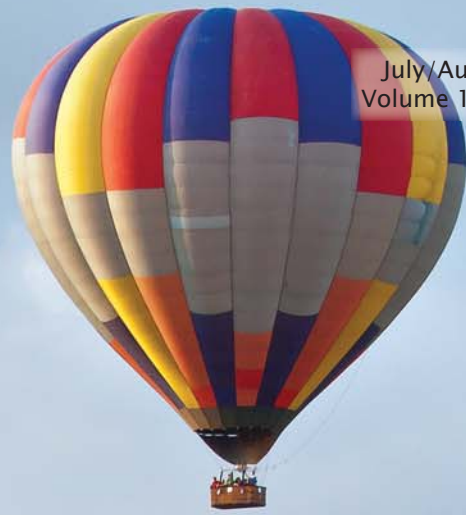


The Heartbeat of

The Remnant

July/August 2012
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Higher Ground: A Tribute to Bro. Denny

See p. 3



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The Remnant

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Higher Ground

My heart is full today as I write. As most of you know, this issue finds us in the midst of coming to grips with sober reality of the unthinkable loss of our dear Bro. Denny Kenaston. *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* is a work we inherited from Bro. Denny. Today, we remember the man whose hard work, burden, and vision gave birth to this publication, and who continually inspired and challenged us to higher ground.

A few months ago, Bro. Denny called and invited me to breakfast. He was coming to Lancaster County to finish up a few things since his recent move to Berne, Indiana. As you can imagine, I really wondered what the topic of conversation was going to be. I figured he had some questions or encouragements for me about the recent difficulties that the churches of Lancaster County had experienced. But that is not at all what he wanted to talk about. After a bit of customary small talk, he began to share what was on his heart. He and a few brothers in Berne were going through a book called “*The Holy Fire: The Story of the Fathers of the Eastern Church.*” This is a book about the testimony of some radical early Christians. Primarily, the book focuses on their sold-out, even ascetic lifestyles. He admitted that some of their strange practices didn’t make sense to him, but that the zeal of these men who “took the kingdom by force” was inspiring. The conversation got exciting as we talked about many of their examples. After breakfast, we continued the conversation as we walked across the street to the Ephrata Cloister. Standing around the graves of these men and women who had also lived peculiar, radical lives for their faith, the conversation continued and grew. We spoke of future dreams and my heart was stirred—stirred for many reasons—not only because of the stimulating topic that we were engaging in, but I was impressed that not a word was uttered about old problems; not a hint of bitterness was in him. He just wanted to press for the next level—the “higher ground” he so often spoke of. After we parted, I thought, “Wow, I pray that I will always have that kind of passion and zeal for Jesus.”

Bro. Denny’s yearning for higher ground was ultimately satisfied on July 4, 2012. His son, Daniel, record-

ed the last minutes of Bro. Denny’s life on this earth. Here is Bro. Daniel’s account of those final moments:

We decided to split up the night and take turns sitting by his side (as we have done many times throughout these months). It felt to all of us like this could be Papa’s final hours, so even those not on for their shift sort of hung around for a good part of the night. My wife and I started our shift at 11:00, just sitting by his bedside and whispering words of affirmation and



Bro. Denny’s fervent preaching against carnality and vanity was instrumental in birthing a church and a movement.

encouragement in his ears. Sometimes it seems like people hold on to life, waiting for reassurances from loved ones before allowing themselves to go, so we spent time confirming our presence and promising future care for Mama after his passing. We also talked a lot about heaven and the great reward waiting for Papa there. Obviously, we have no way to know how much of this was registering with Papa, but it sure felt like we were holding his hand spiritually as well as physically during those final hours.

Around 1:00 on Wednesday morning I started to recount memories and blessings from my childhood, thanking Papa for his love and guidance in my life. It was a very emotional moment for me, feeling that I would not have many more chances to bless Papa for his input in my life. Somewhere in this time period Christy and I started to pray with Papa, asking God

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Michael Fisber - Bedford, PA

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Ge. 1:28

In the beginning, the first command God gave mankind mandated the reproduction of the man and woman, with the purpose of filling the earth with people. God would receive glory and pleasure by the expansion of the human race across the earth He had created.¹

The fall of man meant that the growth of the human race would be accompanied by all the problems caused by Adam and Eve's sin. As one specific consequence of the fall, children would be born in great pain. However, we understand from Scripture that children were considered a great blessing—not a curse.

One of the most familiar statements in the Scriptures about the blessing of children comes from Psalm 127:3-5:

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Twice this passage emphasizes that children are a gift from God. It also seems to suggest that a “full” number of children is something to be desired, and is a source of happiness.

¹ Ed. Note: God loves people. Satan hates people. While it is true that Satan hates a holy man more than a carnal man, he simply hates all men and is on a mission to destroy humanity. Think about this mission in the light of birth control.

The past hundred years have seen considerable change in family demographics in this country. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average household size in 1900 was 4.60 persons. One hundred years later, in 2000, this number decreased to 2.59—a fairly dramatic change.²

These numbers reflect society as a whole. However, it seems more than likely that this trend is reflected in Christian subcultures as well. Conservative Christian groups are often characterized by larger families, but many of these groups would likely show a decrease in family size over the past century if a scientific study were done on them.

Conservative Anabaptists have typically been among the last bastions holding out against societal changes. However, even in these groups, a similar trend seems apparent. A 2006 study by Cory Anderson noted this trend in the Beachy Amish churches.³

Some time ago, a midwife lamented to my wife and I that she was obligated to purchase stocks of birth control products at Walmart for the Plain ladies in her community who were too embarrassed to be seen buying them.

The bottom line is clear: we are having fewer children. And it is not by accident.

The primary reason for the decrease in family size over the past hundred years seems fairly obvious. Discoveries in science and technology have brought access to easy, reliable, and affordable methods of birth control. No one needs to have children unless they intend to do so. Now, more than ever, having children is optional.

There are valid ethical debates about birth control methods. This discussion will not enter into those questions. Rather, the question to be addressed is one that is more basic: *Why* do we want to prevent conception in the first place? *Why* don't we want children?

All methods and means of birth control have the same purpose: the prevention of conception. The *motives* behind the desire to prevent conception will be the focus of this discussion.

As Christians, we should be more than willing to examine our motives in the light of Scripture. Are we willing to take an honest look at our motives, critique them, and even modify behavior if necessary?

² No. HS-12. *Households by Type and Size: 1900 to 2002*, U.S. Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/statab/hist/HS-12.pdf>. Accessed 2/12/2012.

³ “Contemporary Beachy Amish Mennonite Birth Rate Trends and Evaluations” by Cory Anderson. <http://www.user.shentel.net/coryaa/birthrates.htm>. Accessed 2/29/2012

Why?

What then are the reasons we want to prevent having children? The following list of reasons is intended not so much to overtly approve or condemn any particular motive, but to begin in our minds the process that was described earlier of getting to the root of *why*.⁴ The process begins with examining our *motives* in the light of what the Scriptures have to say about this topic. I believe that for the most part we well know what God thinks about this. The following list is probably incomplete, but here are a few possible motives for not wanting children:

- We dislike the stigma attached to large families. Large 15-passenger vans full of children are embarrassing spectacles, as are the string of children at the grocery store. People make jokes. Even Christian people chuckle, “Yeah, God said to be fruitful and replenish the earth, but he didn’t say it had to be done by one family alone!” Everyone “knows” that children in large families are deprived of proper attention and care. Obviously, too many children, not spaced apart enough, are “evidence” of poor planning and management on the part of the parents. Nobody wants that kind of image. Making sure there are two or three years between children is as important to our image as keeping our property landscaped nicely.⁵
- We may wish to pursue adoption or dedicate our lives to other ministry avenues. Some have suggested that with all the children in the world who are available for adoption, Christians should perhaps forego

4 Instead of *how*.

5 This observation is one of many which I gleaned from an e-mail discussion with a group of friends. Much of the content of this article comes from this exchange.

having, or at least limit the number of, their own children for the purpose of helping as many of these as possible. The adoption of children is without question as blessed a pursuit as that of having one’s own children. If there really are those who are willing to forego having a family of their own in favor of serving their fellow man in this way, it seems difficult to criticize this motive. This line of thought seems to imply that children can hinder ministry. It might be worth mentioning, however, that having children may open as many doors in ministry as it may seem to close. Perhaps having children interferes with our plans more than it hinders God in His plans.

- We do not view children as a blessing. Clearly, the Scriptures speak of children as a gift and blessing from the Lord. However, some parents may really view them as a bother. It is sad that a family should have any child who is not seen as a gift from God. Families, large or small, where there is not sincere love and thankfulness for each child are indeed a sad situation.
- We find it challenging to meet the needs of the children we already have. This is a very real giant that parents face. The responsibilities of parents, particularly of mothers, can at times be overwhelming. There is never a vacation for a mother. The clothing must be washed. The house must be cleaned. The meals must be prepared. This is in addition to the attention that must be paid to the physical needs of each child, as well as the educational, social, emotional, and spiritual needs. And although fathers can feel overwhelmed as well, often the mother is the one who bears the weight of this burden.

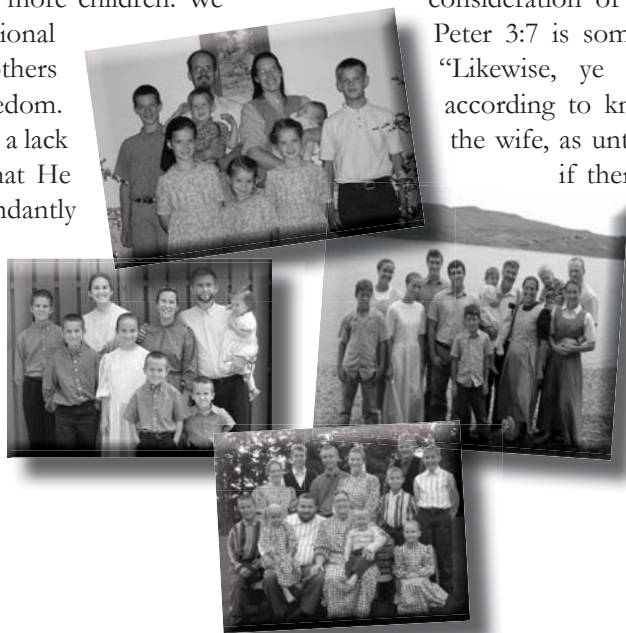
Have you ever noticed ...

- how the world seems to have more concern for animals than for humans?
- how there is a fine of up to \$5,000 for killing a bald eagle, yet abortions are acceptable?
- how our culture thinks it nothing to spend hundreds of dollars on pedigreed dogs, yet does not want children?

It is nothing new. Consider this quote from Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215):

But those who are more refined than these keep Indian birds and Median peafowls, and recline with peak-headed creatures; playing with satyrs, delighting in monsters. They ... overlook the chaste widow, who is of far higher value than a Melitaeon pup, and look askance at a just old man, who is lovelier in my estimation than a monster purchased for money. And though maintaining parrots and curlews, they do not receive the orphan child; but they expose children [ed. - leave them out to die] that are born at home, and take up the young of birds, and prefer irrational to rational creatures; although they ought to undertake the maintenance of old people with a character for sobriety, who are fairer in my mind than apes, and capable of uttering something better than nightingales; and to set before them that saying, “He that pitieth the poor lendeth to the LORD”; and this, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me.” ANF II, 278

- We face health issues. Pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing are often complicated by preexisting health conditions. Even in the best circumstances, every birth is some sort of health risk. Childbearing may be physically impossible for reasons that are out of our control. Scripture speaks of God opening and closing the womb. Having children is not always a matter of choice.
- We are afraid. We may fear childbirth. We may be afraid we cannot provide for more children. We may fear having a dysfunctional family. We may fear what others think. We may fear loss of freedom. Fear seems to be coupled with a lack of faith. Faith is believing that He is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” But fear militates against faith, and fear often leads one to trust in man’s wisdom rather than God.
- We can. With the advance of technology, we have easy access to effective birth control products. With the advance of science, we better understand the human body. Thus, we understand practices that help to prevent conception. We live in a modern Western society with new and “better” ways. We have health care choices that most people in history could only dream of. And so we prevent conception for no better reason than that we can.
- We may face financial issues. Children are expensive. When a child is born, it can cost a family anywhere between a few thousand dollars and everything they own. Each child is a financial risk. The possibility of sickness, injury, or other problem poses a constant financial hazard to a family. The cost of sufficient housing can be considerable for a large family. Even though as a whole we live in a financially prosperous society, economic success does not always translate into a family-friendly lifestyle. Stress, along with countless technological and social interferences made possible by affluence, encroaches on family time.
- We may have a better understanding of the responsibility of parents. Perhaps the parents of



Almost nowhere in our culture is having large families promoted. Have you ever seen an advertisement featuring a family with six or eight children?

large families that we have observed seem to have had their large families almost by accident, without having a clear purpose and vision. Never before have we had so many resources, books, and sermons on child training. Perhaps one result of this is that some feel that they have a clearer concept than some others of the seriousness of parental responsibilities, leading them to be more intentional in their family planning.

- We feel that preventing conception reflects proper consideration of the husband for the wife. 1 Peter 3:7 is sometimes quoted in this regard: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel ...” Even if there are no clear health, financial,

or other reasons to prevent having children, it is sometimes suggested that doing so is simply a loving gesture of courtesy and consideration towards the wife.

- We have been influenced by secular thinking concerning the problems of population growth. Our culture not only outright, but also subliminally, teaches that small families are the way to go. As conservative Christians, we may scoff at the dire predictions of earth-conscious environmentalists

who declare that having children at all is helping to doom the planet, but we may be succumbing to the more subtle influences that end up pointing us the same direction. Almost nowhere in our culture is having large families promoted. Have you ever seen an advertisement featuring a family with six or eight children? This thinking permeates our culture, and we may be shaped by it more than we realize.

- We don’t really know why. Just like some people seem to have had large families seemingly almost without thinking about it, we size our families smaller in the same sort of aimless way. We have no vision or strong compelling reasons to have children. Family does not excite us.
- We don’t have the time. A friend once lamented about the lack of time in his busy community, which is known for being saturated with Christian churches:

“The community is thriving, and there are seemingly always things to do, and good activities to be involved in. Committee meetings, PTF meetings, graduation ceremonies, school programs, ball games, prayer meetings, revival meetings, support group meetings, chorus practice, benefit auctions, fundraisers, and the list goes on. But it all comes with a price. With all this activity, there seem to be precious few evenings to simply spend at home. And even at home we have our distractions. E-mail, cell phones, and Facebook allow us to stay in touch with more people, from all over the world, than ever before. And so our already-stretched lives get stretched even more.”

Where in the world are we supposed to find time to have children? Educations need to be completed, businesses must be established, and of course the newly married must have time to enjoy and learn to know one another without distractions. Yes, certainly, children are wanted, children are valued, and children are blessings—when we find the time.

- We may lack the support of our community. Some communities are well known for the practice of having young ladies volunteer significant amounts of time and effort helping mothers with small children. Sometimes more experienced families are able to offer encouragement by example. Not all families are blessed with this sort of community support. In some cases, those who might be available to lend a hand to overwhelmed families might have other interests. But it is possible for a family to feel alone and overwhelmed, which makes the idea of having more children less appealing.
- We don't like giving up control. To leave open the question of how many children we will have seems irresponsible and scary. A woman of average health might conceivably have children as often as every year or two. Is managing this natural course of events any different from cutting one's hair, mowing the lawn, or taking Tylenol to help a headache?



The Bible calls debt a curse and children a blessing, but in our culture we apply for a curse and reject blessings. Something is wrong with this picture.

- We are selfish. Recently, a friend was telling my wife about the first years of their marriage. They waited a number of years to start their family, because they were enjoying the free lifestyle provided by two sizable incomes and no children. “We were selfish,” she said simply. Selfishness seems to be a primary reason that people don't want children. Other reasons may often be simply a cover for pure selfishness. Children interfere with our personal interests, our freedom, our time, our resources, and our plans.

As we have focused on our own hearts in this way, hopefully the Spirit of God has made the connections, or

in some cases revealed the disconnects, between our reasoning and the teaching of the Scriptures. As we allow this process to reach its completion, the course of our lives will be altered, perhaps radically, as we attempt to align our thinking and our actions with God's expressed word in relation to children.

In conclusion, there are a few things that should be clear to us in thinking through this issue. We understand that there has been a distinct

shift in family demographics in the recent past. We also know that, relative to other parts of the world and other times in history, we enjoy unprecedented prosperity and unparalleled access to health care. Financial success and generally improved health, however, have not caused an *increase* in family size in our society and in our communities; rather, the opposite is the case. We are wealthier and healthier than past generations, and therefore seemingly better able to sustain larger families, and yet our families are shrinking. It seems clear then that much of our reasoning in limiting our family size can be attributed to pure selfishness.⁶

In a widely circulated quote, Doug Philips notes another irony about our culture. “The Bible calls debt a

⁶ It seems that this discussion could be followed by one titled “Why We Want Children,” examining the motives we have for wanting children. In such a discussion, I think we would find that people have mixed reasons for wanting children, some of which may be as purely selfish as some of those we have mentioned here.

curse and children a blessing, but in our culture we apply for a curse and reject blessings. Something is wrong with this picture.”⁷ Clearly, our values as a culture are reflecting values other than those the Bible promotes.

A final clarification should be that it is not at all necessary to have children in order to be blessed of God. In fact, the single person or the husband and wife who are childless or whose family is limited by circumstances out of their control can expect God’s special attention. “A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land” (Ps. 68:5,6).

There are single persons or childless couples whose “families” far exceed those of others both in number and in blessing. “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord” (Is. 54:1).

If we were to act primarily by the values in God’s word and of His kingdom, instead of the self-centered, materialistic values of our generation and culture, how might we think and act differently in terms of planning our families?

If we were to act primarily by the values in God’s word and of His kingdom, instead of the self-centered, materialistic values of our generation and culture, how might we think and act differently in terms of planning our families? Fifty or a hundred years from now, what investment of ours will matter most?

May you advance on a journey that leads you toward what God wanted the world to be in the first place, when He spoke of a verdant earth filled with His creation, which would continuously glorify Him and bring Him pleasure.

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. Ge. 1:31

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Lu. 18:16 ~

7 As quoted in *QuiverX*, by James and Shannon French, Xulon Press, 2006.

Rendering Unto God His Own

Throughout the ages emperors, kings, presidents, and rulers have placed their images on coins and other forms of currency, thus expressing their ownership and authority over them. Mt. 22:20-21, Mk. 12:16-17, Lk. 20:24-25 The clear message of Jesus here is that men are to “render to Caesar what belongs to him” ... but let us not miss the second half of this profound message.

As God placed His own image upon mankind in the creation (Ge. 1:26-27, Ge. 9:6), we are thus being boldly called by Jesus to render unto “God the things that are God’s,” and thus He is here beseeching us, “by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Ro. 12:1.

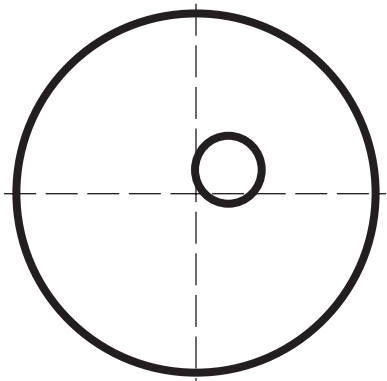
We see that Jesus is the “very image of the invisible God” (Co. 1:13-15, Co. 2:9, He. 1:3) and in the life of Jesus, who is our example and pattern (1 Pe. 2:21), we can see clearly that which God is calling us to, what He has created and designed us to know and to be.

Jesus could boldly proclaim that “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jo. 14:9) because He and the Father are one. Jn. 10:30 His prayer for us is that we too will be one as He and the Father are one—Jesus and the Father in us and we in them—that the world may believe that the Father sent the Son! Jn. 17:11, Jn. 17:21

Our lives and works, as His, are to boldly declare that we are in the Father and the Father is in us! Jn. 14:10-12 Every time we see the works of God flowing through the life of the Lord Jesus, the works that no man can do unless God is with Him (Jn. 3:2), we can hear God the Father clearly, repeatedly, and boldly declaring from heaven—upon every miracle, sign, wonder, deliverance, pardon, and healing—“This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased (fully satisfied)! Hear ye him!” Mt. 3:17, Mt. 17:5, Mk. 1:11, Lk. 3:22. And so it is to be in our lives (Jn. 7:37-39, Jn. 14:12) and in our assemblies! 1 Co. 14:25

The calling is indeed high, heavenly, and holy (Ph. 3:12-14, 2 Ti. 1:9, He. 3:1), but God has made all the resources available to us, through the blood of Jesus, in order to enable us to attain, lay hold, and walk worthy of this beautiful and wonderful calling, for it is His destiny and purpose for our lives—that we would be perfectly “conformed to the image of His Son” (Ro. 8:29), putting “on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him,” (Co. 3:10) and that we are to be “changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord!” 2 Co. 3:18

Dear Lord Jesus, may it be so in our lives, for Your holy and worthy name’s sake! ~Philip Hodson



Christian Eccentricity

Henry Drummond 1851-1897 (Adapted)

They said, he is beside himself. Mk. 3:21

The most pitiable life in the history of the world is the life of the Lord Jesus. Those who study it find out, every day, a fresh sorrow. Before He came it was already foretold that He would be acquainted with grief, but no imagination has ever conceived the darkness of the reality.

It began with one of the bitterest kinds of sorrow—the sorrow of an enforced silence. For thirty years He saw, but dared not act. The wrongs He came to redress were there. Hollow religion—a mere piece of acting—was being palmed off around Him on every side as the religion of the living God. He saw the poor trodden upon, the sick untended, the widow unavenged, His Father’s people scattered, His truth misrepresented, and the whole earth filled with hypocrisy and violence. He saw this, grew up amongst it, and knew how to cure it. Yet He was dumb, He opened not His mouth. How He held in His breaking spirit, till the slow years dragged themselves done, it is impossible to comprehend.

Then came the public life, the necessity to breathe its atmosphere: the temptation, the contradiction of sinners, the insults of the Pharisees, the attempts on His life, the dullness of His disciples, the Jews’ rejection of Him, the apparent failure of His cause, Gethsemane, Calvary. Yet these were but the more marked shades in the darkness which blackened the whole path of the Man of Sorrows.

But we are confronted here with an episode in His life which is not included in any of these—an episode which had a bitterness all its own, and such as has fallen to the lot of few to know. It was not the way the world treated Him; it was not the Pharisees; it was not something which came from His enemies; it was something His *friends* did. When He left the carpenter’s shop and went out into the

wider life, His friends were watching Him. For some time back they had noticed a certain strangeness in His manner. He had always been strange among His brothers, but now this strangeness was growing upon Him. He had said much stranger things of late, made many strange plans, gone away on curious errands to strange places. What did it mean? Where was it to end? Was the family to be responsible for all this eccentricity?

One sad day it culminated. It was quite clear to them now. He was not responsible for what He was doing. It was His mind, alas! that had become affected. He was beside Himself. In plain English, He was insane!

An awful thing to say when it is true, a more awful thing when it is not; a more awful thing still when the accusation comes from those we love, from those who know us best. It was the voice of no enemy; it came from His own home. It was His own mother, perhaps, and His brethren, who pointed this terrible finger at Him; apologizing for Him, entreating the people not to mind Him, He was beside Himself—He was insane!

There should have been one spot surely upon God’s earth for the Son of Man to lay His head—one roof, at least, in Nazareth, with mother’s ministering hand and sister’s love for the weary worker. But His very home is closed to Him. He has to endure the furtive glances of eyes which once loved Him, the household watching Him and whispering one to another, the cruel suspicion, the laying hands upon Him, hands which were once kind to Him, and finally, the overwhelming announcement of the verdict of His family, “He is beside Himself.” Truly He came to His own, and His own received Him not.

What makes it right to dig up this harrowing memory today, and emphasize a thought which we cannot but feel lies on the borderland of blasphemy? Because the significance of that scene is still intense. It has a peculiar lesson for us who are to profess ourselves followers of Christ—a lesson in the counting of the cost. Christ’s life, from first to last, was a dramatized parable—too short and too significant to allow even a scene which well might rest in solemn shadow to pass by unimproved.

It’s true!

Observe, *from the world’s standpoint*, that the charge is true. It is useless to denounce this as a libel, a bitter, blasphemous calumny. It is not so—it is true! There was no alternative. Either He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, or He was beside Himself. A holy life is always a phenomenon. The world doesn’t understand it. It is either supernatural or morbid.

For what is “being beside oneself”? What is insanity? It is eccentricity—ec-centr-icity—*having a different cen-*

ter from other people, being off-centered. Here is a man, for instance, who devotes his life to collecting objects of antiquarian interest, old coins perhaps, or old editions of books. His center is odd, his life revolves in an orbit of his own. Therefore, his friends say, "He is eccentric." Or here is an engine with many moving wheels, large and small, cogged and plain, but each revolving upon a central axis, and making a perfect circle. But at one side there is one small wheel which does not turn in a circle. Its motion is different from all the rest, and the changing curve it describes is unlike any ordinary line of the mathematician. The engineer tells you that this is the eccentric, because it is running off-center.

Now when Jesus Christ came among men He found them nearly all revolving in one circle. There was but one center to human life—self. Man's chief end was to glorify himself and enjoy himself for ever. Then, as now, by the all but unanimous consensus of the people, this present world was sanctioned as the legitimate object of all human interest and enterprise. By the whole gravitation of society, Jesus—as a man—must have been drawn to the very verge of this vast vortex of self-indulgence, personal ease, and pleasure, which had sucked in the populations of the world since time began.

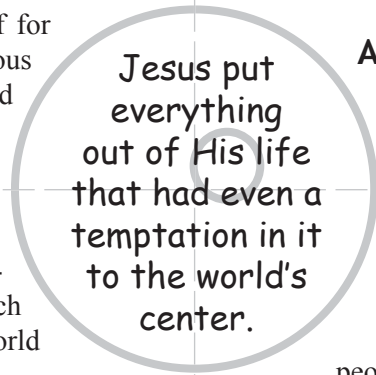
But He stepped back. He refused absolutely to be attracted. He put everything out of His life that had even a temptation in it to the world's center. He humbled Himself—there is no place in the world's vortex for humbleness. He became of no reputation—nor is there a place for namelessness. He emptied Himself—gravitation cannot act on emptiness. So the prince of this world came, but found nothing in Him. He found nothing, because the true center of that life was not to be seen. It was with God. The unseen and the eternal moved Him. He did not seek His own happiness, but that of others. He went about doing good. His object in going about was not personal gain, but to do good.

Now all this was *very eccentric*. It was living on new lines altogether. He did God's will. He pleased not Himself. His center was to one side of self. He was beside Himself! From the world's viewpoint it was simply insanity.

Think of this idea of His, for instance, of starting out into life with so quixotic¹ an idea as that of doing good;

¹ "Quixotic" references the character in classical literature of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, who takes upon himself the task of straightening out the world.

the simplicity of the expectation that the world ever would become good; this irrational talk about meat to eat that they knew not of, about living water; these extraordinary beatitudes predicating sources of happiness which had never been heard of; these paradoxical utterances of which He was so fond, such as that the way to find life was to lose it, and to lose life in this world was to keep it to life eternal. What could these be but mere hallucination and dreaming! It was inevitable that men should laugh and sneer at Him. He was unusual. He would not go with the multitude. And men were expected to go with the multitude. What the multitude thought, said, and did were the right things to have thought, said, and done. And if anyone thought, said, or did differently than the culture around them, his folly be on his own head, he was "beside himself," he was insane.



As He was, so are we

Every man who lives like Christ produces the same reaction upon the world. This is an inevitable consequence. What men said of Him, if we are true to Him, they will say of you and me. The servant is not above his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

A Christian must be different from other people. Time has not changed the essential difference between the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christ. They are radically and eternally different. And from the world's standpoint, Christianity is still eccentricity. For what, again, is Christianity? It is the projection into the world of the ethics which Christ lived. It is a duplicating in modern life of the spirit, the method, and the aims of Jesus, a following through the world the very footprints He left behind. And if these footprints were at right angles to the broad beaten track the world went along in His day, they will be so still.

It is useless to say that the distinction has broken down in our day now. These two roads are still at right angles. Christ prepared His church beforehand for the reception it would get in the world. He gave no hope that it would be an agreeable one. Light must conflict with darkness, truth with error. There is no sanctioned place in the world as yet for a life with God as its goal, and self-denial as its principle. Meekness must be victimized; spirituality must be misunderstood; true religion must be mocked. Holiness must make a strong ferment and reaction in family or community, office or workshop, wherever it is introduced. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter

against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Mt.10:34-36

True religion is no milk-and-water experience. It is a fire. It is a sword. It is a burning, consuming heat, which

True religion is no milk-and-water experience. It is a fire. It is a sword. It is a burning, consuming heat, which must radiate upon everything around.

must radiate upon everything around. The change to the Christlike life is so remarkable that when one really undergoes it, he cannot find words in common use by which he can describe its revolutionary character. He has to recall the very striking phrases of the New Testament, which once seemed such exaggerations: "A new man, a new creature; a new heart; a new birth."

His very life has been taken down and recrystallized around the new center. He has been born again.²

The impression his friends receive from him now is the impression of eccentricity. The change is bound to strike them, for it is radical,³ central. They will call in unworthy motives to account for the difference. They will say it is a mere temporary fit, and will pass away. They will say he has shown a weakness which they did not expect from him, and try to banter him out of his novel views and stricter life. This, in its mildest form, is the modern equivalent of "He is beside himself." And it cannot be helped. It is the legitimate reproach of the cross. The words are hard, but not new. Has it not come down that long line of whom the world was not worthy? Its history, alas! is well known. It fell on the first Christians in a painful and even vulgar form.

The off-centered church

The little church had just begun to live. The disciples stood after the great day of Pentecost, contemplating that first triumph of Christ's cause with unbounded joy. At last an impression had been made upon the world. The enterprise was going to succeed, and the whole earth would fill with God's glory. They little calculated that the impression they made on the world was the impression of their own ridiculousness. "What meaneth this?" the people asked. "It means," the disciples would have said, "that the

² Ed. Note: Here the author brings out clearly that "born again" is not synonymous with "forgiven," but rather is synonymous with "changed in character."

³ "Radical" means "going to the *root*."

Holy Ghost, who was to come in His name, is here, that God's grace is stirring the hearts of men and moving them to repent." The people had a different answer. "These men," was the coarse reply, "are full of new wine." Not insane this time—they are intoxicated!

Paul's eccentricity

Time passed, and Paul tells us the charge was laid at his door. He had made that great speech in the hall of the Caesarean palace before Agrippa and Festus. He told them of the grace of God in his conversion, and closed with an eloquent confession of his Lord. What impression had he made upon his audience? The impression of a madman. "And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." Ac. 26:24

Poor Paul! How you feel for him when the cruel blow was struck. But there was no answer to it. From their viewpoint it was perfectly true. And so it has been with all saints to the present hour. Such men are to the Jews a stumblingblock and to the Greeks foolishness.

The eccentricity of prayer

It is not simply practical Christianity that is an offence. The whole spiritual life, to the natural man, is an eccentric thing. Take such a manifestation, for instance, as prayer. The scientific men of the day have examined it and pronounced it hallucination. Or take public prayer. A congregation of people with bowed heads, shut eyes, hushed voices, invoking, confessing, pleading, entreating One who, though not seen, is said to see, who, speaking not, is said to answer. There is no other name for this incantation from the world's standpoint than eccentricity, delusion, madness.

We are not ashamed of the terms. They are the guarantee of quality. And all high quality in the world is subject to the same reproach. For we are discussing a universal principle. It applies to inventors, to discoverers, to philosophers, to poets, to all men who have been better or higher than their time. These men are never understood by their contemporaries. And if there are martyrs of science—the centers of science being in this world, seen, demonstrated, and known—how much more must there be martyrs for religion whose center is beyond the reach of earthly eye?

There is no sanctioned place in the world as yet for a life with God as its goal, and self-denial as its principle.

Don't be thorough (and you'll be "okay")

It follows from this that the more active religion is, the more unpopular it must be.

Christ's religion did not trouble His friends at first. For thirty years they were content to put up with it. But as it grew in intensity they lost patience. When He called the twelve disciples, they gave Him up. His work went on; the world said nothing for some time. But as His career became atypical more and more, the family feeling spread and gained universal ground. Even the most beautiful and tender words He uttered were quoted in evidence of His "condition." For John tells us that after that exquisite discourse in the tenth chapter about the Good Shepherd, there was a division among the Jews for these sayings: "And many of them said, He hath a devil and is mad. Why hear ye Him?" It seemed utter raving.

The tightening path

Have you ever noticed—and there is nothing more touching in history—how Christ's path narrowed?

The first great active period is called in books "The year of public favor." On the whole it was a year of triumph. The world received Him for a time. Vast crowds followed Him. The Baptist's audience left him and gathered round the new voice. Palestine rang with the name of Jesus. Noblemen, rulers, and rabbis vied with one another in entertaining Him. But the excitement died down suddenly and soon.

The next year is called "The year of opposition." The applause was over. The crowds thinned. On every hand He was obstructed. The Sadducees left Him. The Pharisees left Him. The political party was roused into opposition. The Jews, the great mass of the people, gave Him up. His path was narrowing.

With the third period came the end. The path was very narrow now. There were but twelve left to Him when the last act of the drama opens. They are gathered on the stage together for the last time. But it must narrow still. One of the disciples, after receiving the sop, goes out. Eleven

are left Him. Peter soon follows. There are but ten. One by one they leave the stage, till all forsook Him and fled, and He is left to die alone. Well might He cry, as He hung there in this awful solitude—as if even God had forgotten Him—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

And so goes the path of the saints ...

But this is not peculiar to Jesus. It is typical of the life of every Christian. His path, too, must narrow. As he grows in grace, he grows in isolation. He feels that God

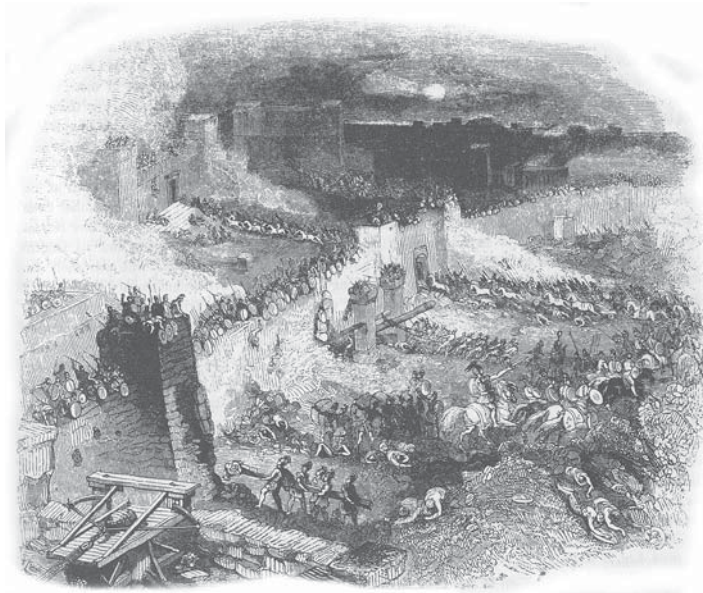
is detaching his life from all around it and drawing him to Himself for a more intimate fellowship. But as the communion is nearer, the chasm which separates him from his fellow man must widen. The degree of a man's religion, indeed, is to be gauged by the degree of his rejection by the world. With the early Christians was not this the commonest axiom, "We told you before," did not Paul warn them, "that we should suffer?" "Unto some it was given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His

sake." It was the position of honor, as it were, in the family of God to be counted worthy of being persecuted for the sake of Christ.

It is a sad reflection that, as in the case of Christ, the keenest suffering may come sometimes from one's own family circle. Among our friends there may be one on whom we all look doubtfully—one who is growing up in the beauty of holiness, and we not knowing what it is that makes him strange. It often needs death to teach us the beauty of a life which has been lived beside our own; and we only know the worth of it when God proves it by taking it to Himself.

Eccentricity for eccentricity's sake?

Finally, it may be objected to all this that if eccentricity is a virtue, it is easily purchased. Anyone can set up for an eccentric character. And if being off-centered is what is necessary to be a Christian, we shall have candidates enough for the office. But it remains to define the terms



Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfill. A fanatic comes not to fulfill, but to destroy.



That they may teach the
young women ...

Just as Thou Wilt

Marcia Zimmerman

Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone ...

The day is long. Often weary and worn, we would faint beneath the responsibilities placed in our field of service. The enemy of souls whispers (or sometimes thunders) lies to us that we cannot make it or that we are not doing a good enough job. Oh sisters, take heart! Let us believe that all power is available to us to speak in living echoes of Jesus' tone amidst the trials and pressures of everyday living. By His grace (power) and by His Spirit's direction we surely can bring glory to God, even in the most trying of circumstances ...

The key to being a living echo of Jesus' tone? Go to the Source of the echo ... the place of quiet before Him in communion, preferably before the day begins. He brings refreshment and new strength through His Spirit guiding us into all truth as we read the precious words of His Book.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath." In my short years of walking with Him, I've observed that the mothers with the greatest grace upon their lives are the ones who place a premium on their time alone with God. I know mothers who go to bed early and get up early so they can be sure to have that time with Him before the day begins and duties press around them. Other mothers take that time during some quiet in the middle of the day. No matter when it is, that time of sitting at the feet of Jesus is key to being a living echo of His tone.

Abiding in Him will ensure our lives are echoing Jesus' tone. To abide in Him requires dying daily to our wants, our hopes, our dreams, our personal likes and dislikes—who "we are"—in order to live the life He came to give in abundance, always and only for the glory of the Father.

"Take it to the Lord in prayer" has been a vital link down through the ages to mothers, wives, and daughters being able to speak in living echoes of His tone. As the burdens press and the cares distress, making a habit of "praying always for all things" goes a long way in helping us to bring glory to God as we relate to those in our homes and communities.

When the summer heat decreases our physical stamina, do we believe in and reach for that grace that enables us to be a living echo of Jesus' tone?

When immaturity rears its annoying head in young members of the family, do we rely on that power, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives, to be a living echo of Jesus' tone?

When our husband/father asks something of us that requires us to rearrange our plans for today, do we adjust our schedule to theirs so that in the Spirit of Christ, we are living echoes of His tone?

**Abiding in
Him will
ensure our
lives are
echoing
Jesus' tone.**

When a sister shares a struggle she is having, we can be living echoes of Jesus' tone by caring about her and by biblically helping her to find an answer to her need.

When we are misunderstood or falsely accused, and we are left with "only God" to avenge our cause, do we believe that it is possible to be a living echo of Jesus' tone, and follow the example of Him who "like a lamb before His shearers (was) dumb"?

As Thou hast sought, so let me seek,
Thy erring children, lost and lone.

Sometimes as we live and work "behind the scenes" in our homes, we can feel like we are not doing much to seek the lost. But listen, dear ones ... being a daughter or a mother at home with the family day in and day out is no meaningless place to fill. The little ones who come to us, with souls that will never die, must know their purpose in being created, and eventually come to understand their need of Jesus Christ and new life in Him. That is a full-time task, and one that bears the highest importance for us in God's plan.

Someone is needed who will serve the head of the home, helping him to carry out his vision for bringing the gospel to our community as a family unit, the way the Lord planned it to be. Are we organized and managing our time enough to be able to do that? It will mean laying down some personal interests in order to fill this place the Lord has given us. Oh, Lord, give us wives and daughters filled with vision and purpose in understanding why God put them where He did, and gladness of heart to obey that call!

Then there are the clerks we relate to in town who need a smile, a friendly word, or a caring ear. What about the older woman struggling with her groceries to the car? Do we have time to stop and lend her a hand and word of care? Do we teach our daughters to help them with a cheerful smile, even though they may feel shy? How about the lady and her daughter who look rather distressed in the store parking lot as they view the flat tire on their van? What about the neighbor whose wife left him with two

young daughters to raise? Would he appreciate a basket of fresh green beans and a caring note from the family? How about the widower farmer in the community who would enjoy a caring invitation for a visit and a home-cooked meal shared around a family table? There are lost and erring relatives and friends to pray for, asking God to put the desire for Jesus in their hearts. Jn. 6:44 Never do we have time to shirk our place of responsibility in kingdom work.

Jesus has sought us quite intensely. Mt. 18:10-14 His is a love and compassion that we will never reach perfectly while here on earth, but He expects us to walk as He walked, and to live as He lived ... so let us walk on toward that perfection. He wants to put His love and

compassion in our hearts. As He sought us, so let us seek. We may not completely know the hearts of those He puts in our path to bless, but He knows them. As He leads, and as our families are well cared for, let us seek those in our communities who need Him, whether they need to be born again, or simply need friends who care about them enough to bless them.

Oh feed me, Lord, that I may
feed
Thy hungering ones with manna
sweet.

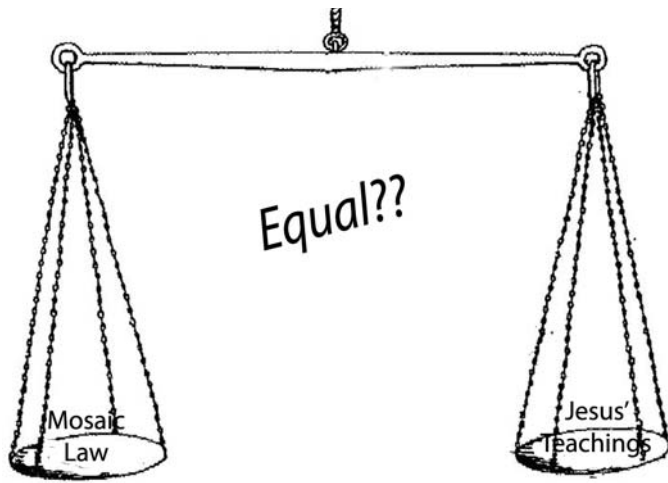
Spending time in the Word—and obeying what the Lord shows us—is a sure way to be able to feed others what He has fed us. If we are to going to have sweet manna to feed those within our care, it is imperative that we feed on that sweet manna ourselves. In this generation, it is so easy to just pick up a book filled with a mixture of psychobabble

and Scripture, self-help suggestions mixed with nuggets of real truth, to "find answers" for what we seek. But that is not God's way nor is it His answer to biblical sisterhood. His Words are pure, like silver tried in a furnace of fire seven times. No other words are as pure as His Word. Sweet manna comes from that Word alone and can be had in abundant measure, pressed down and running over, if we but gather it. The example of the noble Bereans in Acts 17:10-12 is a challenge for us to follow even today.

Continued on p. 17



Sometimes, as we live and work "behind the scenes" in our homes, we can feel like we are not doing much to seek the lost.



A More Glorious Gospel

A look at “flat Bible” theology

Bryce Geiser – Caneyville, KY

In the nearly eight years since we moved here, we have had several visitors who believe and teach something called “flat Bible” theology. “Flat Bible” thought is easy enough to recognize, but it has many variations. Recently a family from Missouri visited here, and as the conversation unfolded I noticed the familiar pattern again. And so I asked him, “Have you ever read Thomas Lancaster’s book called *Restoration*?”

He admitted that he had, though he forcefully denied any relationship between his and Lancaster’s theology. And yet, as the conversation continued, I heard a lot of the same things being said that sounded so much like Lancaster and his publisher, “First Fruits of Zion.”

I can’t be sure, but it seems to me that this way of viewing the Bible is growing, and it has many sincere adherents who do not realize that it is assuredly not kingdom Christianity.

For those who have not yet run into “flat Bible” theology, it is, very briefly, the belief that the Old and New Testaments run along the same moral plane and that Jesus never intended to be teaching a higher standard of morals or behavior than what the Old Testament *really* teaches. This requires some hair splitting about what is moral and what is not. Because of this, some reject the idea of dividing the Old Testament into moral, civil, and ceremonial categories, and decide to simply accept everything as having some application today—especially the Sabbath and dietary laws. These people, of whom Thomas Lancaster

is a primary voice, expect God to once again establish the entire Old Covenant in these last days, as people gather around a restored Torah.

My friend from Missouri did not agree with this, but he agreed with the teaching that the Sermon on the Mount has been misunderstood by the Anabaptists. He said that Jesus never intended to say anything different than what God taught Moses. “It has been said ... but I say unto you” was simply Jesus clarifying certain aspects of the Law which the Pharisees had obscured.

The slippery slope

This is where it gets slippery, so watch out! If it is true that Jesus was simply trying to correct the understanding of the Torah, then we must try to understand Jesus’ words in light of the Old Testament. This is foundational. Jesus, they say, could never have contradicted or changed the Law of God, since He came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. Therefore, the gospel of Jesus does not differ from the Law, at least in any moral sense. For some, it does not differ at all in any sense.

Of course, the apostles continued to keep the Law even after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This seems evident from passages like Acts 25:8, where Paul tells Festus, “Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.” Christians of Jewish descent continued keeping the Law for some time, although the events of 70 A.D. closed that door completely, most assuredly by the hand of God. Gentile Christians were, of course, another matter.

Reading the Bible in the light of “flat Bible” theology leads to some gradually diverging practices, mostly in three areas. First, and most important, is the doctrine of nonresistance. The concept of two kingdoms and not resisting evil is certainly a moral issue, and those of the “flat Bible” persuasion eventually, and sometimes even reluctantly, must accept the use of the sword, both individually and as a society. They accept self-defense and “just” wars, because they must reconcile the words of Jesus with those of Moses.

A second issue is that of divorce and remarriage, which is why some people turn to “flat Bible” theology in the first place. If Moses thought it necessary, because of the hardness of people’s hearts, to allow divorce, then Jesus must be saying the same thing. His comments about how it was in the beginning are only meant, so they say, to correct certain abuses.

A third divergence arises in the area of money and possessions. While the Old Testament provides for tithing and supporting widows and orphans, the overriding

theme is that obedience to godliness results in God's favor; "Wealth and riches shall be in his house." Ps. 112:3

Jesus takes almost the opposite stance. "Blessed are the poor." "Sell what you have and give alms." "Do not lay up treasures on earth."

How can we reconcile all this? Is it possible that we have misread Jesus, and that the Law actually contains the key to unlocking what Jesus really meant? Did nothing change significantly between the two Testaments?

The early church

Anyone familiar with the history of the early church will recognize that "flat Bible theology" is not historic Christianity. The early Christians denied, vehemently denied, that the God of the Old Testament was someone different than the God of the New. And yet, they also clearly felt that a new, higher dispensation had arrived which made the Old obsolete. One quote from Irenaeus will suffice:

Since, then, the law originated with Moses, it terminated with John as a necessary consequence. Christ had come to fulfil it: wherefore "the law and the prophets were" with them "until John." And therefore Jerusalem, taking its commencement from David, and fulfilling its own times, must have an end of legislation when the new covenant was revealed.
ANF 1, 466

Indeed, a recurring theme among the early Christian writers is that a tremendous new breakthrough in morality had occurred by virtue of the life and teachings of Jesus. A quantum leap, if you will, and a paradigm shift for the whole of mankind.

No wonder. The apostle Paul sees it that way as well:

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious ... which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? ... For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. 2 Co. 3:7-11 (in part)

Truly, this gospel that Jesus brought far exceeds in glory what it replaced. The first Covenant was only a necessary prelude, a shadow, of the new kingdom that Jesus brought. This kingdom we have received is often called the upside-down kingdom, in contrast to the right-side-up kingdom of the nation of Israel. This is the kingdom we have received, a kingdom that does not resist evil, does not sanction divorce or remarriage, and teaches against the accumulation of wealth.

A more glorious gospel than the Old one! ~

Continued from p.15

The olive plants sitting around our tables need that sweet manna ... they need to know what the Lord thinks of any heart issue that arises, what He says about modesty, hospitality, gossip, pride, having a servant's heart, or loving our enemy. They need to hide that sweet manna in their hearts through Bible memory. Do we take the time to help them (and memorize right along with them!)?

Our sisters in Christ, while hopefully not "erring," as the song speaks of, need that sweet manna, too. They may be struggling with weariness, fear, or wrongful treatment against them. Do we have sweet manna to pass along to them? God intends that we should admonish and encourage one another, provoking one another to love and to good works. He. 10:24; Ro. 15:14

Oh use me, Lord, use even me,
Just as Thou wilt, and when and where,
Until Thy blessed face I see,
Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share.

Amen.

Just as Thou wilt ... and when ... and where. What a blessed place of surrender in Christ! This is exactly where He needs us mortals of clay (yes, we who, without Him, are sinners with no excuse and without hope) to be, so that He can fulfill His purpose through us and, most importantly, so that God will receive glory from us each day that He gives us breath. What a blessing to know those overcomers who have kept their garments unspotted from the world, who have chosen to give Him their ALL ...

There is coming a day, dear sisters, when we shall lay our earthly duties down and rest forever. Often we sigh for that eternal rest, where there is no sickness to attend, no sorrow to dismay, and no temptation for us to stray from the fold of God and live for our own pleasure. There is coming a day when we shall rest beside the beautiful river of God, a much better rest than any man can ever invent here below. What a day that will be! Jesus will be there. We shall see Him face to face at last, the One who died for us and whose life we echoed here on earth.

Until then, beloved, may we keep ourselves in the love of God. ~

Excerpts are from the hymn "Lord, Speak to Me,"
written by Frances R. Havergal.

**The olive
plants sitting
around our
tables need
that sweet
manna!**

Introduction

Many churches today are facing the pressure of dealing with the world's music trying to get into the church. Some of it is coming in the back door, but some of it is also being introduced in the front door by leaders who have come to the conclusion that the way to win the world is to imitate the world.

This article takes a somewhat different approach to the issue of contemporary music. The author moves back a few steps and takes a wide look, not at this generation's choice of music, but at what happened starting two centuries ago. From there, he follows the choices up to the present.

There are a couple of points to make before reading this article to help in understanding it. First, this article is actually an overview of a topic given at a hymn conference. Thus, it contains a certain amount of talk that assumes the reader understands basic music terminology.

The main term to grasp is what the author calls the "gospel song." This refers to a music genre that developed in the 1800s, which he explains below. The important thing to remember is that he doesn't use the term "gospel song" in a general way, but to a genre of music. As well, he uses the term "concert gospel" to talk about a style of music developed in the early 1900s.

Next, this topic was given in the context of American Anabaptism. The author traces the history of church music in that context, which may or may not be the same context that you as the reader are in. The context given here is a kingdom Christianity that had solid spiritual hymns and songs, in German, as the "music menu" in its beginning. With the move from the German language to English, a decision had to be made: What songs would they use in their hymnals?

Read the following article in that light, and watch a progression happen. The author ends with some observations that are pertinent to all of us, regardless of our spiritual legacy.

Note that the endnotes are the author's notes, but all footnotes are by *The Heartbeat of the Remnant*. Also note that commas have been removed from song titles to prevent confusion when listed in a series.

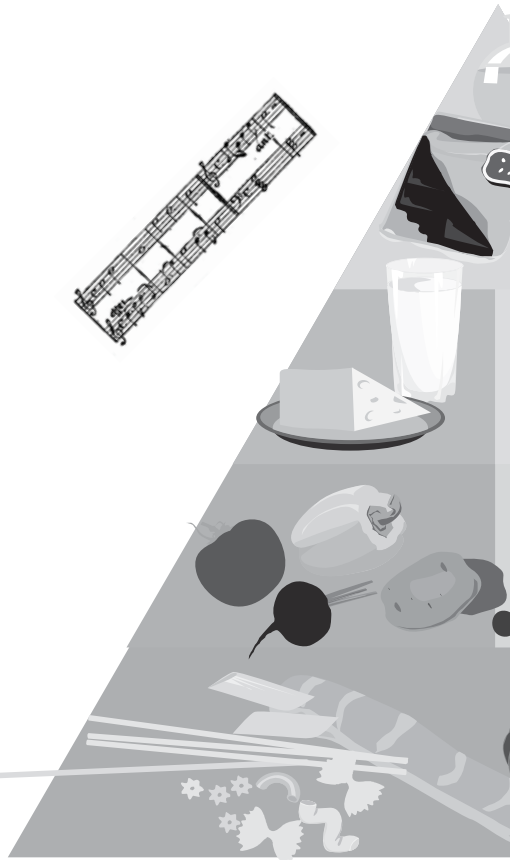
Finally, take note of the food pyramid pictured on this page. Notice the foundation of what is considered a balanced diet, and then notice what the little peak consists of. And think of music while you look ...

“What shall we sing?” has long been a dependable hot-button question in the church. From chants to psalms to hymns to choruses, the changes in worship music have seldom gone smoothly. In some ways, Anabaptist groups have been less vulnerable to worship fads. They have historically kept a strong hold on their worship traditions. But the switch from German to English in the late 19th century broke that continuity and left the Anabaptists scrambling to borrow worship materials from the nearest Protestant sources. The gospel song was one such acquirement that became surprisingly entrenched in Anabaptist worship, considering how poorly it fit their theological motifs.

First-generation gospel songs: Sunday schools and revivalism (1860-1900)

The origins of the gospel song are usually traced back to the camp meeting songs of the early 1800s. Out of Appalachian folk traditions came “white spirituals” such as *Give Me That Old-Time Religion* and *On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand*. In this era, blacks and whites often attended camp meetings together, and may have shared their heritage of simple praise songs. Black spirituals of that day included songs like *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, *We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder*, and *Were You There?*¹

The Sunday school movement, which sprang to life in the mid-1800s, created a demand for simple spiritual songs for children. William Bradbury led the way in the 1860s with fresh tunes, many of which we still sing: *Jesus Loves Me*, *Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us*, *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*, and *Just As I Am*.



What's on the

Examining the legacy

James S. Martin

During the same period, Robert Lowry composed lively tunes such as *Marching to Zion* and *All the Way My Savior Leads Me*. He wrote both words and music for *Shall We Gather at the River*. More memorably, the blind poetess Fanny Crosby supplied around 8,000 new song texts,¹ frequently collaborating with the composer William Doane.² Some of her best known songs include *To God Be the Glory*, *Blessed Assurance*, *Rescue the Perishing*, and *I Am Thine O Lord*. Other favorites born in this era were *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, *I Will Sing of My Redeemer*, and *He Hideth My Soul*. Of course, these examples represent the “gold” of the gospel song style; the “chaff,” or the 99%, has drifted away.

Although this type of song was first designed for Sunday schools, it also proved to be the perfect tool for the mass urban revivalism that began in the 1870s. Dwight L. Moody and his song leader Ira D. Sankey held dynamic evangelistic rallies in large urban venues, creating a new model for parachurch ministry. With solos and choir support, Sankey could quickly teach these

new repetitive songs to large crowds without songbooks. Compared to singing hymns in the Lowell Mason style, this was heady stuff. It was a brand new sound for Christian worship, modeled closely on the popular music of the day—parlor tunes and folk ballads. The fresh personal testimony of the lyrics, the lively rhythms, and

1 Fanny was certainly good with poetry, but it is to be noted that she was paid to produce song texts, which resulted in many of them actually being of mediocre quality. Less than 1% of her texts have endured to our day ... This should remind us that writing poetry or prose for the money does not produce an anointing.

2 This was the same criteria that John D. Martin used in his recent *Hymns of the Church*.

the easy tunes made these songs custom-tailored for the excitement of the whole revivalistic project. Moody knew that mass evangelism depended heavily on the emotional momentum created by large crowds singing sensational songs together. He said, “I believe that music is one of the most powerful agents for good or evil.”³

The spirit of revivalism stirred among the Mennonites too. As they began borrowing both the methods and materials of the Protestant Awakening, the more cautious segment of brothers withdrew to form the Old Order groups. Today, we forget how threatening these bouncy new English jingles must have sounded to ears accustomed to slow German hymns.

The first wave of these new gospel songs entered the Mennonite churches through the *Church and Sunday School Hymnal*, 1902. A few decades later, the 1927 *Church Hymnal (Mennonite)* attempted to reign in the zeal for gospel songs by limiting the number of gospel songs to 20%.² The book that has spread gospel songs across a wide segment of conservative Anabaptist churches to this day was the 1959 *Christian Hymnal*, produced by the Churches of God in Christ, Mennonite.

Characteristics: Identifying gospel songs of the Sunday school era

Classifying worship songs is always complicated by the exceptions. For example, the gospel song *When Peace Like a River* is quite hymnlike. Compared to hymns, however, gospel songs had a distinctly new flavor.

General Features

1. Song form. In the hymn tradition, tunes and texts were conceived of independently. Hymn writers wrote poems in standard meters that could be matched to any number of existing tunes—or interchanged for variety. The gospel song writers and composers collaborated to create a single work. Like the secular vocal songs of the day, the tunes were specifically composed for the lyrics, or vice versa. This enabled a unified expression that often communicated effectively.

2. Spontaneity. Many pieces, both words and music, were written in very little time and put into circulation. Hence, the endlessly romanticized folklore in the collections of “hymn stories.” One gets the impression from these books that the average gospel song flowed out on the back of an envelope in 20 minutes, in response to some personal crisis. The tunes were jaunty, but not especially creative. The texts were not intended as studied theological statements. Often the language was only tan-

3 This was the same criteria that John D. Martin used in his recent *Hymns of the Church*.



e Praise Menu?

y of the gospel song

in - Scurry, TX

gentially scriptural and the biblical allusions ambiguous. The spontaneous response of the songwriter's experience made the songs at once intimate and ephemeral.

Consider these familiar lines:

I am trusting in my Savior, with a calm and steady light;
 Hope is shining on my pathway, making all things fair and bright.
 I am trusting, trusting, trusting, I am trusting day by day,
 I am trusting in my Savior to go with me all the way.

This is a perfectly valid expression for the disciple of Jesus. But the poetry is fluffy; it uses a lot of syllables to say very little—a mark of hastily composed verse. Contrast this to the densely packed lines of a hymn like *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*.

3. Commercialism. The revivalism of the late 1800s kicked off an overwhelmingly popular market for these new songs. Publishing houses sprang up to fill the demand. Millions of paperback collections of the latest songs were snapped up for use in Sunday schools and urban ministries, as well for singing in the home. (In this pre-iPod era, if people wanted music, they had to make it.)

Musical Characteristics

1. The refrain. The most obvious feature of gospel songs was the repetition of a refrain, or chorus, after each verse. As everyone piled into the familiar repetitions, it lent a forward momentum to the singing, even if many singers did not know the song well.

Understanding Syncopation

Syncopation means, literally, “a cutting off.” In music it refers to cutting the length of a musical note shorter than normal, thus disrupting the beat of the music from the expected flow. To illustrate, we have the familiar lyrics of *Jesus Loves Me* with the normal spoken accents marked above the text. Note the “accented-unaccented” pattern of the syllables:

Jesus loves me this I know,
 For the Bible tells me so ...

Now let's look at the melody these words are normally sung to, with the words put underneath. Above the music, the beats normally accented in a 4/4 score are marked. Note how the accents of the words match the accents of the music score.

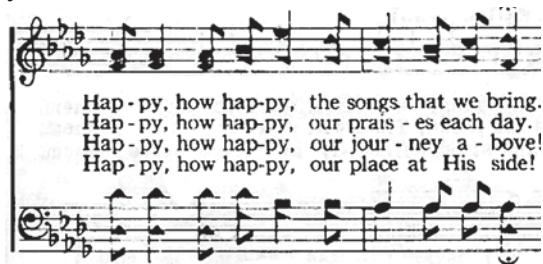


Now let's look at a piece of syncopated music on a very similar tune. You will notice that some of the notes have been tied across the bar line as well as other tied notes. The first note after a bar is supposed to get the most emphasis, but since the first note is either shortened (as in the first measure below) or tied to a note in the preceding measure (as in the third measure below), the accent gets “offbeat.” It creates the same atmosphere as when you clap between beats.



Syncopation creates a certain “tension” in the music. Used occasionally, it can be likened to a strong spice. But what happens if it is used constantly, like in jazz, rock, and other pop music? It pulls the attention to the beat. It makes great music to make people clap their hands, wiggle, or dance!

An example of a gospel song that uses a form of syncopation is *Trying to Walk in the Steps of the Saviour*. The syncopated notes give a snappy, happy twang to the words, “Happy, how happy, the songs that we bring.” In this case, it is used to spice the feel of singing jubilantly. Notice that the first note is an eighth note, which makes the “-py” syllable of the word “happy” get more emphasis. Normally we stress the first syllable of the word “happy.”



What happens when syncopation is used more than occasionally? Well, it is like potato chips. They make an acceptable occasional snack, but they really have way too much oil and salt for a healthy diet! Raise your child on potato chips and he will groan about baked potatoes! And that is besides having to deal with the effects of music with a strong beat. A strong beat stimulates fleshly senses ... as one famous blues/jazz musician said about his music ... “I like it because it makes the women wiggle!” ~MA

2. Motor rhythms. Where hymns moved along sedately at a pace set by quarter and half notes, the gospel tunes stepped along a brisk eighth note trot. The net result was more syllables of text per minute. *I Am So Glad That Our Father in Heaven* is a good example. One can almost hear in these staccato rhythms the steam engine dynamism of the Industrial Age in which the music was born. The social gospel reformers had progressive agendas, and this was their beat. Meditative music it was not; it was the gospel on the move.

3. Dance rhythms. The skipping effect of a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note brought a toe-tapping exuberance into the church that shocked the hymn singers of that day no less than if “praise and worship” choruses were brought into our Anabaptist assemblies today. Sing to yourself the classic hymn *Holy, Holy, Holy* with music by John B. Dykes [*Hymns of the Church* #113], and then sing William B. Bradbury’s music as used in *Holy Is the Lord* [*Hymns of the Church* #119]. The first is meditative; the second is jiggy. Songs like *Standing on the Promises* are an odd choice of musical expression for a people who have traditionally opposed clapping and dancing in worship.

4. Harmonic simplicity. The story of a song’s harmony is told in the bass line. Many gospel tunes are “three-chord specials.” That is, the bass notes are primarily DO, FA, and SOL—corresponding to the three primary chords I, IV, and V. A side-by-side comparison illustrates this readily. Compare *The Whole World Was Lost* to *In Heavenly Love Abiding* [*Hymns of the Church* #625 and #626]. In the first, the gospel tune, the bass notes have little movement; in the second tune, the bass moves about constantly, in a melody of its own. This makes gospel tunes great for singers learning to sing parts. It also makes them less interesting musically, which is why they wear out sooner.

5. Major key. Where are the minor key gospel songs? Without exploring the psychology of taste and tonality, we should at least ponder the dislike for minor key music that seems to linger in the conservative Anabaptist ear. Perhaps a century of overdependence on major key, “happy-clappy” praise songs has dulled our senses to the more serious expressiveness of minor key songs.

Textual Characteristics

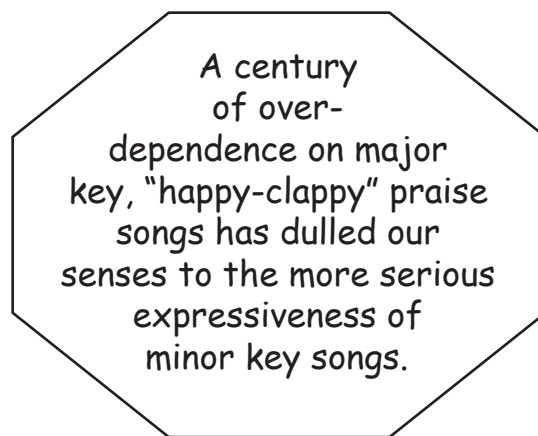
1. Focus on personal experience. This doesn’t mean that gospel songs used “I” and “my” and hymns do not. But the gospel song, almost by definition, majored on the personal testimony of salvation. A side-by-side comparison in the *Christian Hymnal* of the two selections *I Will Sing of My Redeemer* and *Oh Worship the King* [# 8 & 9]

illustrates the general difference in tone and expression between gospel songs and hymns.

2. Superficial content. As noted earlier, the very nature of spontaneity precludes a profound development of the theme. Gospel songwriters tended to pad their verses with trite repetitions of salvation lingo. Consider this popular refrain that was added to Isaac Watts’ timeless hymn *Alas and Did My Saviour Bleed* [*Christian Hymnal* #311]:

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day.

This can certainly be the newborn believer’s genuine testimony. However, it has a breezy—almost flippant—air about it that seems to laugh at the serious words of



Watts. Read through the song and feel the contrast in both attitude and literary quality as you move from the verses to the refrain.

3. Cheap grace. Unfortunately, too much of revivalism was founded on cheap grace theology. Just pray the sinner’s prayer and you’re home free! Naturally the songs used by revivalists reflect this thinking. A line from *Oh Why Not Tonight?* captures it well: “Believe, obey, the work is done, be saved, oh, tonight.” Or consider the bouncy little chorus, *I had so many sins and he took them all away*.

4. Overused metaphors. While the language of gospel songs was often cast in fresh images from contemporary life, certain themes got more mileage than others. For example, seafaring images were popular. *Jesus Saviour Pilot Me*, *Love Lifted Me*, and *The Haven of Rest* are typical examples. “Roaming” is another common image, no doubt taken from the “lost sheep” figure. Many songs mention wandering out in the world and finding one’s way back home.

Jerusalem, my happy home (Hymn)

Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end
In joy and peace and thee?
When shall these eyes thy heav'n-built walls
And pearly gates behold?
Thy bulwarks with salvation strong,
And streets of shining gold?

O when, thou city of my God,
Shall I thy courts ascend,
Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end?
There happier bow'rs than Eden's bloom,
Nor sin nor sorrow know;
Blest seats! thru rude and stormy scenes
I onward press to you.

I love to think of my home above (Gospel Song)

I love to think of my home above,
In glorious realms of light,
Of the pearly gates and the golden streets,
In that land where there is no night.

(ch.)

Home, sweet home!
Happy home, sweet home!
O! say will you meet me there,
In that home above,
where all is love,
And joy beyond compare.

I'll fly away (Concert Gospel Song)

Some bright morning when this life is over,
I'll fly away
To a land on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away

(ch.)

I'll fly away, oh glory,
I'll fly away (in the morning).
When I die, hallelujah by and by,
I'll fly away.

Comparing the lyrics at the left, one can easily see the differences in quality and depth of the words. There is, to be sure, no clear, distinct line between what is called a hymn, a gospel song, and a concert gospel song. However, the three samples given (which are not the complete lyrics, but only a verse or two from each selection) show a general pattern.

First, note the difference in the depth of the words. The hymn, although the wording is from the late 1700s and uses a couple of words unfamiliar to us, has a rich supply of metaphors describing various aspects of the New Jerusalem. The gospel song has some of the same richness, but then the chorus gets some repetition and uses phrases that are clichés. Next comes the concert gospel song, which upon evaluation has a lot of repetition of one theme. Five times in eight lines one sings, "I'll fly away ..."

Notice next the closeness to biblical language in the hymn, and the almost total lack thereof in the concert gospel song. Although not as obvious as the absence of biblical language, the concert gospel song leans heavily toward glorifying "my experience," while the hymn speaks more of the glory of the destination.

Again it is to be noted that the analysis given is not always as easy to be discerned as in the three samples used here. Yet, these three selections do give us food for thought concerning our worship diet.

The call to our generation could be seen as that of replacing some of the rich old hymns of former times—whose wording is that of another era and thus not as "fresh"—with rich hymns that speak the same message in 21st-century English. We do ourselves a big disfavor to replace a meaty but archaically worded hymn with a flippant and fluffy song in modern English—steaks for cotton candy! We *can* have rich singing even in our modern dialect.

Let's sing nourishingly! ~MA

In general contrast to hymns then, gospel songs tend to be big on joy, salvation, personal experience, and spontaneity. They tend to be weak on scriptural theology and the wider scope of the Christian journey, as in themes of discipleship, brotherhood, and suffering. The tunes are rhythmically more dancelike and melodically more upbeat and predictable.

Second-generation gospel songs: Concert gospel (1900-1950)

The revivalists and singers that followed Moody and Sankey leaned even harder in the direction of popular music and shallow lyrics. Charles Alexander and Homer Rodeheaver were two gifted song leaders of the early 1900s who borrowed entertainment tactics to get the crowds singing. With bold conducting, trombone solos, and showy vocals, they blurred the lines between an evangelistic meeting and a gospel concert.⁴

Gospel songs written in this era are noticeably different from the Sunday-school-era gospel songs. Rodeheaver himself admitted the shift toward show business:

It was never intended for a Sunday morning service, not for a devotional meeting—its purpose was to bridge the gap between the popular song of the day and the great hymns and gospel songs.⁵

An example of the evolution of songs about the heavenly Jerusalem could illustrate the shift (see opp. page):

Hymn: “Jerusalem, My Happy Home”

Sunday school song: “I Love to Think of My Home Above”

Concert gospel song: “I’ll Fly Away”

Additional characteristics of “concert gospel” songs

1. Soloistic tunes. Vocal soloists with choir support became a standard feature in these days. A flood of new songs was written to provide soloistic material. *The Old Rugged Cross*, *I Come to the Garden Alone*, and *I’d Rather Have Jesus* are a few classic examples.

2. Syncopation. The Sunday school tunes brought a new bounce into Christian singing; the concert gospel tunes upped the tension with syncopation. The fourth phrase of *Stepping in the Light* [*Christian Hymnal* #561] illustrates this daring new rhythmic technique. Today we scarcely notice it. Two other songs of the period that use extensive syncopation are *Living for Jesus* and *Since Jesus Came into My Heart*.

3. Call and response. An innovation in form was to have the upper and lower parts repeat phrases after each

other, such as in *Send the Light* [*Christian Hymnal* #212]. This became a stock feature of 1940s-era gospel song, with whole songs composed on this model. *Each Day I’ll Do a Golden Deed* comes to mind. These gospel hits were popularized by gospel performers like the Chuck Wagon Gang, the Blackwood Brothers, and the Happy Goodmans. In one of history’s little ironies, these groups were



later imitated by an amazing variety of aspiring Amish and Mennonite singing groups, minus the instruments.

4. Feel-good lyrics. The concert gospel message became a lot more comfortable with general and sentimental references to salvation. Consider the song *Way Down*:

I have a feeling in my soul,
since the Savior made me whole;
Way down, way down, way down,
away down deep in my soul.

The plaintive soloistic lament, as in “This world is not my home, I’m just a passing through . . .” blurred the lines between *gospel* and *country and western* music. In fact, Country music has some of its origins in gospel music. One can still hear exactly these kinds of gospel songs on country music radio, especially in the southern Bible Belt.

In conclusion, these features all pushed in the direction of concerts and away from congregational singing. It was “sanctified” entertainment. Mercifully, most of this genre has stayed out of Anabaptist songbook racks.

Should we sing gospel songs in our assemblies?

This is like asking, “Should we eat cookies?” A dietary fanatic might say no, but most of us feel life is richer with cookies and milk. Yet no one would advocate a total diet of cookies and milk. Paul speaks of “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Ep. 5:19), which clearly implies variety

in our expressions of praise. Think of hymns as steak and salad. Then gospel songs are the milk and cookies, and concert gospel songs ... they might be Coke and Twinkies.

Junk food provides instant gratification, but not lasting satisfaction and good health. Only the immature eat it all the time. We have to help our children make good dietary

There are other alternatives to hymns that have centuries of Christian tradition behind them. Where are the Scripture songs, chants, prayers, antiphons, and Psalms?

choices, because their instincts are not trustworthy. Just so, we ought to maintain a healthy distrust of our natural inclinations in music. Our taste must always be subject to the scrutiny of the biblical standard.

Treats do have their time and place. A bag of Snickers makes a poor dinner, but one Snickers bar is great on a cold afternoon. *I'll Fly Away* makes a poor worship

song in church, but it can still cheer up a laborer's dull afternoon.

We should sing the best gospel songs for the sake of our little children. They love to chime in on the simple refrains. These songs were, after all, originally developed for Sunday school. The apostle acknowledged the need for both milk and meat. *Sing Them Over Again to Me* is quality milk.

Following the Davidic precedent, gospel songs provide a needful outlet for singing our personal testimony. The basic theme of gospel songs is *I will sing of my Redeemer*. Feel the deeply personal tone of these familiar lines:

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long ...

With the latent pietistic stream running through Anabaptist spirituality, it is not surprising that Anabaptists felt comfortable borrowing gospel songs. On the other hand, "me-centered" expression runs contrary to the stronger Anabaptist emphases of brotherhood and self-effacement. Have gospel songs eroded our sense of collective adoration in worship?

Finally, Gospel songs balance out what hymns do for our worship. Worship should engage the whole person—

body, soul, and spirit. Too much rhythm appeals only to the body. Sentimental and personal lyrics primarily stir the soul. Theologically profound hymns may gratify only the intellect.

Challenges for our day

Let's be brave enough to be scriptural! "Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" indicates a variety of expressions that spring from the Word of God and the work of God and the person of Jesus. There must always be room for simple joy in our public worship. However, we may need to wean ourselves away from a sentimental attachment to a popular music fad that sprang out of 19th-century revivalism. There are, after all, other alternatives to hymns that have centuries of Christian tradition behind them. Where are the Scripture songs? What about chants, prayers, or antiphons? Are we singing any Psalms?

As with mission concepts, the Anabaptist attachment to gospel songs is another example of indiscriminate borrowing from Protestantism. "Indiscriminate" does not mean "bad"; it means not thinking carefully before you choose. If we do not show scriptural discrimination before we borrow, or if we are unwilling to examine our choices in the bright light of the Word, we are vulnerable to becoming something we don't want to be.

"Gospel songs" have probably done more to shape our concepts of salvation and conversion than all our preaching put together.

Songs do not merely preach; they change our thinking in ways we are not aware of. Gospel songs have probably done more to shape our concepts of salvation and conversion than all our preaching put together.³ The cheap grace theology, the high-pressure altar calls, the once-and-done view of salvation—the ideas that once sounded so foreign to the Anabaptist mind, have lodged themselves within

³ Oh, so true! Think about it ... how many sermons have you memorized? How many sermons have you listened to over and over again. Now, compare that to how many songs you know by heart and have sung dozens of times. The hymnal your congregation uses has more influence than you probably think!

our subconscious to a degree that 21st-century Anabaptism has yet to understand.

Cross-bearing, suffering, discipleship, yieldedness—the gospel themes which defined Anabaptism—are ironically too dissonant for the chirpy tone of many gospel songs. Our songs can become “pacifiers”—comforting without being nutritious. We must honestly evaluate the singing diet in our churches.

Contemporary Christian music

The gospel song eventually gave way to another worship fad—the *praise and worship* music of the 1960s and 70s—the popular performance of which became known as Contemporary Christian music (CCM). This music, which borrowed the sounds of Rock Music to carry a Christian message, has made overwhelming invasions into the musical tastes and values of Anabaptist youth in the past several decades. But until the hand-wringing parents deal honestly with their own attachment to the gospel song, they have little foundation from which to direct their children. Gospel music and CCM both came out of renewal movements in the church. Both borrowed the styles of contemporary pop music to reenergize worship, and both had close ties to show business. And both compromised a biblical approach to worship, because the showman’s song is not the people’s song. To our confusion, some of the current tension between the generations is simply a tension between yesterday’s fad and today’s fad. But the language of the debate is too often generalized as “Christian music versus worldly music,” when neither side is honestly measuring the styles against a biblical standard.

Now some have defended gospel songs for their simplicity. They do fit us well, in one sense, for conserva-

tive Anabaptists are generally not highly educated in music. But our collective singing is a gift offered to God. This neglected concept colors how and what we sing. Our “sacrifice of praise” is the New Testament answer to “the finest of the flock.” We do not preach shortcuts in the Christian journey in other areas; we preach about the cost of discipleship. How could we promote a whatever-is-easiest approach to worship?

This is not musical snobbishness; it is biblical. The Law allowed the poor to bring turtledoves, and God certainly honors the saint who brings *Wonderful Story of Love*. At some level, we are all musically poor. Our finest hymns are humble little offerings compared to the music of heaven. Jesus taught a powerful lesson from the lady who gave two mites, but He did not teach that we should all give two mites so that no one feels left out.

Let the best gospel songs continue to ring in our chapels and schools and homes. We need them. Which ones are the best? Just flip through a half dozen major denominational hymnals from recent years and see which ones have survived. You will find a consensus that will probably look familiar.

What’s on *your* praise menu? ~

(Endnotes)

- 1 Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing Co., 1993) p. 226.
- 2 Eskew and McElrath, *Sing With Understanding* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980) p. 277.
- 3 Hustad, p. 240.
- 4 Eskew and McElrath, p. 180
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 180

The Early Church: Let the World Keep Its Music!

For if people occupy their time with pipes, and psalteries, and choirs, and dances, and Egyptian clapping of hands, and such disorderly frivolities, they become quite immodest and difficult to handle. They beat on cymbals and drums and make a noise on instruments of delusion. For plainly such a party, as it seems to me, is a theatre of drunkenness. ...

For temperate harmonies are to be admitted [in the church]; but we are to banish as far as possible from our healthy mind those liquid harmonies, which through pernicious manipulations in the changes of tones, train a person to effeminacy and vulgarity. But sober and modest tunes say “Farewell!” to the turbulence of drunkenness. Colorful harmonies are therefore to be abandoned to immodest parties, and to complicated and vulgarly attractive music.

~Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, Bk II, Ch. 4



Our Scattered Lives

D. C. Innes

More than 800 million of the world's seven billion people are connected via Facebook. When you also consider mobile phones, e-mail, Skype, and other social media, the world is exponentially more connected than it was even a generation ago. And yet our lives are more fragmented and scattered than ever. People hang out together, but doing different things in different worlds on their handheld devices. Even children don't play together anymore. After school they retreat into their separate electronic worlds of gaming, sexual prurience, and social media networks. Even our thought lives are scattered. Between emails, incoming texts, and Facebook alerts, a train of thought has become an antique.

This follows the scattering brought on by the automobile and the isolation that air conditioning gave us. Who sits out on the front porch anymore or talks over the back fence? We drive to far-flung superstores where we shop with strangers if we don't shop online. Families scatter upon graduation from college. My father-in-law's four girls now live in Massachusetts, New York, Wyoming, and California. And we are scattered even in death. How is a family plot possible under these conditions? My grandparents were cremated and their ashes thrown to the wind—the ultimate scattering.

But God created us to live in community with one another, to occupy and cultivate a place, face-to-face in real bonds of love. God Himself, whose image we bear, is a loving community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in perfect ontological unity. In this way, "God is love" (1 John 4:16), and we can be fully human only in a shared life of love. He redeems us not just to be separately saved individuals, but an intimately connected body with Christ as the head (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 1:22-23).

Sin shatters those relationships—man and God, man and neighbor—which are essential to being human and to human happiness. That shattering brought the curse of scattering. After his sin, Cain became "a wanderer on the earth" (Genesis 4:14). God "scattered" the proud builders of Babel "over all the face of the earth" (Genesis 11:9). In A.D. 70, in the second generation after the cross, God scattered ethnic Israel, dispersing them around the globe. But at the same time He commenced gathering His people, both Jew and Gentile, into the church of his beloved Son (Mark 13:27).

Whatever isolates us is destroying us, not only personally but also as a people. The answer to the modern scattered life is Christ's church, God's new society. For example, the more we depend on government services, the less we have to do with each other. But the church is all about having to do with each other—bearing one another's burdens: the poor, the sick, the aged, the young, the stressed marriage.

But people confine "church" to Sunday, even Sunday morning, perhaps even between the second hymn and the benediction ... if there's nothing better to do that day. We love Jesus, but we don't love the people Jesus loves: His church. And we move from church to church the way we change our Internet service providers—except Verizon has you tied up in a two-year contract. If we are serious about preserving a good, free, and human life in this century, we must start by taking seriously the blessing of life in Christ's covenant community, what it means to be a Christian in the body and church of Christ. ~

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not just to be
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**Between emails,
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Continued from page 3

to release him and take him home. We kept reassuring him that he could go, that Jesus would be waiting for him, and that Mama would be cared for here.

Just a few minutes before 2:00 in the morning, we noticed that his breathing was slowing rapidly, and I jumped up to call Mama from the adjoining room. She came immediately, as well as three of my sisters who were resting or waiting nearby. We all rushed back to his side for the final breath, and waited together wondering if this peaceful passing was for real. After so much pain on Sunday, we had all hoped that Papa could pass on without pain and at peace. As the moments passed and we realized that the battle was over for Papa, floods of thoughts and emotions poured through all of our hearts. Relief that Papa had passed on so peacefully, tears for the finality of the loss we were experiencing, and somehow a thrill in our hearts also as we imagined the trumpets or drum roll that must accompany the entry of a man of God into heaven!!

We decided to wait on calling the funeral home for a few hours to give us time to process Papa's passing with our families. As we brought our children in to say goodbye to Grandpa, we were all amazed to see the peaceful, almost smiling expression on his face. After all the months of somewhat uneven smiles as the left side of his body stopped functioning, and days of pained expressions, the restful look on his face was so special to each of us! One of my children commented that it looks like Grandpa has a secret he wants to share! Surely he does!

If you will allow me, I'd like to share my own personal feelings as I kept returning to the room where the shell of my dear father's body lay. I felt like a junior officer entering the office of his commanding general. I wanted to snap to attention and salute! Farewell to the general and pacesetter of our family! Farewell to the man we have been honored to call Papa!

Farewell to a spiritual mountain climber, always ahead of us and shouting about the view just a little higher! Sometimes the pace he set for us was tiring, and we wrestled with weariness in following him, but he always believed in the thrill of the mountain peak just ahead. Sometimes he stumbled as he climbed above us, and the gravel that came scattering down around



**Bro. Denny's shoes.
Who will fill them?**

us concerned us as we climbed, but within moments would come the shout we were waiting for as he gained another foothold, just above the last one! That he has slipped into the clouds further up the mountain is sad, as we have drawn much strength from watching his climb. But even from the misty peaks where he now rests and thrills in the views, we hear his challenge and encouragement to climb higher! Farewell! Farewell!! We follow with greater zeal because of your example and the shouts of victory we have heard from your life and now your death!

My heart resounds a hearty "Amen!" to Bro. Daniel's beautiful epitaph to his father. Though we are saddened by our loss, we can't help but rejoice with Bro. Denny. He has finally reached his highest destination and is rejoicing in the presence of the Lord, forevermore—hallelujah! Yet, his passing causes my heart to pause and reflect, and even to tremble a bit. Bro. Denny's life has made such a huge impact on my life and the lives of so many others. When a fellow soldier departs the battle scene, it provokes a sense of introspection, as we consider our final steps on this earth. Admittedly, Bro. Denny was more than a fellow soldier. Though only an earthen vessel, God used his gifts and passion to stir the people of God to greater fervor. In his

wake, Bro. Denny's preaching and ministry have left an army of men and women behind, inspired by his intensity and fury for the things of the Lord. I wonder, "How can he be replaced? Who will fill his shoes?"

After the funeral, Bro. Emanuel Esh mentioned to me that he would have liked to have displayed 100 pairs of shoes on the stage and challenged each of us, "Who are the 100 men that will fill these shoes?" Clearly, the mental image of all those empty shoes signifies to us the closing of a chapter. But the closing of one chapter also means the beginning of a new one! Jesus promised that when we bear fruit, He will prune us so that we will bear much fruit. It hurts to be pruned, and it certainly hurts to lose Bro. Denny—but oh, in his passing, may we each draw inspiration from the image of Christ that was so beautifully demonstrated in his life, to cheer one another onward and upward with renewed zeal and enthusiasm! With God's help, we can fill those empty shoes, as we continue our ascent to that Higher Ground! ~Bro. Dean

The quotes on the following page and page 31 were chosen with Bro. Denny's fervent ministry in mind.

“ It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church’s mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen.” ~Oscar Romero

HE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS ... AND HATED INIQUITY.

*Based on the message given by Mose Stoltzfus
at Bro. Denny's funeral service*

I find it incredibly difficult to put thirty-plus years into a few minutes of expression, in great feebleness. I want to read Isaiah 57:1.

The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

It has been thirty plus years since I found Bro. Denny and his wife sitting hippie style on the floor at a wedding reception in Sparta, Tennessee. My wife and I were invited to their home the next day for a meal, and I remember Bro. Denny trying to learn how to run a woodstove and stirring a fire with a poker. I remember how Denny had awakened to feed the fire in the middle of the night and God had spoken to him, "Denny, go stir up the churches."

I asked him, in light of something happening here in Lancaster County, whether he would consider such a thing as working together, and I think his answer was, "I'd go anywhere to preach the gospel." I have found that to be a true statement, from the dark, difficult regions of Africa, to all over the US and Canada and other parts of the world.

Our relationship was incredibly unique. Different ones have come to me through the years and referred to our relationship as a near husband/wife relationship, and I would have to say that it had its similarities to that type of relationship. It was divine, I believe. I remember coming home from Tennessee that time—in December it will be 31 years—and there was something that held my spirit in the hand of God and that seemed that something was about to happen, or that God had done something in our hearts that was not human. I still believe that very firmly.

We were very different men, but that difference was complimentary to each other, as I knew that whatever I faced or the mistakes I made, Bro. Denny loved me ... and I loved him.

And that paved the way for many, many years of being able to understand each other, to the point of it not being a battle for me to know what he was thinking, and it was

not a battle for him to know what I was thinking. We'd get into many difficult situations in church work, and as we would confer together, our hearts would often blend in an amazing way to come up with an answer for a situation we were facing. I thank God from the depth of my heart for this great privilege which was beyond any words I can put together.

It was a great difficulty, that—due to the growth of the congregation at Charity Christian Fellowship—Denny and I separated into two congregations. Many men have considered it a mistake that we were separated in our ministry, and we have to let that in the hands of God, but that is certainly a possibility.

Concerning Denny's input in my life, first of all, I was wounded a bit and struggling with things, 30 years ago. He came from a very different perspective—not coming from my traditional background—which was a tremendous help to me in not becoming a bitter man, and to respond rightly through difficulties, condemnations, or rejections. I often cried to him in those difficult times and he led me to think and feel right about all those things and to continue on. I remember many times when we had difficult experiences, trying to find some broader acceptance in the body of Christ, and would get a closed door. Denny would say, "Well, we'll just go on. We'll just go on and do God's work."

Last night a verse came to my mind in Hebrews 1, where it is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ:

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. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

I am not trying to make Denny a messiah or lift him up above that which is right to do, but I would only like to explain his love for righteousness as I knew it through the years.

This man loved righteousness, beyond a shadow of doubt in my heart!

First of all, he taught us much of the centrality of Jesus Christ. His love for the Lord Jesus was expressed in many messages and conversations. Denny loved righteousness!

Bro. Denny loved the attributes of God and preached them here in Bible School, and preached them in great detail.

He often preached out of Colossian 1, “in whom, of whom” and he would go on with that in the centrality of Jesus Christ. He loved the book of Isaiah and often preached out of it, and he loved Isaiah’s vision when he saw God high and lifted up and His train filled the temple, and he saw his own undoneness. Denny compared that to our human experience as we saw the holiness of God. Bro. Denny loved the attributes of God and preached them here in Bible School, and preached them in great detail.

Another attribute about him is that he loved the gospel. He had a hold of the gospel message in a concise way. For many years we took trips to New York City to Washington Square Park and I was always thrilled in my heart as he would get up and give a little description of his hippie life of smoking marijuana and living in sin and fornication, and how God changed his life from top to bottom. And he would put the gospel message in a concise way as the people sat and stood spellbound, many times, listening to the gospel story of the change made in this man. Many of the listeners would have had a hard time believing that God could change such a man.

Bro. Denny loved righteousness, in that he had an unparalleled devotional life beyond anything that I knew. When we travelled together, staying up late at night, he would still try to rise early so he could have his devotional time with the Word of God. When I first saw his Bible soon after we met, and saw the two year’s worth of notes (the time in which he had spent in Hammond, Indiana, trying to find out who he was and what he believed), he had so many notes in his wide-margined Bible that it was beyond anything I had ever seen. I was touched and impressed by that.

He was a man that if it was in the Bible, he believed and sought to practice it. It didn’t matter what it was ... whether about brotherhood or other Anabaptist doctrines that were a bit new to him when we met. He embraced them. Because he believed in a literal practice of the Word

of God, when he came upon the holy kiss and footwashing, he embraced them and similar doctrines and they were no problem to him. If it was in the Bible, then it was in his life and with a passion he sought to practice them. His Baptist friends did not understand this at times and were intimidated or embarrassed by it, but he would often challenge them, “Is it in the Bible?”

Bro. Denny loved his family, and would begin to pray for the little one as soon as pregnancy was discovered, before it came into the world. He also loved the “remnant” people—those coming out of apostatizing churches—and had a heart for them and was quick to answer a phone call from anywhere if it was from someone from his Evangelical background who was reading the Bible and trying to find their way. I tended to minister more to people from my background, the Plain People, and he tended towards his background. But we often crossed over and this helped to balance us out.

But I must also say, and without any apologies, that Bro. Denny HATED iniquity. He was a hateful man, if I can say it that plain and boldly. He HATED iniquity! He hated sin. He hated the world.

I was often tremendously challenged as we went out to witness in the streets in the local fairs and places like that, and he would walk up to the professed “Christian” world that was there to enjoy the night on the town, and ask them whether they hated the world ... and they didn’t know what to say in light of the fair and the rides and the gambling dens and the much food, etc. He HATED iniquity!

**Bro. Denny
HATED iniquity!
He hated sin.
He hated the
world.**

And he hated his past life. I remember him looking at the cover of a magazine, I believe it was *Time* or *Newsweek*, when Jim and Tammy Bakker’s sin and corruption came to light. He picked it up threw it back down, saying, “I can’t read this stuff; it’s defiling due to my past life.” That’s how he hated iniquity.

He also hated mediocrity. He hated complacency. He was a fervent man, and when he sold out to God, he gave it all he had. He HATED mediocrity. He pled against it, he prayed against it, he preached against it, he talked against it. It was always so refreshing to take a look at ourselves and see where we may have been slipping in material pur-

suits or anything when we had those types of conversations together.

He was a great visionary. I was that type of person myself, and what a joy it was to sit down and talk and dream together. In 1993 we purchased a tent and put together a trailer with three prayer rooms and would travel together preaching in the US and Canada. Later we did some separately, and also did some local tent meetings.

**He was
grieved
at the
departing of
the church.**

We would alternate preaching. Afterwards, we would sit together and talk about what God was doing. In those days, much of our talk was positive—men were calling for help and men were responding and repenting and seeking victory over sin. There was a revival going on across the land—which we did not start, by the way, but was well on its way before we

ever met—and a seeking after righteousness and practical Christianity as the mainline churches deteriorated into worldliness. In those days much of our talk was positive as we shared together.

But I also have to tell you that Bro. Denny had a period of grief. And if he would have been here these days, and if we would sit back in the office here or in some living room, and reminisce about what has happened and the people that have come through, there would be a deep grief on our brother's heart. He was grieved at the departing of the church. He was grieved at the changes people made. He was grieved at the drift that was so obvious and evident, both on the outside and the inside.

The question I have at the close is, "Who is going to follow his faith?"

I don't think he would be interested at all that you would pay your respects to his frame, his dead body. My plea is that you consider his faith, his example of life. And that grief can be turned into joy when he ends up meeting you across that great beyond.

1 Corinthians 15:26 says, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." That has been destroyed for Bro. Denny. He awaits the great resurrection day when his spirit shall unite with a new body and he will be entire and whole for all eternity.

If I were to put an epitaph upon his gravestone, it would be that which was said of John the Baptist:

He was a burning and shining light.~

“ It is not the critic that counts,
nor the man who points out how
the strong man stumbled,
nor where the doer of deeds could
have been done better.

The credit belongs to the man
who is actually in the arena—
whose face is marred
by dust and sweat and blood;
who strives valiantly—
who errs and comes short again
and again—
who knows the great enthusiasms,
the great devotions,
and spends himself in a worthy
cause;

Who at best knows the end of
the triumph of high achievement,
and who at worst, if he fails,
at least fails while doing greatly,
so that his place shall never be
with those cold and timid souls
who know neither victory nor
defeat!”

~Theodore Roosevelt

Which Kingdom Are You Living For?

The Pastor of Hermas (1st or 2nd century A.D.)

As in this world we have no abiding city, we ought to seek one to come. He. 13:14 He (the Lord) says to me, "You know that you who are the servants of God dwell in a strange land, for your city is far away from this one. If, then," He continues, "you are aware of the city in which you are going to live, why do you provide for yourselves lands, and make expensive preparations, and accumulate dwellings and useless buildings here? He who makes such preparations for this city here cannot return again to his own. Oh foolish, and unstable, and miserable man! Do you not understand that all these things here belong to someone else, and are under the power of another? For the lord of this city will someday say to you, "I do not want you to dwell in my city. Depart from this city, because you do not obey my laws."

You, therefore, although you have fields and houses and many other things, when he casts you out, what will you do with your land and house and other possessions which you have gathered to yourself here? For the lord of this country can justly say to you, "Either obey my laws or depart from my dominion."

What, then, do you intend to do, respecting your lands and the rest of your possessions here, when you have a law from your own heavenly city? Here is what you will do. You will deny the heavenly law altogether and walk according to the law of this city here.

Watch out lest you deny the law in your heavenly city to your own hurt. Then, if you want to return to your heavenly city, you will not be received. You will be excluded from it, because you have denied the law of your city.

Therefore, take care as one who lives in a foreign land. Make no further preparations for yourself than what is merely sufficient. When the master of this city comes to cast you out for disobeying his law, be ready to leave his city, and to depart to your own and to obey your own law where you will not be exposed to annoyance but will be in great joy.

Therefore, instead of lands, buy afflicted souls, according to your ability. Visit widows and orphans and do not forget them. Spend your wealth and all your earthly preparations which you have received from the Lord, upon such lands and houses as these. It is only for this reason that the Master makes you rich, so that you might perform these services unto Him. It is much better for you to purchase these types of lands, possessions, and houses. You will find these in your own heavenly city, when you come to dwell there. These are noble and sacred expenditures, which do not bring sorrow or fear, but joy.

Do not adopt the practice of acquiring things the way the heathen do, for it will be injurious to you who are the servants of God. Instead, adopt the practice of acquiring things in such a way that brings you eternal joy.

Do not corrupt yourself by touching what is another's nor covet it. It is an evil thing to covet the goods of other men. Do your own work, and you will be saved. ~

A Cry From The Heart

May my life from idols be,
From chains of sin set free,
Though others all around me bow,
To idols and things fall down,
Dear Lord, please cleanse my heart from these,
And may I Thee forever please.

My life is Yours and Yours alone.
No longer I upon the throne.
For me and others far and wide,
Upon the cross you bled and died.
And THEN, my Lord, you rose again,
O'er death and hell the vic'try gained.

Now dear Lord, please let me go,
And tell the others so they may know.
Of how for them you gave your life,
The world's greatest sacrifice.
And how I no longer turn,
And to my idols incense burn.

And now, oh Lord, take down,
The idols in each village and town.
From person to people, all.
Their idols now must fall.
For God will come in might and power.
And ALL will worship in that hour.

~Nancy Esh

If God would grant us the vision, the word 'sacrifice' would disappear from our lips and thoughts; we would hate the things that seem now so dear to us; our lives would suddenly be too short; we would despise time-robbing distractions and charge the enemy with all our energies in the name of Christ. May God help us to judge ourselves by the eternities that separate the Aucas from a comprehension of Christmas, and Him, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor so that we might, through His poverty, be made rich. Lord God, speak to my own heart and give me to know Thy holy will and the joy of walking in it. Amen. ~

By Nate Saint, written just before he was martyred by the Auca Indians in South America.



Paula, the Waldensian

A book review by Mike Atnip

Note that to understand this review completely, it may be necessary to first read the article in this issue titled “Christian Eccentricity.”

I met Paula—of all places—in an elk-hunting camp in the Rocky Mountains. Far, far away from her beloved Italian Alps, yet Paula’s life spanned a century and two continents and spoke to me, the seeking young man in North America.

There I was, in the place I had dreamed of for years ... in a hunting camp in the Rockies! But since I had not lived in Wyoming long enough to be a legal resident, I could not buy a resident hunting license. So I just “went along for the ride” and to accompany another person on a bow hunt for elk. After all, it is not wise for someone to head up into the hills all by oneself. If an accident happens, you want someone else around. So I went along to “help.”

We packed the saddlebags and panniers for the horses and headed up to the ridge above the South Fork of the Shoshone River, about 50 miles to the east of Yellowstone National Park.

But God ...

But God had been working on the heart of a self-centered young man in the previous weeks and months. Drawing, convicting, calling ... to His kingdom. To Christian eccentricity. To a life not centered in *self*. To a life away from sport hunting, and to a life of ... well, a life like Paula lived.

Having read a chapter or two before we left for the hills, I stuck *Paula, the Waldensian* (and a Bible, of course) in among the camp gear. We made the steep climb up to the ridge, found a spring among the timber, and pitched the teepee tent.

I must say that I found Paula’s story more engaging than the elk hunt! Elk hunting was losing its savor, and following Christ in service to others was tasting sweeter all the time. Although I did go out on the hunt some, I spent a good amount of time in those couple of days of camping

getting acquainted with a young Waldensian. Her life represented what I was longing for, even though at that time I don’t think I would have put it in those words. But there was a longing in my heart, a longing for real Christianity. A Christianity that worked and had practical applications.

A Christianity that had shoe leather in it. A Christianity that took Jesus’ teachings seriously and actually tried to practice them.

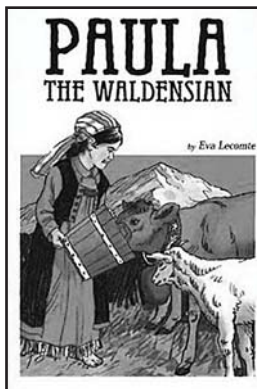
Almost 27 years have passed since I came off that mountain, deeply moved by Paula’s story. I don’t know if I have ever acknowledged it before, but her simple life of service made me cry in those hills. I have read parts of the book since then, if not the whole story, but now having a desire to introduce Paula to my own son, we have read and listened to the audio book just recently. Her simple-hearted service to others made tears come to my eyes again in several places. Such a simple life of serving and blessing others. So “eccentric”! So beside *self*, which is the center of all the unconverted. Being saved from a life of selfishness is what the gospel is all about!

Paula’s story

Leaving now the testimony of how Paula has touched my life, I will give a brief overview of her story. Orphaned at 10 years of age, she is sent to live with a well-to-do uncle near Paris, in the late 1800s.¹ Life in this new family is quite different than with her father (her mother and two sisters had died earlier in her life) in the Italian Alps. Not only is the flat land, “cultured” lifestyle, and huge house different than what she knew, the spiritual atmosphere is on the other end of the spectrum as well. Her uncle has embittered himself against God, since God did not meet his demands.² He has forbidden his family to speak of God, pray, go to church, or sing hymns.

1 I cannot remember any date given in the story, but the earliest printing of the book was in the late 1890s, so that would give a time frame of mid to late 19th century for when the events occurred.

2 He had told God that he would serve Him if God would not let his wife die. Well, his wife died anyways. The moral of



Poor 10-year-old Paula knows nothing of this upon her arrival, but within days she finds out the hard way: her uncle angrily takes her Bible and forbids her to pray. In a quandary, the poor girl submits as much as she can; obviously though, she cannot submit to never praying, and prays when she is alone.

Written in first person, the author tells of Paula's trials and triumphs from the eyes of another 10-year-old girl, Paula's cousin and daughter of the embittered uncle. Lisita is, of course, thrilled to have another girl her age in the house to play with, but she gets more than she bargained for. The family doesn't quite know what to do with Paula's eccentricity. This poor girl acts so beside her *self*!

An example of this living beside one's *self* is when Paula receives a gift of money from someone back in her old home in the Alps. She, to the consternation of her uncle and the old servant of the home, Teresa, wants to spend it immediately. They try to discourage her from "letting the money burn a hole in her pocket," but Paula is determined. When the first chance comes to go to town, she takes her money along to buy things.

A gift for each cousin, postcards to write to her old acquaintances in the Waldensian valleys, a gift for uncle, a gift for old Teresa. When she arrives home, each receives his/her gift, a useful item they were needing (the gifts were neither trinkets nor useless adornments for the house). After admiring all the gifts, one of them asks Paula, "You have bought us all these gifts, so what did you buy for yourself?"

Paula seems a bit embarrassed. She hadn't thought of herself! "Oh, I have a few coins left, I can buy myself something sometime," she replies. Paula lived "beside her *self*," and the self-centered family can't figure her out!

Her love to the down-and-out and to the hurting—even to the cat being mistreated by the village bully—earns its way into the family members one by one. Uncle's heart is

the story is that we don't "cut a deal with God" to serve Him if He will do something for us. We serve Him no matter what. Yet so many people get offended at God because God doesn't "cut deals": when we get ready to serve God no matter what, God already has the deal cut. There is only one deal ... serve God for better or for worse.

softened. He finds his little niece has a way of breaking down the walls against religion that he has constructed. And he is "floored" that when he finally decides to give her back her precious Bible, in a flood of love and concern for him, she offers it back to him! Her most precious possession on earth—the Bible her dying father had given to her on his deathbed, with all his personal notes in it—and Paula, totally beside her *self*, now wants to give it back to her uncle (he had hit her over the head with it, when he took it from her).



This 13th-century drawing depicts a "bon home" (good man) sharing his food and drink with the down-and-outs of society. Waldensian preachers were known as "Bons homes."

The author picks scenes from Paula's life that illustrate Paula's simple life of following the precepts of the gospel, the precepts of unselfishness. One story after another unfolds as opportunities present themselves to Paula to deny herself and live for the good of others. And the little Waldensian orphan grabs every last chance she can to be or give a blessing.

The book ends in a startling way. I will not spoil Paula's story by telling it all. But suffice it to say that the final words of the book are the verse about how a grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die if it wants to bear fruit. The scenes from Paula's life exhibit that daily dying ... and the bounteous fruit that it produced.

The negative?

Overall, the book is excellent. However, the discerning reader may notice a few points that take away a little from an otherwise well-written piece of literature. Some of the dialogue between the characters in the book contains what I will call a certain triteness or shallowness when it comes to verbalizing the gospel message. If the book was about these scattered conversations, when one or another is telling someone else "how to get saved," the book would hardly be worth a read. But Paula lived the gospel of taking up the cross, and her life shines so vividly through her actions that one hardly "hears" some of the actual conversations. We must also take into account that, although the story is supposed to be true, the author most likely used literary license to fill in the gaps of conversations that she most assuredly did not remember word for word. Those conversations probably spring from the author's theology, not necessarily Paula's.

One sees in this inconsistency the “war” between the old original Waldensian faith of following Jesus and the “new” faith of the Protestant reformers that focuses on believing facts about Jesus as the way to salvation. The Waldensians as a group began several hundred years before the Reformation. After the Reformation was going a few years, a remnant of Waldensians living in the Italian Alps contacted the Reformers to see if they were of the same faith. Some of these Alpine Waldensians³ wanted to join immediately with the Reformers. Some wanted to take it slow, as they were not sure they were of the same faith. Yet others saw that they were *not* of the same doctrine and practice as the Reformers and wanted no union with them.

Those who wanted an immediate union won the day. It must have been a sad day for those who saw that the original Waldensian faith was quite distinct from Protestantism. But that is history. These Italian Waldensians took up Reformed theology, throwing out nonresistance, and taking up the swearing of oaths along with the acceptance of wealth and interest.

The book about Paula does not tell of these events, but one can sense that Paula was living more to the ideals of original Waldensianism. Given her young age, the fruit of Paula’s life may well be the result of her godly parents more than from Paula’s own spirituality. Sad to say, the compromise has continued—as in many other movements—so that today the Waldensians are but just another Protestant denomination, complete with the acceptance of sodomy in their congregations.⁴

Paula, the Waldensian has been published by several conservative Christian publishers (Faith Publishing

3 This group in Italy represented only a small remnant of the Waldensians. At an earlier time, there were up to 400 congregations of Waldensians scattered across Europe.

4 In 2010, the Waldensian Synod voted 105-9 (with 29 abstentions) to allow blessings upon homosexual couples.

House, Rod & Staff, etc.), and some may have taken the liberty to drop a few sections that reveal the apostasy of Waldensianism in Paula’s time—like setting up and decorating a Christmas tree in the chapel. The public domain versions available online (www.gutenberg.org has several digital formats, and www.librivox.org has free audio book files) may contain these sections, while those from other publishers may not. Despite these few inconsistencies, you and your children will benefit greatly by reading *Paula, the Waldensian*.



Waldensians leaving an Alpine chapel in the early 1900s. Is one of those ladies the author of *Paula, the Waldensian*?

A final note

Paula’s story is, from all the sources I could find, supposed to be true. It seems almost too idealist at times ... too good to be true. Assuming that her story is at least based on real happenings—and allowing the author the necessity of a literary license to fill in gaps—there is still one little aspect of the books that speaks loudly to me. The author mentions it in passing in the preface.

A final note

She says that she is writing the book from Villar-Pellice, a little village down in one of those beautiful Italian⁵ Waldensian valleys. She lives there, and invites anyone who reads the book to visit her.

Think about it. What is a girl from a wealthy French, atheist/agnostic family doing living in the Waldensian valleys? Obviously, Paula’s life has drawn her cousin to the faith. And instead of the poor, backwoods, religious girl who is sent to live among heathen getting sucked into the worldliness of upper-class France, the opposite happens. The rich atheist’s daughter gets sucked into the Waldensian faith and ends up moving to the valleys.

Living beside one’s *self* is that potent! ~

Living beside one’s *self* is that potent! ~

Living beside one’s *self* is that potent! ~

5 The free versions of the book found at www.gutenberg.org put Villar-Pellice in France, but that is a mistake of the person[s] who made that version. Villar-Pellice lies on the Italian side of the Alps.

The Heartbeat of

The Remnant

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GRACE:
THE GOD-GIVEN ABILITY TO BLOOM
WHERE HE HAS PLANTED YOU.