. We tout our own approach as the perfect way to be Christian. I do believe that we should firmly take a stand on truth as we see it. However, I believe that we should do so in humility. It is possible that pride is the root cause of most of the problems that run revivalism, traditionalism, restorationism, Christocentrism, or biblicism (which in themselves may not be wrong) into the ditches we mentioned.

One of the things I came to realize while thinking through these various themes is that I have been influenced by all of them. These influences came at various times in my life and have shaped my perspective deeply. Personally, I appreciate the Christocentrism approach. However, I desire a Christocentrism that embraces the entire Bible, involves a vibrant Christian life, is humble in relation to tradition, and that is informed by the vibrant witness of past generations of Christians.

In light of these five approaches, we should see a need for "pentagonal" Christianity. In our fear of ecumenism and relativism, and desire for orthodoxy and genuineness, we may need to be reminded of the fact that authentic Christi-



anity is a full-orbed light to the world, reflecting all of what Jesus calls us to be.

In conclusion, there are at least three attitudes that we can take in relation to these issues.

***We can take the attitude of cynicism.*** When we see the reality that no particular approach isolated from the rest is perfect—regardless of the claims of its proponents—it is easy to simply discount all approaches as equally wrong and worthless. Bitterness can destroy us when we find ourselves disappointed in some way, after having thought that one or the other approach was *the* solution to all problems.

***We can take the attitude of blindness and pride.*** It is comforting in the short term to imagine that we really are the only ones who have it right, and that all other churches ought to bow down before our perfect doctrines, impec-

—Continued on page 16



# The Cause of Division ... and the Cure

*Dean Taylor*

In A.D. 449, in the famous New Testament city of Ephesus, bishops from all over the world gathered to discuss what they saw as a life-or-death point of theology. The issue? They wanted to nail down just how the two natures of Christ co-existed in the person of Jesus. Fully divine and fully human, they all agreed. But that wasn't enough. Precisely how those two natures existed in the person of Jesus was the debate. At first glance you would probably think that this must have been some fine point of theology reserved only for the elite theologians. But no ... this got big.

Just as always, the root of the issue wasn't theological. Personal differences and political agendas fanned the fires of dispute and contention. There's an old saying that goes, "If you want to beat a dog, it's easy to find a stick." Through the centuries there have been a lot of dogs.

In the case at Ephesus, the dispute went public. The local "Christians"—who probably had never experienced an ounce of the engrafted nature of Christ—were getting in on the debate everywhere. Akin to our presidential elections or sporting events, people were taking sides. There even is a report that at the sporting complex, the Hippodrome, the "Christians" could be seen wearing colors on their sleeve to represent their theological sides! Seriously, the ones known as "Orthodox" wore blue, and what came to be called the "heretic Monophysites" wore green ones.

Once the theological debate got underway, things went from bad to worse. When one side of the debate didn't feel that things were going their way, a group of monks, accompanied by a gang of militia, proceeded to take over the debate by force. Threatening everyone with their life, they

took a blank piece of paper and made the bishops all sign it. They planned to later simply put what they wanted on the blank section. After they got the signatures, they turned to their leading opponent, Flavian, and cried out, "Slaughter him!" Immediately a band of monks proceeded to beat the bishop so badly that he died a few days later.

At last, when they felt the debate was settled, the synod proudly pronounced, "May those who divide Christ be divided with the sword. May they be hewn in pieces, may they be burned alive." Through the centuries, this little meeting has affectionately been named "the Gangster synod."

Just last night I heard Leroy Beachy say that "we study history so we can see a reflection of ourselves." Perhaps it's easy to look at these Ephesus bishops and say, "Wow, they obviously had some issues." True, they did. Hopefully we won't hire a group of gangsters to accompany us to the next brothers' meeting. But I wonder sometimes that during difficult church disputes if we don't have more of these Ephesus gangsters in our hearts then we care to admit.

We all like passionate churches, right? Well, passion comes in two packages: good passion and bad passion. If you study radical church movements and times of first-generation revival, almost always you find some pretty rocky roads. What's surprising is that if you were to roll out the annals of church disputes over the centuries, it's amazing just how confident each side was.

Are we any different? I don't think so. The Bible has much to say about everyday, practical things like this. Let's look at just a few Scriptural principles that can help us discern if we are on the right track during difficult times.

1. Ask yourself, "Am I falling into the trap of getting the right answers to the wrong questions?"

Jesus, warning us about future contention, said, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Jn. 16:2 Like the gangsters at the Ephesus synod, these synagogue guys that Jesus was talking about *thought* they were doing the right thing. Jesus told us that they even thought God was happy with them. I assume they all had good Scripture quotations for their causes. But even in their zeal to be right with God ... Jesus tells us they were missing everything. They were getting the right answers to the wrong questions.

To further explain this point, consider a young man who, although he is in a cult, is serious about trying to please God. Wanting to hear God's will, the young man asks God, "Should I buy a new sports car or go to the mission field?"

Looking from our perspective, we know that both of his questions are wrong. More than anything else, the young man needs to get out of the cult. But that's not the question he's asking. Now imagine him there, studying the Scrip-



**"May those who divide Christ be divided with the sword. May they be hewn in pieces, may they be burned alive."  
—"Gangster Synod"**

tures and praying to God for the right answer. Finally he comes up with the deduction: "The Scriptures teach that it would be better for me to go to the mission field than to buy a sports car." You see, he got a "**right**" answer but he asked the **wrong** question.

In the case of the Ephesus gangsters back in A.D. 449, whether or not the "Orthodox" ended up with a **right** answer to this fine point of theology is a bit beside the point. Someone should have asked a different question. Like maybe, "Is it ok to slaughter fellow Christians simply because they don't understand the nature of Christ like I do?" That would have been a better question to ask.

2. Be careful with your spirit and your attitude. Be painfully honest with how you are feeling deep inside.

The book of James has some very good guidelines to gauge the spiritual temperature of our heart. James said:

Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. Ja. 3:13-14

James stressed that our character and demeanor would reveal the source of our wisdom. In several place throughout his epistle, James stresses the great need for wisdom. He reveals in chapter 3 that we can actually receive wisdom from a good or from a bad source—from God or from the devil. Furthermore, he provides a great way to check if our wisdom is coming from the wrong place.

This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. (vss. 15-16)

So, ask yourself, "Is there envy or strife or confusion in my heart?" Now be careful how you answer. It is easy to see

those flaws in your "opponent's" attitude. However, God wants us to look at our own heart. If any of these problems are there, then James puts it to us straight ... we have received wisdom from the wrong place. That's scary! That might mean that we may feel pretty smart. We might even be winning the argument. But if these flaws in our attitude are there, then we are practicing "every evil work."

Paul also put it sternly to his young disciple Timothy: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men." 2 Ti. 2:24 My feeling is that Paul was speaking here from experience. History might have been different if the bishops at the "Gangster Synod" in Ephesus would have used these Scriptural checks before pulling out their swords and chanting, "May those who divide Christ be divided with the sword. May they be hewn in pieces, may they be burned alive!"

3. Was your issue a big issue for Jesus?

I remember once years ago I was in a church that was going through some major doctrinal crisis. I can't even remember now what the issue was, but I can remember taking it hard. I remember going out on my porch that night, looking up into the night sky, and crying out to God, "Why didn't you just tell us what things were the most important to You?"

Years later I finally realized that He *had* told us. The words of Jesus are those "most important things." Jesus came to give us God's perfect plan for humanity. The Gospel of His kingdom is the answer to every problem. If Jesus' teachings and plan for humanity would become our emphasis, the whole world would change.

Think about it, when was the last time that you heard of a church split over something like not giving to the poor, or not visiting the sick? If we could be saturated with the red letters of our Bibles, we will become instinctively aware of the things that are important to God. Again, bringing up the gruesome Ephesus debate ... think about it. What if the Ephesus bishops, instead of excommunicating people for having the wrong definition of how the two natures of Christ can be mixed in one person, actually disciplined people for things like storing up treasure on earth, or not visiting people in prison (not to mention hacking other believers in two)?

**Think about it, when was the last time that you heard of a church split over something like not giving to the poor, or not visiting the sick?**

Luke recorded Jesus saying, “He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” Lu. 11:23 I know we all want to say we are “with Jesus.” But do we seriously hold on to what He said? Are the teachings of Christ the things that matter most to us? Do we really believe that Jesus meant every word He said? Jesus is saying in this passage that if we are not “gathering” with Him, then we cause division.

Christian unity is an essential theme throughout the New Testament. And since the hallmark of Jesus’ teaching is the ushering in of the new kingdom here on earth, we better take it seriously. A look at Jesus’ rebuke to the seven churches of Revelation reveals that He still expects the church to continue to “hear His voice” and act on it while we address the crisis of every age. Re. 2, 3

Church unity is one of the things that was very important to Jesus. He said that His testimony was at stake by how unified we are. “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Remember also that the same Lord also gave us another test of true Christianity: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Jn. 13:35

Jesus said it well: “Smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.” Mt. 26:31 As long as the people of God disparage the teachings of Christ, the church will scatter.

So the next time you find yourself in a church crisis or theological meltdown, ask yourself these three things:

1. Even though I feel I am right, could I possibly be getting the right answers to the wrong questions?
2. Am I careful with my spirit and attitude? Am I honest with how I feel deep inside?
3. Was this issue a concern for Christ, or is it of the spirit of Christ? ~

*Continued from page 13*

cable methods, or grand spiritual experiences. However, this surely is a recipe for deception and eventual catastrophe. We will only succeed in bringing harm to the name of Christ and turning people away from His kingdom.

***We can choose to walk humbly.*** That was the way of Christ, who chose for His associates the people others shunned, and whose approach actually drove away crowds of His would-be followers. We can be honest about our failures and less dismissive of the approach of other Christians, even as we stand on principles we believe in. “*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*” Mi. 6:8

Whatever our particular approach may be (the truth, of course, is that no person, congregation, or denomination neatly fits inside any one of the above categories), it must be characterized by this humility if it is to meet the requirements of our Lord, who alone is perfect. As Tennyson says so beautifully, at the end of the day, the little systems we create are but broken lights of Christ. In light of Him, we are nothing. ~

Strong Son of God, immortal love,  
Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust;  
Thou madest man, he knows not why,  
He thinks he was not made to die:  
And Thou hast made him: Thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,  
The highest, holiest manhood, Thou.  
Our wills are ours, we know not how;  
Ours wills are ours, to make them Thine.

Our little systems have their day;  
They have their day and cease to be;  
They are but broken lights of Thee,  
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know;  
For knowledge is of things we see;  
And yet we trust it comes from Thee,  
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before.

-Alfred Tennyson, 1850



# We Are World Christians



We are “World Christians.” (But not worldly Christians.) We put God’s love for all people first. No race is superior to another, no government is more loved than another, no country is dearer than another. We don’t put our nation’s economy before God’s economy. He tells us to seek first His kingdom. He will then meet our needs.

We are driven to action daily with the knowledge that billions of people do not know our Savior. Our passion in life, our unquenchable desire, is to take God’s love to them.

No task is too small for us. All that limits us is our willingness to believe that God can enable us to do it.

We are sold out to Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Nothing less. We understand following Him means absolute death to ourselves. It costs everything to be His disciple.

Don’t give us blessings—give us grace to be unquestionably obedient to every last command and desire of Yours.

Don’t give us status—give us a place to serve.

Don’t give us things for our use—use us.

Don’t give us a mansion to live in—give us a springboard to take Christ’s love to the whole world.

Don’t give us good jobs—put us to work.

Don’t give us comfort—command us.

Don’t give us pleasure—give us perspective.

Don’t give us satisfaction—teach us sacrifice.

Don’t give us entertainment—enable us.

Don’t give us good salaries—give us strength to do Your will.

Our great joy in life is in pleasing our Lord—and there is no other joy comparable.

We’re tired of playing religion, tired of seminaries and Bible Schools that pump out thinkers who have no action, tired of church life that consists of a few regular functions and sermons that sound good—as if they were being rated as speeches—but have no consequential value except complacency. Life is not some 70 years stretch we endure until Christ returns or takes us home, nor is it a time to seek personal fulfillment.

We don’t seek self-actualization—we pursue the actualization of God’s love in all hearts.

We don’t seek our personal rights—we seek to see all people set free.

We make no plans—we take orders.

We have no complaints—except our thankless hearts.

We have no excuses—they limit God.

We don’t ask for reasons—we ask for responsibility.

We don’t give 10% of our income to God—we give it all.

We don’t work for Him from 8-5—we are His 24 hours of each day.

We are not stoics—we hurt and cry when loved ones leave us. But we hurt all the more for people who pass into eternity without making Jesus Christ their Lord. We are not “drop-outs” because we don’t hold “respectable, secure” jobs—we’re “sold-outs.”

We are not cynics. Although there are unanswered questions, we know Christ has all the answers.

We are not bitter. Although we have been hurt, Christ is our healer.

We don’t spend endless hours squabbling over sideline issues, such as specific views of eschatology.

We don’t take pride in acquiring things.

We say it is senseless to talk of availability or willingness. We would rather obey and do the job, not talk about it.

-Author unknown (Adapted)

Life is not  
some 70 years  
stretch we endure  
until Christ returns  
or takes us home,  
nor is it a time to  
seek personal  
fulfillment.

# Gelassenheit—Purp

Overview of a tract by Andreas Rudolff  
An explanation of the concept of

One who lets go of or leaves something is a “detached” person. Although one who has been abandoned may be called a detached person, the difference is that “abandoned” is passive (the action has been done to him) and “detached” is active (or reflexive, meaning the person does it to himself). If you wish a Latin term for this, I can think of no better one than the word of Christ, who said, “Whoever leaves father and mother, etc.” The Latin uses *relinquo* (relinquish). However, there are other Latin terms, such as *deserere* (desert) or *renunciare* (renounce) or *dimittere* (dismiss), which describe Gelassenheit.

Take note how that the love to a wife surpasses and cuts out the love to father and mother, where it is written, “A man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife.” In the same way, the love of God ought to displace all love and delight which we naturally have toward created things. Yes, we must dismiss all created things if we want to have God as our Protector and Indweller or Lord.

From the Gelassenheit that married couples experience (letting go of father and mother to adhere to a spouse), we can learn how we are to divest ourselves of all things and rise above the created, for the uncreated and higher things.

## What we must let go of

Note, then, that I am not in any way to seek my own. The word “mine” includes my honor, my advantage, my hurt, my desire, my displeasure, my reward, my suffering, my life, my death, my sadness, my joy, and everything that might affect a person—be it in material goods, or in things that affect the body or inner being, such as intellect, willpower, and desires. Everything to which the ego and “I-ness” may cling must leave and fall off, if I am to be “detached.”

We must continue in this path, not just start in it. I must be so fully immersed in God’s will as to have truly died to self. I should desire therefore to be nailed to a cruel, shameful cross and have a holy dread of “myself” and to become wholly ashamed of “my” thoughts, desires, and “my” self-centered deeds, as if they were a horrible vice that should be avoided, just like one avoids a yellow, pussy boil. I should see my inability to do the good and, on the other hand, my capacity for and inclination toward everything evil, punishable, and shameful.

## Seek only the necessary

I should seek nothing from created things but what is necessary for survival. We must seek God, but we must not

seek the created unless it is to serve, just as a sick person eats his food with great trepidation, from sheer necessity or as a medicine for survival, but not for mere pleasure. Yes, eating and drinking is the body’s necessity, but a God-fearing person does so with great fear, being ever mindful not to forget that the One who gave him food and drink is God alone.

Christ says in clear words: “Unless a person leaves all he possesses, he cannot be my disciple.” Note how bitter and harsh the school of Christ is, and what a frightful, pitiable thing it is to our intellect, will, and nature. Note also that Christ was right in saying, “Whoever does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” Lk. 14:27 Christ teaches that the kind of Gelassenheit (detachment) which surrenders everything is a daily cross that we must carry without standing still. Rather, we must *follow* Christ and be where Christ is in will, thought, love, and desire, suffering at the right hand of God. Everything that is ours must be fused into God’s eternal will and become nothing.

Christ did not speak of this virtue only one time or in a farewell speech. Rather, He said many times—and in one epilogue frequently—that an apprentice had to do the same as the person who is considering building a house or tower: he would have to check his pouch or bag and count his wealth to see whether he could finish such a building. When he finds himself sufficiently capable, he then begins building.

All Christians must do the same. Those who intend to become students of Christ must first consider and mull over everything. Yes, in the end, they must bid them farewell and yield them in a way and with the intention of one who finally lets go of something he hates and no longer wants to take to himself. This is called *renunciare* (renounce)—to completely let go of a thing and drive it away from oneself.

## Gelas

Bind the gift u  
Break the ala  
Lay Thy hands u  
Hold me unde  
I would not be  
When my Master  
Though I struggle  
In the Potter’s  
Take my dearest  
If they tend aw  
Lift my eyes from  
So that Thou  
Joy is here up  
Pain and tears m  
But I will not,  
That which is

—Clau

# Useful Detachment

F-Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486-1541)  
of the German word *Gelassenheit*.

Anyone who thus surrenders all things can become a disciple and apprentice of Christ. The soul must be “without form”, i.e. naked and deserted of all created things, if it is to receive God and let God possess, rule, and adorn it, just like the first creation (of heaven and earth). Until we can divest ourselves of everything created, we should not dream of becoming a disciple of Christ. Let no one think that God enters, as long as creatures fill, comfort, or please the soul, as it says in Jeremiah 7:24, “They departed from me in their desires and the wickedness of their hearts and refused to hear me.” If we turn our backs on such a Lord and repudiate Him, should He then turn His face toward us and be well-disposed? No, these “two-timers” have turned Christ’s forgiveness into a lottery.

## Gelassenheit

upon the altar,  
abaster bowl,  
upon my spirit—  
r Thy control.  
found unwilling  
gives commands;  
, keep me, Savior  
tender hands.  
t heart’s desires,  
way from Thee;  
m fleshly baubles  
art all I see.  
on Thy altar—  
ay be the price—  
cannot, offer  
s no sacrifice.

dia Esh

### Spiritual circumcision

Were I to love something besides God, I should not love God with my whole heart. For that place in my heart which loves something else is taken away from God; hence, I cannot love God with all my heart. This love is spiritual circumcision, i.e., a cutting away from the heart of all created things. As long as not all of the created things are separated from the heart, the heart is not able to love God fully. When help, comfort, and trust are sought in a thing which is not God, the heart is uncircumcised. For this reason it is said that faith circumcises the heart, because it lifts up the heart to trust God, robbing it of comfort in everything else.

### Attached to God

It must be noted, moreover, that God attaches and affixes us with that glue called love. A truly believing heart clings to nothing other than God, and since the love of God is the glue that binds us to God, it follows that a circumcised and loving heart has abandoned all created things and in love clings to nothing other than God. Further, it is impossible for God’s love to enter a heart unless love, desire, comfort, and trust in anything created have gone

from the heart. Circumcision and expulsion of the created happens so that we might love God with *all* our hearts, saying, “God shall circumcise your heart that you might love him with all your heart.” De. 30:6

### Gelassenheit and circumcision of the heart are the same thing

Consider whether it is not the same to say, “No one can love God unless his heart is circumcised of all desires, trust, comfort, and fear of created things,” and what Moses and Christ say, “Unless we let go of all we have (i.e., the things in which we find comfort, pleasure, and trust, or which we fear), we cannot be His disciple.” We read that Christ called numerous people to His supper, none of whom came, since each of them had an excuse. One had bought land, another had bought some oxen, the third had entered into marriage, etc. Lu. 14:18-21 All of them discovered their clogged and unyielded hearts in that they could not or would not hear God’s voice and accept the invitation to a good meal.

In this parable, Christ also names the created things we must abandon if we wish to hear and obey His voice and teaching and truly know and love God. Christ names land, oxen, and a wife. Although these point to all other creatures which we are to let go of, I will name a few other things Christ also mentioned: houses and fields; brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers, children, and wife; and further, our own soul.

### ness and self-ness

If we wish to be yielded persons and to become disciples of Christ, we must let go of everything and surrender all that might affect us in any way. For example, nothing good must be appropriated to ourselves. Neither must we covet anything natural. It is certainly true that if you reach the point at which you have divested yourself of your own person, you are free of everything.

I do think it necessary to say again that such *Gelassenheit* is not the same releasing as one might drop a nickel out of his hand. We must not, of course, kill either father or mother, or commit suicide. Hence, this *Gelassenheit* is a cutting off of love, pleasure, worry, trust, and fear that we may have in and for ourselves and the things that are ours. In short, such letting go is to destroy all that we are and a turning away from everything that we might covet, so that God alone is our love, pleasure, worry, trust, help, fear, and everything. To Him we must cling!

## Letting go and letting God provide

In common with animals, we seek food and drink. And, we relate with our relatives. But as a Christian, we do not have it in common with unbelievers to be full of care about these things. We must be free of care, like animals, and enjoy our food only as a necessity—as cattle do.

Yet, we are worse than horses and mules, for we eat and drink more than is necessary and what is good for our health. We anger God by setting up our belly as our god. We ought to open our eyes and look to the lilies and trees and to birds and learn from these creatures just who it is that clothes and feeds them, and whether they worry or not. But because we worry about clothing, a place to rest, and food and drink, we must needs cling to these created things. But Christ has this to say about that: “O ye of little faith.”

Anyone who is burdened by confidence, comfort, desire, care, and fear with regard to money or food sins against faith by as much as he has cares about money and food. Why? Because Christ says that we always show little trust and confidence in His heavenly Father when we worry excessively about food, drink, and clothing.

Note that this sin (unyieldedness in trusting God) indicates or reveals an uncircumcised heart, and that with such a sin a person must hate or at least neglect God and count Him for naught or little. You may conclude from all this that we must cling to God, and His kingdom alone, in sure confidence, with fervent love, and in certain fear ... and all necessities will be added unto us. Mt. 6:33

## No looking back

Yes, we must firmly and with steadfast eyes seek God alone so that we would rather die than look back. Similarly, we should prefer to die a thousand times rather than willingly step away from God even once. Whenever we fix our eyes on temporal goods, it means stepping away from God. Christ says it like this, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” Lu. 9:62

Hear then, my brothers, that we are unfit to enter the school of Christ when we look back. And understand how you must cut away everything or sever everything from

your heart and you must sweep your house clean, if you wish to be an apprentice of Christ. Place Luke 9 and Luke 14 side by side and compare them by combining their meaning, and you will undoubtedly get a shock and cry out! What poor people we are! O, how we are in need of the suffering of Christ at all times.

## Remember Lot’s wife

Lot’s wife was probably looking back on her goods, income, or friends when God had sulphur and fire rain down on Sodom and Gomorrah, destroying everything that was blooming. Now, the same thing that will happen when Christ shall appear, must also take place within a person when Christ secretly lets His light shine in the heart. If we wish to be yielded Christians, we must not be anxious to acquire goods and preserve wagonloads full of food. Neither must we be shocked when the goods we now have already acquired vanish in an instant. Neither should the goods we now have either comfort or console us. Instead, we ought to accept the kingdom of God, that is, His eternal will, with love and delight.

## Pride not yourself of your Gelassenheit

Note that when you recognize, confess, and shun the above-named things that we must detach ourselves from, do not let your knowledge, confession, and letting go become your love and joy, lest you perish for loving your Gelassenheit. It often happens that a person is slapped in the face for God’s sake, and he decides not to take revenge or offense. Yet, he would very much like to have his patience praised, or to be taken for a Christian on account of his patience! Or, he might be secretly irked for having allowed himself to be hit without hitting back, although he was strong enough to have defended himself, or allowed himself to be called a donkey, partier, or peasant, without retorting. Nonetheless, he has an eye on his suffering and stands there, enjoying and loving it when he should have fled this love also, for God’s sake, to serve God alone and focus his eyes on God only.

It all boils down to this: all who wish to serve God ought not to serve Him halfheartedly, but with all their soul and will.



We must let go of earth so that  
we can grasp heaven.  
This “letting go” is “Gelassenheit.”

## Self

From all this you may learn the meaning of self and also how a true and detached service of God uplifts the eyes of the soul toward the unfathomable will of God, creeping into the fathomless good which is God himself, where there can be no *ego* or self. For as long as the soul looks upon nothing other than God's will and the eternally good which is God, the heart, too, will not be grounded in any created thing.

In short, anyone who wishes to be totally yielded and be the one who detaches himself must irrevocably divest himself of self and freely give up his I-ness or self-centeredness. Then the yielded self must become one with the divine will, so that he does not see, hear, taste, desire, understand, or will anything other than God's will. Whatever prevents or diverts a person from accepting God's will must become a place of martyrdom.

This is the cross which we must carry daily!

## The new life in Christ

Then the despised, surrendered, and forsaken ego, selfhood, or I-ness becomes a Christ-like, Christian life. And one discovers that his life is no more human life, but divine life, and that it is not I, but Christ in me. Ga. 2:20 Whether or not we have thus yielded our ego or self can be determined and decided when nothing pleases us except what pleases God, and when we desire nothing of any created thing except what God wills. Then we are detached, because we no longer love what *we* will, but only that which *God* wills. And, we desire everything to will what God wills. In this, i.e., in God's will, our love, desire, joy, glory, life, and salvation are rooted. We therefore pray sincerely, "Lord, your will be done on earth as in heaven! Let your will work mightily in all earthly creatures!"

## Christ—the way, the truth, the life

God sent us Christ His Son (who led such a yielded life in the highest and best manner), to be the way, the truth, and the life. We will not be deceived as long as we follow in His steps and walk as He walked. That is why we must see what Christ and the immovable truth teach.

## Two kinds of seeds

Christ told a parable in which a seed that had not died bears no fruit and remains alone. To such a seed, Christ compares the person who loves his natural life, but ends up destroying it. He destroys it by keeping it alive, in the same way that a grain cannot bear any fruit as long as it is alive.

According to this, we cannot have new life or good works as long as we love ourselves. Everything is lost and worthless and not of God, no matter how much we make a show of it, as long as we remain in self-love. God curses such a tree and its leaves, and consigns it to the fire because it bears no fruit. We may run, work, sing, fast, pray, suffer tribulation ...but it is all in vain in God's eyes if we continue to love the natural life.

## Hatred of the soulish life

It is not sufficient simply not to love one's soulish life. A strong salt must be added; a supernatural hatred and envy must replace our love for created things. There, the grain must die and bear fruit. There, love, desire, partiality, and all lusts of the soul must die. There, the soul irrevocably turns away from the natural desires. This is baptism in the death of Christ—the old, natural life is being attached to the cross



When the soul irrevocably turns away from the natural desires, it is a baptism in the death of Christ.

of Christ; pierced, killed, and buried with Christ in baptism, to rise again. Not in the old, natural life, but in the new, unnatural life. Ro. 6:4-11 One is then able to say truthfully, "It is not I who live, but Christ in me." Ga. 2:20

There are two lives which are opposed to each other and in tension: the old and natural, and the new or supernatural; the life of the old Adam and that of the new Christ; the earthly and the heavenly life. The love of and inclination to the old life comes from below, from the earth and the flesh, and it is earthly and carnal. For that which is born of flesh is flesh. But the new life, the new love, the new inclination,

**God gave things to man to be used, not to be loved.**

*Origen - Commentary on Song of Songs*

and the new fear come from above, from heaven where re-birth takes place. Jn. 3:6

The old life consists of disobedience and self-will and loves itself in everything it does; it complains and groans when someone gets too close. The new life is the pure will and obedience of God and hates the soulishness of a person in all its active and affective aspects; it kisses the father's rod, however hard and long he may be hit.

## The dangers of our life

You can see what great danger our life is in and how quickly an unyielded person destroys his soul. For as soon as we love ourselves and not purely for the sake of God's will, we are corrupted. I suppose that Gelassenheit may be seen in the words of Moses, "You must not till or plow the land with firstborn oxen. You must not shear firstborn sheep. They are holy to God." De. 15:19 What else is tilling and plowing to indicate to us, than that we must not serve ourselves with God's gifts? Firstborn oxen belong to God, therefore no one was allowed to till with firstborn oxen.

All good gifts and everything God wants, He creates in His servants; and all that is good belongs to God, not to us. For this reason, we must not serve ourselves, but God, with good things. And what does "You must not shear firstborn sheep" mean, other than that you must not seek your own advantage, honor, glory, or any other thing for your own benefit, in all the things God consecrated unto Himself—which is everything God created?

## Faith

Christ does not conceal who is able to believe. "Seek God's honor, which comes from God alone, if you wish to believe," says Christ. When God's glory, honor, praise, will, and love rule in us with power, then ego, I-ness, and self-absorption must wither and become nothing. This is the very characteristic and nature of faith—to see God's glory and our

shame, God's virtue and strength and our wickedness and weakness, God's something and being and our nothingness.

Therefore, it is impossible to have faith and remain outside of Gelassenheit, because God's honor must be directed to God and not to ourselves. Where there is no Gelassenheit, there is no faith.

## Pure love

Christ says also, "I know that you do not have God's love in you, for you seek your own honor." Jn. 5:44 God's love and the love of our soulishness cannot stand together. Now, it might happen that we abandon lands, parents, children, and wife, and yet be unyielded in our soul. This happens when we love and enjoy the surrender and yielding in and of themselves.

Whatever I am to love, I must love it for God's sake and because it pleases God. If I love a person for the joy of it or for my sake, I must relinquish love when such a person is against God.

## The reason for our creation

God created us for good works, which He made so that we might walk in them. Ep. 2:10 If there is a good thought, a good will, a good existence, or a good work in us, it is God alone who is the Creator of them. We have no right to claim them or fancy ourselves to be the originator of them. If we attribute something to ourselves which we have no right to claim, we steal and rob God of what is His.

Unyieldedness is a thieving robber, claiming good that is not its own. If God moves a person to do good, it is like a stick that is being moved. We cannot appropriate to ourselves that which happens through Christ's power in us, any more than we can attribute power to a dead stick that is moved.

I will soon write more on this subject. Meanwhile, be manly and strong in your desire toward God! Amen. ~

## How to Fill a Cup with Pure Water

Step number one in filling a cup with pure water is surprisingly simple ... yet so often overlooked.

Thoroughly clean all the original contents out of the cup!

Yet, how often in the Christian life we try to get our life filled with Christ and His kingdom, all the while tenaciously hanging on to parts of our old life.

Sure, we dump the "ugly" out, or try to. But for us to pick out the bad and leave the good (especially if we are a new believer who does not have his senses exercised to discern both good and evil) can be compared to trying to pick the dirt particles out of a cup of muddy water.

Would it not be best to simply empty *all* the contents of the cup first, and then refill it with pure water?

Many people fear Jesus' teaching to "forsake all." It seems overboard, if not despotic. Or at least undoable. Most say, "But Jesus really didn't mean that ..."

But Jesus did mean just what He said! He is not trying to make life miserable for us. He is simply trying to tell us that we should let go of everything in our life—detach ourselves from it—and let *Him* decide what to put back in.

Otherwise, it is a case of either trying to fill a dirty cup with pure water, or *us* trying to pick the dirt out of a cup of muddy water.

Jesus will not force us to empty our life. He calls us to that, but He will wait until we respond willfully ... so that He can then fill our life with what He has chosen for us! ~



That they may teach the young women ...

# Poisoned Paper

*Edith Witmer*

POISON

Martha's head was in the far corner of Joel's closet when she heard the commotion downstairs.

"Go!" called Joel.

"No," Frieda replied vacantly, as if her five-year-old mind was a hundred miles away.

"I said go!" Joel's voice was a little louder now.

"No!" Frieda retorted.

Joel's voice grew softer, and he began again with a hint of gentle persuasion. "You can go on a zim-zam, or on the cat's tail, or in a bucket. I don't care how. But go!"

"No! I won't go. But I will when I'm done with my picture." There was a hint of tears in Frieda's frustrated voice.

Then there was a loud whack, Frieda was crying, and both children were running up the stairs.

"Mother," Frieda wailed as she met Martha at the stair door, "Joel hit me!"

Martha frowned. "Joel," she said, addressing the little boy who stood before her with bowed head, "did you?"

Joel nodded.

"Why would a seven-year-old boy want to hit his little sister?" Martha probed.

Joel turned huge brown eyes up to Martha's face. "I was just playing Marvin," he said wiping a tear, "and she wouldn't go."

Martha's mind spun. Playing Marvin? Now what was that game? Then she remembered the silly little book she had read the children yesterday afternoon.

After Martha settled all accounts, and the household had returned to normal, she began peeling potatoes for supper. And her thoughts ran on little rabbit trails beginning and ending with books.

"My children are outgrowing them," Elaine explained. "I just want them out of the house. Take them along. You can't lose much, Martha."

"No," Martha laughed, "not for a dollar. My children thrive on books." And Martha had loaded the box into the old minivan, supposing that Elaine would have chosen decent books. What a bargain! All the way home she imagined the delighted faces of the children.

And they had been delighted with the book she had pulled out of the box yesterday.

"Read it again!" Frieda laughed when Martha finished the first time. By the time Martha laid the book down, they had read it three times.

"That is so silly!" exclaimed Joel. "Can I take it along to bed with me to look at?"

And questions had begun to swim in Martha's mind about that box of books ...

Now supper was over. Martha smiled as her husband Sam sat back in the recliner, sighed, and stretched out his long legs. Instantly two children were clambering to sit on both arms of his chair.

"Who comes here?" Sam exclaimed.

"Read to us, Daddy!" Frieda begged, as she snuggled next to him. "Read this funny book."

Sam took the book and frowned. He looked at it for a moment.

"What is this, Martha?" He lifted his searching eyes to his wife's face.

"Oh," Martha replied, "it's one of the books I got at Elaine's yard sale."

He nodded and again read *Marvin K. Mooney, Will You Please Go Now!*

"Read it again!" Joel exclaimed.

"No," said Sam. "Get me one of the Little Jewel books."

Some of the sparkle went out from Joel's eyes. But he obeyed and came back with *God Controls the Storm*.

"I just like that other book, Daddy," he said. "It's so much fun."

"You like it better than *God Controls the Storm*?"

"Yes," laughed Joel. "I like all those crazy little creatures and the funny things they do. Don't you like crunk-cars and zike-bikes?"

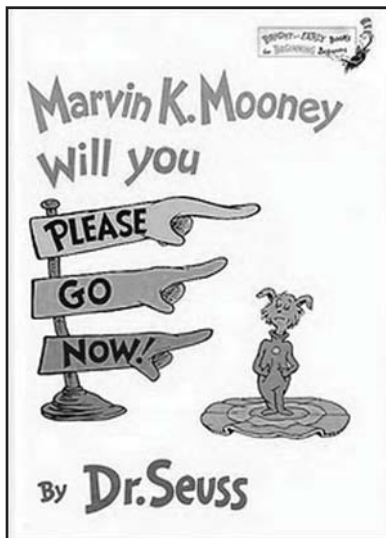
Sam looked thoughtful, but made no comment. His eyes, filled with questions, met Martha's.

"We'll talk about that later," he told Joel. And he pulled both children close to him while he proceeded to read the Little Jewel book. After that, Sam read a Bible story. But Martha noticed that Joel's eyes were glued to the cover of *Marvin K. Mooney*, on the floor beside him.

After Martha had finished praying with the children and giving them their last kisses, she headed directly to the hallway closet. Picking up the box, she deposited it on the dining room table.

"What do you have, Martha?" Sam asked, as he stopped beside her.

"That's what I am wondering. This is the box of books I got from Elaine. She said I couldn't lose much by buying them all for a dollar. Do you think we should look through them?"



"I like all those crazy little creatures and the funny things they do. Don't you like crunk-cars and zike-bikes?"

"I do," said Sam. He pulled out *The Cat and the Hat* and read it quietly.

"That one's out," he said.

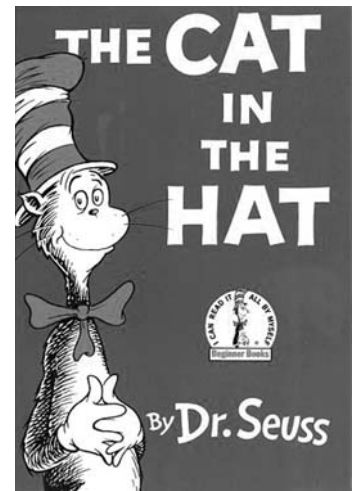
"What's wrong?" Martha asked.

"Here, read it," Sam answered. "It teaches that parents are to be questioned and disobeyed, and that if you can do something fantastic enough, you can get by with disobeying. It also teaches magic, and acquaints the children with weird, beastly creatures."

Martha dropped the book into the trash can.

Sam pulled out another book. "*Green Eggs and Ham*," he muttered. "I think I remember reading this one at my

It teaches that parents are to be questioned and disobeyed, and that if you can do something fantastic enough, you can get by with disobeying.



cousin's house." He held the book out for Martha to share with him.

"Well," said Sam when they were done, "what do you think about that one, Martha?"

"It's a lot like *Marvin K. Mooney*, with weird creatures and unrealistic pictures. And again personal boundaries aren't respected." Martha stopped. "I can't see much of a worthwhile lesson. Did I tell you how Joel was trying to play Marvin today?"

Sam listened, and nodded quietly as she recited the episode of the morning. Then he reached for another book. "*Bears on Wheels*," he said.

"What do you think, Sam?" Martha asked when they finished reading it.

"Well, it does teach the children to count," he replied. "But I saw you doing that with carrots while Frieda was helping you get supper. Do we need beastly creatures that jump out of trees to do that?"

That one went into the trash can too.

"You can choose the next book," Sam nodded to Martha.

Martha pulled out a big book about the Berenstain Bears. It seemed Mother Bear had decided the family should eat a healthy diet, while Daddy Bear grumbled and wanted to eat cookies instead. Martha waited for Sam's reaction.

"Eating healthy food is fine," said Sam. "But do we really want to teach our children that fathers are dumb, and that mothers need to teach them, Martha?"

There was another "clunk" as that book hit the bottom of the trash can.

"*Curious George Goes to the Hospital*," mused Sam as he pulled out the next book. He and Martha read quietly until they reached the last page. "Interesting," Sam smiled. "But do you know what I see, Martha? It's like the Amelia Bedelia books. Where is personal responsibility? George can't help it that he does bad things. He's just so curious that he has to. Then how do he and Amelia Bedelia get out of their scrapes?"



"They do something wonderful that makes people love them," Martha smiled, "and the original problem isn't generally corrected." She paused. "And they don't learn, either."

"I wonder," said Sam, "if it wouldn't be good to look at the books on our bookshelf. Tomorrow is Saturday. What do you say if we keep going until 12?"

"Fine. The house is quiet now." Martha pulled absently at the worn threads on the arm of the couch, and a thought flashed into her mind. "Sam," she said, "we have saved almost enough money to buy that new couch now." Martha's eyes were shining as she looked up into his face."

"Now that's good. I know you've been wanting one for a long time. You've been very patient."

Sam got up, lowered his tall form, and scooped up an armload of books from the children's bookcase. He and Martha sorted through them. Sam stopped when he came to *The Three Little Pigs*. He looked at Martha and reached for his Bible.

"Martha," he said, "is it true that wolves blow down houses?"

Sam was thoughtful as he thumbed to his favorite New Testament book. "Doesn't Philippians 4:8 tell us how we should screen our children's books? *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*"

"If we use that standard," Martha said thoughtfully, "most of the books written for children will go on the burn pile like the books of magic the Ephesians burned. But if we want our children to learn the fear of God, to be serious Christians, and to learn holy values, why would we fill their minds with wrongdoing, or silly filler material that makes good stories and solid values sound dull?"

"I know," nodded Sam. "Joel would have loved to keep on reading *Marvin K. Mooney* instead of reading a worthwhile storybook, or even a Bible story. Did you see how his eyes were glued to the thing?"

Martha nodded. "You remember how we went through my books after we got married, Sam?"

"Yes," Sam smiled remembering. "And you found out that the Bible meant a lot more to you when you weren't reading 'Christian' romances."

"Maybe it's the same way with children. Giving them silly, carnal books dulls their appetite for worthwhile books."

"I am sure you're right, Martha."

"We don't have many books left on the shelf," Martha said, as she stooped to straighten them.

Sam nodded wordlessly. Then he began, "The Dr. Seuss books, and other books like that, use imagination, rhyme, and repetition in a way that fascinates children—and even me. But the devil's bait is on their hooks. We would rather have a few good books than a lot of trash. And we'll try to buy more good books from godly publishers when we can."

Martha frowned. When would that be? Money for things like that was hard to come by. Then her eyes brightened.

"I know!" she exclaimed. "That money we saved up for the couch. Could we use that for books instead? We have Lamp and Light, Christian Light, Rod and Staff, and Green Pastures Press catalogs in the drawer. And I'm sure we can spend every penny of that money on good books."

"And the couch?" asked Sam.

"Mother has a nice slipcover pattern," Martha said. "It would be fun to have the couch. But it would be right to get the books instead. Shouldn't we make all our decisions this way?"

"Yes," Sam smiled tenderly at Martha. "Shall we kneel and build an altar to God?"

"Lord," prayed Sam, "we come to you for wisdom—for ourselves, and for our children. Lord, we see that we want things that gratify our flesh, and we come to You, committing ourselves, consecrating ourselves, and seeking Your blessing. We ask You for Your truth and Your light. Help us to teach our children those values, and to fill their minds with good

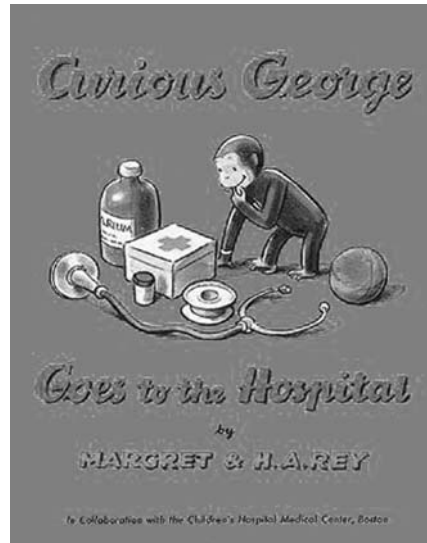
books. We thank You for opening our eyes."

For a few moments Sam and Martha sat on the worn couch, each thinking their own thoughts. Then Martha began to shake her head.

"What is it, Martha?" Sam asked softly.

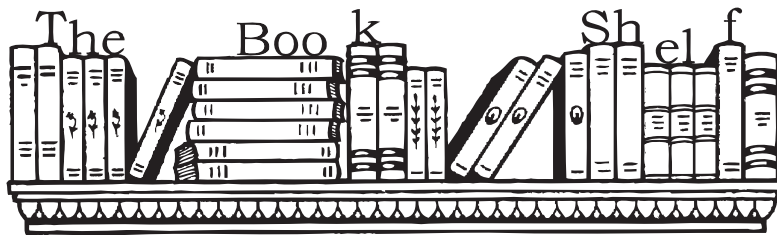
"Just this, Sam. Elaine and I thought I couldn't lose much for a dollar when I bought that box of books. Not lose much for a dollar, when my children's hearts and minds were at stake? What a tragic bargain that would have been!"

"Amen!" said Sam. ~



**Not lose much for a dollar,  
when my children's hearts and  
minds were at stake?  
What a tragic bargain  
that would have been!**

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Book Review by Mike Atnip

Following hard on the heels of an article condemning the foolish reading material that the world provides for children is the joyful news that there *is* something positive to replace the negative that you may have just cleaned off your bookshelf. Yes, in place of Marvin K. Mooney and Curious George, there is the beautiful book called *Coals of Fire*, authored by Elizabeth Hershberger Bauman. Instead of filling your children's minds with foolishness and plain old rebellious attitudes found in *The Cat in the Hat* and similar nonsense, why not give your children a dose of overcoming evil with good? A dose of the kingdom of light overcoming the kingdom of darkness?

*Coals of Fire* is just the book to do that. While it is written for younger people, there is absolutely no reason why an older person will find it too childish. In fact, the stories will challenge the most mature Christian to examine his walk with God and his response to his fellow man.

Some books are written, read by one generation, and promptly forgotten. Not *Coals of Fire*. The copy I have on hand was loaned to us by my wife's grandmother, a well-used 1954 printing that has told the stories of returning good for evil to four generations now. I hope my great-grandchildren will read them as well.

For an introduction to the book, I will quote the introduction that is found in the edition I have in front of me:

COALS OF FIRE tells the stories of men and women who practiced doing good for evil. They didn't just talk about loving their enemies; they lived what they talked about. These are the kinds of stories that make you

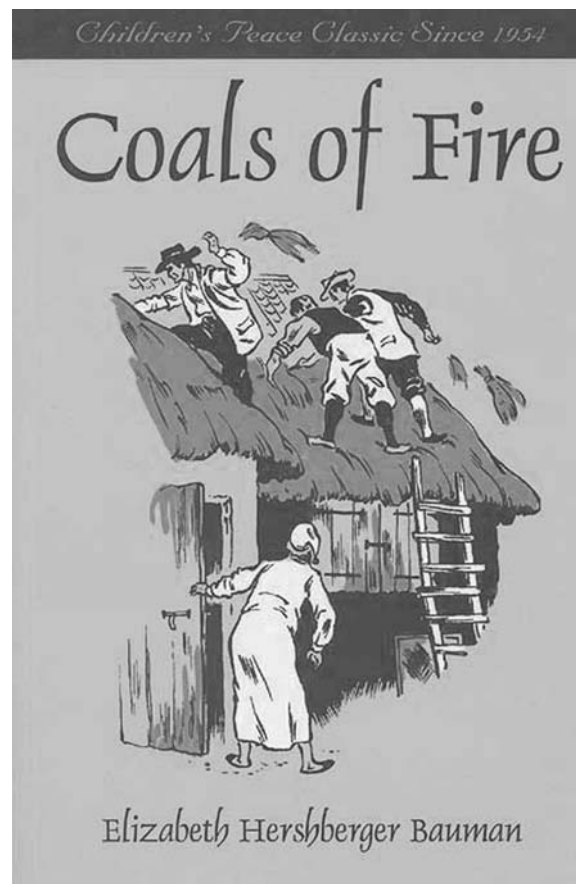
remember how you felt when the boy you detested in school gave you a piece of chocolate cake the day you forgot your lunch. They make you remember how well you slept the night you invited the neighbor girl along to visit the zoo, a whole week after her dad had shot your pet cat in his chicken pen. You will remember the shame you felt when coals of fire burned on your head. How sorry you were down inside when your enemy did you a good turn. You will remember the coals you heaped on the head of your enemy, or the ones you knew you should have and never did.

These people believed that love does no ill to its neighbor. These people lived their love. Because they lived their love they nursed sick refugees and gave them warm coats. Because they lived their love they sat behind jail bars without Bibles. Because they lived their love they had their heads cut off and were drowned.

They lived heaping Coals of Fire. Some died heaping them!

One of the interesting aspects of this book is that many of the stories are "modern." Obviously, since it was written over half a century ago, it lacks the "just in the news last week" touch to it. But many of these stories happened in the last century, in contexts that we can at least identify with to a degree.

For example, in the chapter called "The Pick and Shovel Army," the setting is Europe in the 1920s and 30s. While to a preteenager this may seem like halfway back to the Stone Age, most of us older ones realize it "was but yesterday." Or perhaps, "A Man Who Could Not Yield" could happen today instead of in World War I. This chapter chronicles the experiences of a man



jailed for being a conscientious objector, living on bread and water for 14-day stints. And, yes, that did happen right here in the United States of America. For Canadians, “On Corridor Two” relates the similar incident of Ernest Swalm and his time in Kingston Federal Prison ... again, for being a conscientious objector to war.

The 17 chapters span across time—from Old Testament to modern—and space, from Montana to the Indian Himalayans. It catches a variety of expressions of kingdom Christianity, from Quakers to Brethren in Christ to Mennonite, and more. The uniting bond across the chapters is the theme of living out the principle of overcoming evil with good.

In an age of much evil, which keeps getting worse, these stories are dreadfully relevant. And in the context of the previous article in this magazine, in which evil books were exposed, *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* rejoices to tell our readers of a good book to exchange for the evil ones. Your children’s, and your own heart, are in good hands reading *Coals of Fire*.

Marvin K. Mooney, in the name of Jesus, go to the burn pile now! And, *Coals of Fire*, will you please take his place on the bookshelves of believers in Christ!

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Ro. 12:21 ~

*Coals of Fire* is available from many bookstores and Anabaptist publishing houses. It is also available in Spanish under the title *Ascuas de fuego*.

## King of the Earth

*John J. Hostetler*

Some time ago, while traveling through Virginia, I picked up a copy of “The Roanoke Times,” with a picture of Moammar Gadhafi on the cover. They quoted him as saying, “I am a fighter, a revolutionary from the tents. I will die as a martyr at the end.” Who would not, if a regime of forty years duration was being threatened? We see the same thing many times throughout history, kings and emperors using all the means at their disposal to keep from losing their power, some even sacrificing the lives of millions of faithful followers.

These earthly kingdoms, and how they function, caused me to think of another kingdom (and ruler) whose boundaries are not drawn on the globe. This tyrant sways his scepter over kings, presidents, the wealthy, and peasants alike; few are the individuals who will not bow at his shrines. This ruler denies his people nothing, yet all his followers are never truly happy (actually, most are quite miserable), and in the end will all be destroyed. I hear you say, “That must be the devil you’re talking about.” No, his name is not Satan, though the devil is his counselor.

His name is Self! He lives in human hearts. Some of his attributes are: self-will, self-preservation, self-praise, self-pity, self-conceit, and self-love, to name a few. In fact, my dictionary devotes almost a whole page to the various forms that self takes to retain its self-respect. Looking at the list, we can find a few that are good, but always as an antidote to Self itself. Self-de-

nial is commendable, as long as it is practiced without self-consciousness. Self-abasement can be a form of pride that is often mistaken as a good thing. Someone comments on the good job you’ve done, and you say, “Oh, it’s not that good,” while you feel self-satisfaction rising in your heart because someone noticed. On the other hand, when someone criticizes your efforts, self-vindication and self-excusing rise in self-defense.

In total contrast to all these machinations of Self and the self-life, our Savior began His sojourn among men in a lowly stable. Soon after, His parents, fearing that Herod (another selfish despot) would kill Him, fled into Egypt. From there they returned to live in the lowly town of Nazareth. This son of a carpenter was not born into the ranks of the nobility or ruling party of His time, but into that of the disadvantaged. “Is not this Joseph’s son; are not his mother and brethren with us?”

As He walked among men, He displayed true selflessness; no self-exaltation could be detected. The words that He spoke in Matthew 11:28-29 (Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls) were not born of self-importance. They came from a desire that men might cease to follow their selfish ways and be born anew into the kingdom of God, where Self must die, being crucified in those who have died with Him. ~

(Taken from the April, 2011 issue of *Love of the Truth*.)

## VOICES FROM THE EARLY CHURCH

# Dying and Resurrecting with Christ

*Origen (c. 185-254)*

Just as no living man can be buried with a dead man, so no one who is still living to sin can be buried together in baptism with Christ, who has died to sin. Therefore, those who are hastening to baptism ought to take care as a matter of first importance that they should first die to sin. And in this way, they can be buried with Christ through baptism, so they might say, “Always carrying around the death of Jesus Christ in our body so that the life of Jesus Christ might be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

Now the manner in which the life of Jesus Christ is manifested in the body, Paul himself makes known when he says, “But no longer do I live, but Christ lives in me.” This is the same thing the apostle John also writes in his epistle when he says, “Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” Surely in that passage it is not the one who shall have spoken these syllables and pronounced them in this common confession that shall seem to be led by the Spirit of God, but the one who has fashioned his life in such a way and has produced the fruit of good works, such that he has demonstrated by the very devotion of his own works and thoughts that Christ has come in the flesh and that he is dead to sin and alive to God.

Now that we have explained as well as we could what is means to be buried with Christ, let us consider what else he says: “So that just as Christ rose from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” If we were buried together with Christ according to what we said above, namely according to the fact that we died to sin, it is certainly consistent with this that since Christ rises again from the dead, we also shall rise together with Him. And since He is sitting at the right hand of the Father, we too shall be said to sit together with Him in the heavens, according to what the same apostle says elsewhere, “He raised us together with Christ and made us sit together in the heavenly places.”

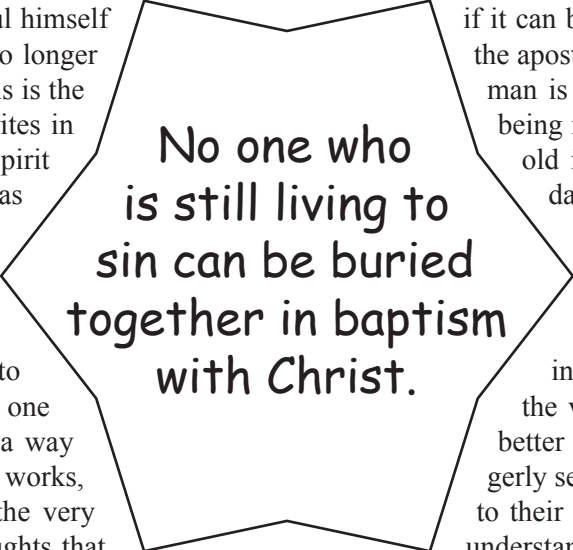
But Christ rose through the glory of the Father; and we—if we have died to sin and been buried together with Christ, because all who see our good works glorify our Fa-

ther in heaven—shall deservedly be said to have been raised together with Christ through the glory of the Father, that we might walk in newness of life. Now the newness of life is when we lay aside “the old man with his deeds” and put on “the new, who has been created according to God” and “who is being renewed in the knowledge of God according to the image of him who created him.”

For you must not imagine that the renewing of the life, which is said to have been done once, suffices. On the contrary, at all times and daily, this newness must, if it can be said, be renewed. For this is what the apostle says, “Even if he who is our outer man is being corrupted, he who is inner is being renewed day by day.” For just as the old is constantly aging and from day to day becoming older, so also this new one is constantly being renewed, and there is never a time when his renewing is not increasing. Just consider those who are making progress in the faith and who daily shine forth in the virtues, how they are always adding better things to their good works and eagerly searching for more noble things to add to their noble deeds, how they grow rich in understanding, in knowledge, and in wisdom. The things which previously seemed to be less clearly understood, they later discern as things plain to see and distinctly evident.

Consider whether you would not say that a man of this sort is in his dealings being daily renewed—just as, on the contrary, as we have said, the person who has begun to grow old shall continue to get worse and is found daily to grow older and to deteriorate further in himself. So then let us walk in newness of life, showing ourselves daily as new persons and, so to speak, as increasingly more beautiful people, uniting the beauty of our face with Christ, as in a mirror and, beholding the Lord’s glory, let us be transformed into the same image by which Christ, rising from the dead, has ascended from the earthly lowliness to the glory of the Father’s majesty. ~

Scheck, Thomas P. (trans.) *Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1-5*. Catholic University of America Press, 2001. p. 358-360.



No one who is still living to sin can be buried together in baptism with Christ.



## When Kingdoms Clash

*Mike Atnip*

Rap, rap, rap, rap.

Something about the urgency and the firmness of the knocks on your front door tell you that whoever is standing out there needs help. Even though your digital clock gleams 1:38 a.m., you are immediately out of bed and the adrenalin flow sweeps the drowsiness from your mind.

Rap, rap, rap, rap.

Whoever is standing outside means business! Not a trace of hesitancy in those knocks!

You open the door to find the young lady from three houses down the street standing there with an anguished look in her eyes. "Oh, I am sorry to bother you in the middle of the night. But will you please help me ..."

Her story spills out. Here in the Guangxi region of China, government officials have been putting the pressure on to enforce the one-child limit. She has already had two children and paid several fines, and is now expecting the third. And just this evening a friend who works in the enforcement department has dropped in after dark to secretly inform her that tomorrow they plan to take her for a forced abortion if she doesn't volunteer to do it herself.

Now she is at your door asking for refuge. You know that helping to hide her is against the law.

Would you, as a disciple of Jesus, help her? Even if it was illegal to help her?

### A confrontation of values

It is a clash of kingdoms. No, our war does not involve guns and ballistic missiles. This war is a collision of values and virtues. God said, "Go forth and multiply and fill the earth," and no murderer shall be a part of heaven. The opposing kingdom says, "We are fearful of overpopulation. You will kill your baby or we will kill it for you."

And the battle is on. Christ's kingdom against the kingdoms of this world. Christ's righteousness against the self-righteousness of those who choose their own standard of right and wrong instead of submitting to the righteousness He has spelled out in His teachings.

As citizens of Christ's kingdom, Christians are caught up in the clash with the values of earthly kingdoms in many fronts. One continuing thorny issue with the kingdoms of this world has been of self-defense and war. Jesus' ethic is to overcome evil with good. The kingdoms of this world try to quell evil with punishment and revenge. A very recent example of this is the revenge killing of Osama bin Laden. Jesus' method of conquering Osama would have been to win his heart by love, changing it from strife and warfare to one of peace and love. The kingdoms of this world "triumphed" over the hatred of Osama with a revenge killing.

But sad to say, it is very likely that the revenge will be revenged, and the hatred will be perpetuated. Hatred does not conquer hatred. Only love conquers hatred.

### The clash in history

An example of a historical clash of kingdoms occurred when Europeans kidnapped (or bought kidnapped) Africans and shipped them to various parts of the world as slaves. Such morally twisted values can never be accepted by disciples of Jesus, and some of these disciples began to speak up. In 1688, the first antislavery statement in what would later become the United States of America was issued. A group of Mennonite/Quakers near Philadelphia wrote a letter addressed to other Quakers, reproving them for accepting slavery. The following is a portion of the letter, set in modern English:

These are the reasons why we are against the traffic of humans: Is there anyone that would like to be sold or made a slave for all of his life? How fearful and fainthearted are many on sea when they see a strange ship—being afraid it should be a Turk, and they should be taken, and sold for slaves into Turkey. Now how is enslaving Africans doing better than Turks do? Yea, rather it is worse for them, which say they are Christians; for we hear that the most part of such Negroes are brought here against their will

and consent, and that many of them are stolen. ... There is a saying that we shall do to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no difference of what generation, descent, or color they are. And those who steal or rob men, and those who buy or purchase them, are they not all alike? ... But to bring men here, or to rob and sell them against their will, we stand against. ... Pray, what thing in the world can be done worse towards us, than if men should rob or steal us away, and sell us for slaves to strange countries; separating husbands from their wives and children? Since this is not done as we would have done to us, therefore we contradict and are against this buying and selling of humans. And we who profess that it is not lawful to steal, must, likewise, avoid purchasing such things as are stolen, but rather help to stop this robbing and stealing if possible. And such men ought to be delivered out of the hands of the robbers, and set free ...

The brave men who signed the document started at the right place. This letter was sent to fellowbelievers who had gotten sucked into the values and ethics of this world. Imagine, Quakers buying and selling slaves! The letter was a rebuke directed toward other believers, not a political statement directed toward the government.

Even so, the letter did militate against the political kingdoms of this world. It suggested that Christians ought to “help stop this robbing and stealing” and that “such men ought to be delivered out of the hands of the robbers.” After all, if you were the one who had been kidnapped from your family and sold as a slave, would you not appreciate a helping hand if you escaped? The letter was not a call to armed rebellion, not even political involvement. It was a call for Christians to repent of their involvement in this sin of legalized kidnapping and to be ready to help those who knocked on their door in the middle of the night needing refuge.

During the next 150 years, some of the American colonies and the later United States of America would make it illegal for anyone to help a slave escape. George Washington himself (who owned or leased over 300 slaves at his death) had signed the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act that slapped a \$500 fine (appr. \$50,000 in today’s value) on those who “shall harbor



**A few Quakers and Mennonites framed this first public antislavery statement in North America, in 1688. It was a statement that clashed with the kingdoms of this world.**

or conceal such person after notice that he or she was a fugitive from labor.” The State of South Carolina even had a death penalty for helping slaves escape. Yet many Quakers and other believers felt a moral obligation to help those who were being unjustly kidnapped—even though the kingdom of this world called *The United States of America* made it illegal to extend the hand of love and compassion. John Greenleaf Whittier, a Quaker, put the national shame of slavery to verse in a poem titled *For Righteousness Sake*. The first of the five stanzas—dedicated to “friends under arrest for treason against the slave power”—runs like this:

The age is dull and mean. Men creep,  
Not walk; with blood too pale and tame  
To pay the debt they owe to shame;  
Buy cheap, sell dear; eat, drink, and sleep  
Down-pillowed, deaf to moaning want;  
Pay tithes for soul-insurance; keep  
Six days to Mammon, one to Cant.<sup>1</sup>

In 1850, another Fugitive Slave Act was passed into federal law. Called “The Bloodhound Law” by abolitionists, this new law increased the fine to \$1000 and 6 months in jail for aiding an escaping slave, and gave authorities the right to deputize any citizen and force that person to aid in capturing escaping slaves. This meant that if the local sheriff came along and told you that you were now deputized to look for slaves, you were *obligated* by law to help capture runaway slaves, like it or not.

Those US citizens who realized that Christ’s kingdom rejects legalized kidnapping and cruel mistreatment of slaves were forced to choose whose laws they would allow to govern their choices: the kingdom of Christ or the kingdom of The United States of America. It was, once again, a clash of kingdoms.

## A recent clash

Another very recent example of the clash of kingdoms involves an Anabaptist minister named Timothy (Timo) Miller, missionary to Nicaragua. When Timothy saw the opportunity to help a former lesbian remove her child from what appeared to be a forced acceptance of homosexual

<sup>1</sup> A “cant” can be a façade, or religious talk. I do not know which definition he intended here. But either way, Whittier seems to have felt that going to church while owning slaves was a “Cant.”

“marriage,” Timothy extended his helping hand. He now faces the possibility of a 3-year prison term for helping the mother of the child escape from being forced to do things contrary to God’s decrees. The values and ethics of Christ’s kingdom—which has not and never will accept homosexual “marriages” as legitimate—has clashed with a kingdom that says everyone must accept the validity of those “marriages.”

And with a clash and a bang, the war is on. Whose law trumps the other? Does the law of Vermont, which says that homosexual “marriages” are as legitimate and binding as God-ordained heterosexual marriages? Or does the law of Christ trump the self-righteous proclamations of a perverted nation? In the mind of Christ’s followers, there is no question.

## A modern Mars’ Hill

Like Paul preaching on Mars’ Hill, I recently went to a place I don’t normally spend a lot of time with, to “preach.” I went online and joined in on some discussion on a national news media comment section concerning the Timothy Miller case. The following are some edited excerpts from that forum:

*(Mike)* People like Timothy Miller can be looked upon as kidnapers and terrible criminals, or they can be seen in the light of his Mennonite forefathers who along with Quakers helped form the Underground Railroad, in spite of President George Washington himself (who owned, leased, and used over 300 slaves at his death) signing the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act that fined those who helped slaves to escape up to \$500.

Lisa Miller has felt that she cannot morally accept the court rulings and must do as those who could not morally accept the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act and must do what they felt morally right to do—help slaves escape.

*(Commentator 1)* Tim Miller belongs in prison, as does Lisa Miller (who also needs mental health counseling). Hopefully the child survives the ordeal.

*(Commentator 2)* Kidnapping in the Name of Jesus!! Thank God I’m a Christian!!

*(Commentator 3)* In Mike we see yet another example of a “good Christian” —one who justifies kidnapping a



The Isaac Wenger home was a stop in the Mennonite Underground Railroad in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. This “line” helped conscientious objectors escape to the North during the Civil War.

child from her legal parent<sup>2</sup> by comparing that crime to freeing the slaves.

Kidnappers for Jesus! ... Given the severity of the problem, I’m wondering if all Christian clergy should be required to wear GPS tracking ankle bracelets, and we should establish a 2,000 ft no-clergy zone around areas frequented by children like schools, playgrounds, and residential housing? The no-clergy zone also needs to include hospital maternity wards and daycare centers.

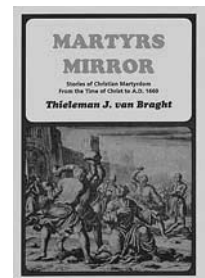
*(Mike)* Hmm. What about those who use the legal system to abduct a child from her biological parent? Suppose that ever has happened? Legalized abduction!

*(Commentator 1)* Mike, that happens every day in family law court. As this case proves, some biological parents are unfit and can’t be trusted with the welfare of their children.

*(Mike)* Timo Miller will be in court tomorrow. Timo is an honest man, a so-called “Anabaptist.” He will not lie about his involvement in this. (He may plead the 5th ... I don’t know.) But he is not expected to deny the fact that he and quite a large number of us who were not involved feel a conscientious and ethical imperative to aid biological parents keep their children from being turned over to those who are not the biological parent [on the basis of homosexual unions].

Civil law always subjects itself to the higher law of conscience. While we as “Anabaptists” do strive to obey civil law, we have a history book 1000 pages thick (called *Martyrs Mirror*) of those who have suffered imprisonment, beheadings, and other harassments from civil governments for doing what we feel was a moral and ethical imperative. We are thankful that the US government has treated us with

<sup>2</sup> At the time of her leaving the USA, Lisa Miller still had legal custody of her child. The commentator here (and other places) makes some broad statements, maybe just to be inflammatory.



The *Martyrs Mirror* is a history of the clash between Christ’s kingdom and the kingdoms of this world.

the greatest respect in these areas, better than any other government has.

We do not generally take part in civil government, we do not take up arms (some of us have sat in jails in practically all the wars of the USA for being conscientious objectors, and two of our young men died from mistreatment by US officials during WW I for refusing to take arms) and we do not sue at courts.

Call it “Christian Sharia” or call it what you want. We firmly believe that conscience trumps human institutions called civil law. And we have committed ourselves to die for that, if those who do not agree decide to kill us or punish us for our ethical standards.

But we do not fight back in the flesh. We will not take up arms. We will not mount a political campaign to force our convictions on others. We choose to live them and invite others to join us, but we do not force. Like our Master, we do what we understand to be right, and expect to suffer for it from those who do not understand.

*(Commentator 1)* Our secular civil law trumps your Christian Sharia law every time. You have no more right to violate our civil laws than does Scott Roeder.

Hopefully the other members of the child abduction ring will be captured and imprisoned too. They deserve justice.

*(Mike)* Scott Roeder violated civil law, and the ethics and teachings of Jesus’ law. I am sorry to have to say it for the name “Christian,” but 90% of those who claim that name do not follow Jesus’ teaching. And neither do I want to say that we “Anabaptists” do it perfectly. But Scott Roeder would be excommunicated from our congregations if he had been a member. (As would have been George Tiller also, obviously.)

We call it “the doctrine of the two kingdoms.” We live in Jesus’ kingdom by His laws, and strive to obey the civil kingdom we also live in. Sometimes the laws of the two kingdoms conflict—as in Timo Miller’s case—and we recognize that we will have to suffer from the earthly kingdom. But we have absolutely no intention

of extending Jesus’ law by force; neither military nor political force.

Want to join us? It’s a voluntary society that overcomes evil with good and does not take revenge when misunderstood. We have sat the equivalent of thousands of years in jails for our beliefs and actions. We may add a few more to that number in the case of Timo Miller.

Even so, we have no plans of changing our standard of ethics and morals.



**Two Hutterites, Joseph and Michael Hofer, died at Leavenworth Military Prison in Kansas from mistreatment received from US military officials for refusing to bear arms in WW I.**



*(Commentator 1)* I wasn’t aware that the US constitution had an exemption for Anabaptists, or that civil crimes were graded on theological effort. I think it’s more of a pass/fail kind of thing.

Hopefully the other cult members will be captured quickly and given lengthy sentences so that they can’t harm any more innocent children.

*(Commentator 2)* Jerry Falwell’s ministries/Liberty University with a big batch of “lawyers” (if you can call them that) are trying to keep a child from her other parent by illegal means.

*(Mike)* We are not a part of what Falwell/Liberty University does. Our methods and ethics are distinct from theirs. While we may both be on the same side of moral issues in some cases, our view of following Christ is quite distinct. It is a case of Baptist vs. Anabaptist in this situation.

We recognize that civil governments do not make exemptions, although in some cases they have, like in giving us conscientious objector status when we tell them we cannot in good conscience kill another human. But we fully expect that civil governments not understand us in some cases. And we will have to suffer without resistance for doing what we understand as right. Even so, we have no intentions of trying to force the civil government to our ethics. Ethical and moral decisions made by force are not a part of Christ’s kingdom.

You are still invited to join us! Be forewarned. One has to take up a thing called a cross to join us. That means you have to give up all rights to self-defense and accept the lordship of Someone higher. It hurts, believe me. I



mean, like Timo Miller. It sure would be a lot easier to lie to the judge, to sue back, to fight with a gun ...

*(Commentator 1)* HmMMM ... sounds like we need to put GPS ankle bracelets on all Anabaptists and monitor them closely. I was hoping we could limit it to the clergy, but it looks like the entire cult might be involved.

Now Timo's the victim? ROFLOL.

I hope as a homophobe he enjoys prison life for many years. [End of discussion.]

## Christian sharia

What do Muslims, Jews, Catholics, Mormons, Evangelicals, and the homosexual movement have in common? They are all perpetuators of their values by the use of force. Each band uses political, judicial, and/or military power to enforce its moral and ethical standard on others. Judges with gavels, prisons, lawsuits, political campaigns ... these are all signs of a worldly kingdom. Be that a strict Muslim kingdom, or a liberal gay-rights agenda. For as much enmity that there is between homosexuals and organized religions that ban their perverted deeds, they all operate outside the kingdom of God when they use force to push their morality—or the lack thereof—on those who differ. In the case of Timo Miller, the State of Vermont and the homosexual movement seem bent

**The only tools used to propagate the kingdom of God are teaching and example.**

on forcing everyone to accept the validity of their immorality. A big batch of lawyers and law enforcement officers will see to it that we all accept their moral standard ... like it or not.

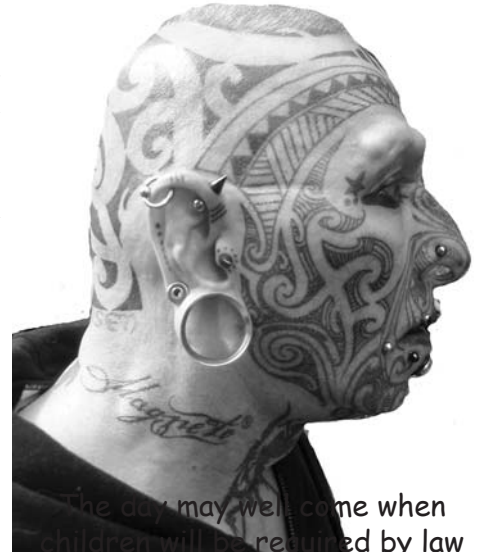
It is at this point that the kingdom of God differs from the kingdoms of this world. While the kingdom of God has what is probably the highest moral and ethical standard in the world, force is never used to propagate the kingdom. It is voluntary. Either one freely decides (by faith) to become part of the kingdom of God, or he simply does not enter in. No one will force him with a sword or a lawsuit to walk in the teachings of Jesus.

And it is at this point that "kingdom Christianity" parts ways with Evangelicals, Catholics, Orthodox, and other "Christians." The only tools used to propagate the kingdom of God are teaching and example. The only "discipline" is the purposeful withdrawal of fellowship from those who say, but do not do. Where the political campaigns begin and the war drums start to roll, or the sheriff slaps the handcuffs, or the fines are imposed, there the kingdom of God ends.

## The two kingdoms

The saints of God realize that they live in a world of two kingdoms. Their first allegiance is to the King Jesus and His values, teachings, and ethics. If the civil kingdom that they reside in happens to allow the citizens of Christ's kingdom to live their principles in peace, so be it! Historically, though, the majority of the time there has been a continuous battle for allegiance between the kingdom of God and the civil kingdom that Christians reside in.

We here in the USA have been blessed to live under a civil government that has been probably the most favorable towards Christ's ethics than any government in history. However, things are changing fast. One or two generations ago would probably have never seen



The day may well come when the children will be required by law to be indoctrinated with the perverted values of the pagan society that the USA is becoming.  
Photo credit: Wikipedia User: Nicor

Timo Miller getting arrested for helping a mother keep her child from being forced to leave her child with an unrelated lesbian. From the looks of things, barring a national repentance and revival, it will not get any better in the following decades. The day may well come—sooner than we think—when children will be required by law to be indoctrinated with the perverted values of the pagan society that the USA is becoming. Either make "Heather Has Two Mommies" a part of your homeschool curriculum, or the Social Services will take your children ... and place them with Frank and Joe, the new "couple" just down the street who have recently been given foster care rights.

When your children are taken and placed in such an environment, the clash of the kingdoms will suddenly ring loud and clear! You will then have to make a decision as to which kingdom you will adhere to. And adhering to Christ's kingdom may find you facing a stern judge with a big gavel.

Thump!!! "Guilty! Two years of suspended jail and the loss of parental rights for ..."

Are we ready? ~

# GOD'S PEOPLE KEEP SINGING

## Hallelujah, It Is Finished

Philip Hess

G. Koehn

Hal - le - lu - jah! It is fin - ished, Let the val - leys ech - o back. Let the hills re - bound the ten - or of the song.  
How the Sav - ior quelled the Ser - pent with un - fath - om - a - ble rout! While ten thou - sand, thou - sand an - gels stood in awe;  
He has dealt in lov - ing kind - ness, of His mer - cies I will sing; with my mouth His faith - ful - ness will I make known.  
ten - or of the song,  
ang - els stood in awe;  
known, will I make known.

For the con - qu'ror Death is van - quished by the Vic - tor on the rack. Hal - le - lu - jah to the One whom praise be - longs. (be - longs.)  
When He died by cru - el tor - ment on the God - for - sak - en mount, let this sto - ry ev - 'ry ran - somed saint en - thrall. (en - thrall.)  
I will lift my hands to hea - ven in sur - rend - er to my King, and will cast my - self in rap - ture at His throne! (His throne!)

Hal - le - lu - jah to the Lamb that was slain, Hal - le - lu - jah is our joy - ous re - frain.  
Hal - le - lu - jah Hal - le - lu - jah

Let us sing a song of praise Glo - ry, glo - ry to the Lamb, Hal - le - lu - jah to the great I AM.  
Hal - le - lu - jah A - men.

Philip and Betsy Hess live near Bethel, Pennsylvania, with their two children, Damaris and David. Philip works in dismanteling and rebuilding old barns. They attend a small, home-based fellowship, where they earnestly desire the kingdom of Christ to grow.

# God's Saving Grace

*Jared Stump*

There are many questions that go through my mind;

The answers to which I can't seem to find.

When I look at my brothers who just can't agree,

I begin to wonder ... is there hope for me?

Why can't we all in unity dwell?

Is it not possible? Can we not tell?

Why is there so much strife within?

Brother against brother, oh, what a sin!

What have we done that God says is wrong;

That He'd take our blessing and remove our song?

Have we taken our eyes and our love off the Lord?

Have we fallen in sin and perhaps dropped our sword?

If these are the reasons why life is this way,

Then wouldn't you agree that it's high time to pray?

And plead with God that somehow we

Would be able to dwell in unity?

I'm not sure that I ever will know

How "Christians" can strive with each other so.

If they'd only obey what the Bible says,

They could love one another for the rest of their days!

If we could love each other with fervency,

I truly believe that that is the key.

How else can we live in this world of woe,

Without living the way the Bible says so?

I've said all that in order to say this;

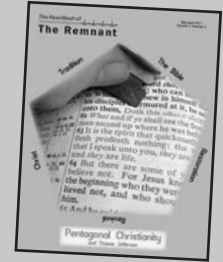
Without abiding in Christ, our life is amiss.

There's no telling the kind of problems we'll face,

If we don't live our lives by GOD'S SAVING GRACE.

## 1st Quarter 2011 Financial Report

***Thank you for your support!***



01/01/11 **Beginning Balance** **\$22,747.77**

### Receipts

Tape Ministry Donations \$20,642.82

Remnant Subscription Donations \$5,896.65

**Total Receipts** **\$26,539.47**

### Disbursements

UPS & Postage \$1,716.56

Tapes, Albums, CD's & Labels \$1,673.30

Equipment & Software Purchases \$153.13

Equipment Maintenance & Repairs \$699.56

Mailing & Office Supplies \$427.72

Rent \$2,250.00

Telephone \$640.49

Website Development & Maintenance \$449.82

Building Improvements \$0.00

Miscellaneous \$193.04

Payroll Expense \$13,550.01

Books & Catalogs \$1,225.00

Remnant Publishing & Mailing \$14,761.03

**Total Disbursements** **\$37,739.66**

03/31/11 **Ending Balance** **\$11,547.58**

**Difference** **-\$11,200.19**

*The Heartbeat of*

# **The Remnant**

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**When you pray, rather let your  
heart be without words than  
your words be without heart.**

*John Bunyan*

