

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk

Isaiah 44:7: And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

1 Corinthians 14:40: "Let all things be done decently and in order."

In the preparation of this publication it sometimes seems that order is the last thing that occurs, sermons are listened to, articles are sought out, read, edited and then prayerfully the Lord will place in order those things that may, Lord willing, benefit our readers and then at the end of the process I never cease to be amazed how it all seems to come together, usually at the last moment and wonder how it all happened.

This month was no exception and after seeking the Scripture for some direction in how to order the contents the two text verse were a great encouragement. Isaiah 44:6-8 portrays the words of God Himself and it challenged me that verse 7 shows our human inability to set in order (*Hebrew word **awrak** meaning to put in order or arrange*) those things that God has ordained and then Apostle Paul speaking to the Corinthian church after telling them God is not a God of confusion (verse 33) says to do all things decently and in order (*Greek word **taxis** meaning regular arrangement, official dignity*). It seems to me that in both cases the order referred to is not only God honouring and God inspired but if we profess to be His people and to be like Him then it is absolutely necessary for us to behave not only in church life but daily life in a way that is God honouring and a reflection of God Himself – we are created in His image are we not?

Philippians 2:12 tells us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling and that cannot happen if we are haphazard in our approach to God's Truth, we need an orderliness in our Christian walk that will reflect God's holiness. Being disorderly in our approach to the Christian life will I believe short change God and cause us to miss the mark – to order our life in line with His Word will bring us into His presence on that last day. Matthew Henry has this to say on this verse: "The doctrine and example of consistent believers will enlighten others, and direct their way to Christ and holiness, even as the light-house warns mariners to avoid rocks, and directs their course into the harbour." Orderliness of progress is in focus here.

Haphazardness in following Christ will not lead us home to heaven. *J.v.L*

MINISTER'S CORNER.

Watch for the Lord's Return. Matthew 24. (Conclusion)

From a message preached at Paces Creek Mennonite Church, KY

Watch, that is what Jesus said, Watch. If the home owner knows the thief is coming he will be watching. We know the Lord is coming so we can be watching.

To watch means to be awake and be alert. I want to just look at a few things in the Bible that God says we should be awake to, several from the Old Testament and then a few from the New. I would like to go back to Isaiah. Isaiah is sometimes referred to as the gospel of the Old Testament, we will take a few thoughts from the book of Isaiah.

The first one [Isaiah 26:19](#)

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

Now that verse alone is quite obscure I admit that, that phrase that I am pulling from this verse is “Awake and sing ye that dwell in dust.” There is something in this chapter that God is calling us to awake to, what is it? Well I see a call in this chapter, if we had the time to read through this chapter I am sure we can all see it, a call for humanity to awake to God. I will just point out a few things here.

I see this as calling people in this chapter to be conscious or aware of the fact that God is sovereign and to see Him working in the earth, He is bringing salvation, He is giving life to people, He is giving life to those who were dead. Some are being convicted of sin and are being saved, they are being quickened, and they are being made alive into Jesus Christ putting it in New Testament terms. God is at work, God is doing something. God is building His Church. Be awake to God is what we see here. Observe His working. Actually this chapter in Isaiah, 26, is a hymn of praise, I will just move back to verse one it says:

[Isaiah 26:1-2](#)

“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. [2] Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.”

The focus of this chapter is that God is a reality and God is at work, He is doing something, we are to wake up to Him.

Well some people are waking up to God and others are not awake to God and that is evident here too as we readin verses eight through to 11, that becomes apparent.

Moving down to verse 20 where God says:

[Isaiah 26:20](#)

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.”

Now we are to close in, I see here a call to just simply close ourselves in to God until the judgment passes over: “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee.” What does that remind you of, what is significant about this God inviting us to come in, to draw near Him?

Jesus says: “When you pray you do this, you enter into your closet and you shut the door” ([Matthew 6:5](#)) When we enter our closets we shut the door, there is a sense in which we exclude everyone and everything, it is just God and us and we can pray and commune with God, we put the world on the outside, all our troubles on the outside, we can hide ourselves in God's presence and be with God and it will only be a little moment until those trials, those indignations are overpast and Jesus comes for us. Awake to God. That was our first point.

Now we come to the second in Isaiah 52 verses one and two. Here we find again the word awake, awake, like verily, verily, there is a duplication here, awake and be sure to be awake.

[Isaiah 52:1-2](#)

“Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. [2] Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.”

We understand that chapter 52 and chapter 53 is a prophecy concerning Jesus and it is a message of hope to a people that is being held captive, it is a message of God's love and deliverance, it runs through this chapter and runs through the next one, it is a message of redemption. Verse three:

Isaiah 52:3

“For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.”

I am going to call this one God's call to awake to the gospel message of Jesus the Saviour of the world.

The shepherds were people that were awake the night the Child was born, the shepherds were out there watching, they were watching their sheep, many people were sleeping but the shepherds were awake and suddenly there were the angels, they saw angels, they were out there with the sheep and suddenly there were angels about them, the glory of the Lord was there in a way that they never saw it before. And the angels said: “Behold we bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people for unto you is a born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11) and the shepherds believed what they heard, they were awake and they believed. The shepherds went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and found the babe, the Saviour, lying in a manger and when they saw it they made it known abroad.

Isaiah asked the question in Isaiah 53:1: “Who hath believed our report?”

Who has believed or will believe? That is a pertinent question, who is awake to the gospel, the Saviour to deliver us from sin's prison and to give us eternal life, who will hear the message, who will believe the message? We believe that this is a part of watching, Christ wants us to be awake and that we would be awake to Christ and the message of the gospel.

Another verse is in Joel chapter 1:5 we find the word “awake” again.

Joel 1:5

“Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.”

What is happening here in this verse? This wake-up call is addressed to drunkards and I am thinking it includes all who are obsessed with sinful living. For drunkards each new day for them is another day for another drink of sin and God through Joel is declaring this is going to stop.

We should be awake to the reality of God's judgment upon sin. We should not only wake-up to the reality of there being a judgment but we should cry out to the Lord in genuine repentance asking for mercy before

that Day because that Day will be a day of destruction to us if we are not awake. Verses 14 and 15;

[Joel 1:14-15](#)

“Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord, [15] Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.”

“Consider the Day of the Lord” that is a phrase that we find throughout this book, the book of Joel, the Day of the Lord is Joel's call to the people of his day and ours, the Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment is upon us and we should awake to the reality of God's judgment upon sin.

Well there are the things that we could point out in this book but we want to continue on to our next verse which we find in first Corinthians chapter 15: 34 and here is a call to awake to righteousness;

[1 Cor. 15:34](#)

“Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”

I am going to call this: Awake to righteous living, sin not.

After Peter confirms in 2 Peter 3 that Christ is coming and that this earth will be on fire and be dissolved he concludes with a promise of receiving a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and he says:

[2 Peter 3:14](#)

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for (that you are awake to) such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

Awake to righteousness so that we are prepared to live in a world of righteousness. We understand that heaven is going to be a world of righteousness, are we preparing ourselves to live in that world where all is righteous, awake to righteousness. Our works, our deeds will either condemn us or will verify our faith when the Lord comes.

The next one we are considering is found in Ephesians 5. I will read verses 14 through 18 here:

[Ephes. 5:14-18](#)

“Wherefore he saith, Awake (another call here to be awake) thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. [15] See

then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, [16] Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. [17] Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. [18] And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; “

The call of this passage seems to be: Awake to the revelation of God's will.

Understand what the will of the Lord is, is the words that we find in verse 17. And other way we might say it is to awake to the Spirit of God. We each need to be awake to the Spirit of God in our life, be filled with the Spirit. We have that here in verse 18: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; “

And so we need to be sensitive to God's will and God's Spirit, that is another aspect of watching. Jesus said it like this: He that has ears to hear let him hear. And hearing Jesus involves being sensitive to God's will and His Spirit, meditating on His Word and discerning what God wants and obeying. We have those verses in the Bible: Grieve not the spirit. ([Eph.4:30](#)) Another one is: Quench not the Spirit. ([1Thes.5:19](#)) We grieve God's Spirit when we don't listen.

Parents how do your children grieve you? Do they grieve you when they don't listen to you, when they don't listen to what you are telling them and we grieve God the same way when we fail to listen to Him and then finally we don't listen long enough and we quench God's Spirit. So the call here is to be awake to God's will and to be sensitive to His Spirit, that is an essential part of watching for the Lord's return.

Another one is found in Romans 13

[Romans 13:11-14](#)

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. [12] The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. [13] Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. [14] But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

I am going to call this one: Awake to faithful living.

High time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. Awake to the possibilities of more devotedness to God. Awake to the possibilities of greater carefulness in our practice. Do we really practice the Sermon on the Mount? How well do we practice it? We should be awake to greater possibilities of doing that. It was a concern of Jesus that when He comes again will He find faith on the earth? We want to say yes to that concern. We want to say yes for us and our families. And here is how to maintain faith, it is to be awake to faithful living and growing in devotedness to God and walking carefully and watching each step that we take and each thing that we allow. That is what we are to do, Jesus said to: Watch ye therefore for you know not what hour your Lord doth come. ([Matthew 24:24](#))

If we are watching we are on alert and when we are alert we are awake to God. We are awake to the message of the gospel. We are awake to the reality of judgment. We are awake to righteous living. We are awake to God's spirit directing us and we are awake to faithful living.

If we are watching in these areas one day we shall see Jesus coming in the clouds of glory and we shall meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ([1Thes.4:17](#))

Let us kneel for prayer.

Our Father in heaven we are thankful for the inspiration that we find in the Word and for the privilege to be here to be gathered with the Saints in this part of that vineyard to look at the scripture again and to gather food for thought there. As we leave this place we pray that we might continue to meditate on the things that we have heard so that we don't let them slip and so that they become a continual inspiration to us as we move into tomorrow and next week until Jesus comes for us.

We do look for our Lord's return and we do ask that the Lord would come quickly and receive us unto Himself that we might share with Him in the glories of heaven but until that day comes help us to live faithfully here to fulfill our duties and responsibilities here and to communicate the gospel to a world that does not know Jesus Christ.

May we live for His return, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.



SNAPSHOTS.

Brief and edited excerpts from historical publications.

Church Order

The early movement of **Anabaptism** gave way very quickly to the development of elements of order as their numbers increased. In 1531 Hans Pfistermeyer said, "I freely concede that Christians need to establish some order in the church since not all have the same function" This had already been clearly acknowledged in article five of the Schleitheim Confession in 1527 as well as in section two of the earliest known **Anabaptist** congregational order. Various functions in the congregation were recognized, which those who had the requisite gifts were called on to carry out.

The Reformed theologians in Switzerland and the Netherlands denied **Anabaptism** the right to be called a church because their pastors were not chosen according to proper church order – that is Catholic or Protestant ideologies. Hence we have lengthy statements on this subject from several writers. They reject the arguments that sacramental ordination, apostolic succession or education are proper legitimate or scriptural reasons for holding the office of pastor.

Anabaptism in general holds that only a man who lives an upright Christian life and who has been taught by the Holy Spirit can be considered as a pastor. **Anabaptists** of all varieties assumed that one could have no confidence in the teaching of a man who was not stringently obedient to the moral dictates of Scripture. Furthermore, only those pastors had unquestioned legitimacy as God's spokesmen who had been chosen by a congregation that was equally obedient. In **Anabaptism** holiness denoted ethical and moral, not sacramental, purity.

It was also recognized that a man could not appoint himself as a "servant of the Word." This always came at the initiative of the congregation. The functions of the pastor were primarily baptizing, preaching and teaching, presiding at the Lord's Supper, administering church discipline, and exercising general oversight over the church.

Orders for the administering of baptism and the Lord's Supper also developed early in **Anabaptism**. These orders apparently developed in order to insure an always a biblical view of the church.

We get some insights into congregational meetings in selections from various **Anabaptist** writers. There was a general rejection of the preacher's

monologue and an uncompromising emphasis on congregational participation. Let us not forget that the early **Anabaptists** had a hunger for the Word of God, a burning desire, and in most cases an unquenchable desire, to follow Christ at all costs, even the cost of their lives, they were a much persecuted people and accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and being baptised with the believers baptism and giving their allegiance to **Anabaptism** was virtually signing their own death warrant, a reading of the Martyr Mirrors will show it has been that way for all those who are of the true remnant church in countries in all ages including the present age, where Christ is either denied outright or the teachings of Christ and the true gospel is perverted to man's own selfish carnal nature, allowing no opposition to their what Apostle Paul rightly called "another gospel"

Many of the early **Anabaptists** even though not trained theologians by the standards of worldly Christendom nevertheless often penetrated more deeply into theological issues than university trained leaders and this was born of their sincere desire and hunger for the Word of God and allowing the Holy Spirit to lead them in all things.

Michael Sattler "Congregational Order," 1527.

Since the almighty eternal and merciful God has made his wonderful light break forth in this world and [in this] most dangerous time, we recognize the mystery of the divine will, that the Word is preached to us according to the proper ordering of the Lord, whereby we have been called into his fellowship. Therefore, according to the command of the Lord and the teachings of his apostles, in Christian order, we should observe the new commandment in love one toward another, so that love and unity may be maintained, which all brothers and sisters of the entire congregation should agree to hold to as follows:

1. The brothers and sisters should meet at least three or four times a week, to exercise themselves in the teaching of Christ and his apostles and heartily to exhort one another to remain faithful to the Lord as they have pledged.

2. When the brothers and sisters are together, they shall take up something to read together. The one to whom God has given the best understanding shall explain it, the others should be still and listen, so that there are not two or three carrying on a private conversation, bothering the others. The Psalter shall be read daily at home.

3. Let none be frivolous in the church of God, neither in words nor in actions. Good conduct shall be maintained by them all also before the heathen.

4. When a brother sees his brother erring, he shall warn him according to the command of Christ, and shall admonish him in a Christian and brotherly way, as everyone is bound and obliged to do out of love.

5. Of all the brothers and sisters of this congregation none shall have anything of his own, but rather, as the Christians in the time of the apostles held all in common, and especially stored up a common fund, from which aid can be given to the poor, according as each will have need, and as in the apostles' time permit no brother to be in need.

6. All gluttony shall be avoided among the brothers who are gathered in the congregation; serve a soup or a minimum of vegetable and meat, for eating and drinking are not the kingdom of heaven.

7. The Lord's Supper shall be held, as often as the brothers are together, thereby proclaiming the death of the Lord, and thereby warning each one to commemorate, how Christ gave his life for us, and shed his blood for us, that we might also be willing to give our body and life for Christ's sake, which means for the sake of all the brothers.

Michael Sattler, Schleithem Confession, 1527

Art.V. We have been united as follows concerning shepherds in the church of God. The shepherd in the church shall be a person according to the rule of Paul, fully and completely, who has a good report of those who are outside the faith. The office of such a person shall be to read and exhort and teach, warn, admonish, or ban in the congregation, and properly to preside among the sisters and brothers in prayer, and in the breaking of bread, and in all things to take care of the body of Christ, that it may be built up and developed, so that the name of God might be praised and honored through us, and the mouth of the mocker be stopped.

He shall be supported, wherein he has need, by the congregation which has chosen him, so that he who serves the gospel can also live therefrom, as the Lord has ordered. But should a shepherd do something worthy of reprimand, nothing shall be done with him without the voice of two or three witnesses. If they sin they shall be publicly reprimanded, so that others might fear.

But if the shepherd should be driven away or led to the Lord by the cross,

at the same hour another shall be ordained to his place, so that the little folk and the little flock of God may not be destroyed, but be preserved by warning and be consoled.

Balthasar Hubmaier, "Baptismal Order," 1527.

Whoever desires to receive water baptism should first present himself to his bishop so that he may be tested as to whether he is sufficiently instructed in the articles of the law, gospel, and faith, and in the doctrines which pertain to a new Christian life. Also he must give evidence that he can pray, and that he can intelligently explain the articles of the Christian faith. This must all be ascertained about the candidate before he can be permitted to be incorporated into the church.

Interrogation of Ambrosias Spitelmaier circa 1527

Asked where they come together and what they do Spitelmaier answered: "They have no special gathering places. When there is peace and unity and when none of those who have been baptized are scattered they come together wherever the people are. They send messages to each other by a boy or girl. When they have come together they teach one another the divine Word and one asks the other: how do you understand this saying? Thus there is among them a diligent living according to the divine Word.

Conversation with Hans Pfistermeyer circa 1531.

I have been offended by their [the clergy's] remuneration since it has its source in usury. I know full well that he who serves with the gospel is entitled to a sufficient living from it. However, it may not come from interest or from usury. It is unrighteous gain to live from interest and from the proceeds of offerings to idols. To preach against such abuse and to live off it at the same time means that he will not be listened to. If he accepts it, how can he condemn it?

I freely concede that Christians need to establish some order in the church since not all have the same function. Nevertheless, the preachers must be supported by resources a Christian can justify. Thus it would happen that once those in need had been looked after, the balance would be used for support of the preachers. Anything left over after that would be distributed to the poor. But if the preacher lives on the proceeds of usury, he cannot chastise nor condemn it.

Hans Hotz in "Bern Colloquy," 1538.

Concerning our calling and commission to the ministry of preaching we answer as follows. A Christian community must be pure and holy. If she detects gifts and virtues in a member as Paul speaks about it, then she has the authority to send them to preach the gospel.... Before there can be Christian preaching there must first be a change of life, improvement, and the new birth. Then, if the virtues are detected in such a person, the commissioning follows as Christ called the apostles to follow him. They had to become subject to his righteousness and abstain from sin. Only then he sent them and commanded them to preach the good news.

Through our faith we have received grace and the apostolic office from God. However, we do not believe that all who believe and receive the faith in Christ should therefore be preachers. For there are different offices which are distinguished from each other but all belong to the one body.

We also confess that not everyone who is called to the godly life should teach. We believe that there is a variety of gifts and offices. A person may not appoint himself; he must be chosen by the church.

Leopold Schamschlager, "Mutual Order," 1540.

Since manifold deceptions gain ground everywhere it is important that the called, surrendered and obligated members of Jesus Christ, wherever they are in the world and in distress, should not forsake their gatherings (Hebrews 10:25). Rather, according to the opportunities provided by place and persecutions they should come together for the sake of Christ's love, wherever and however they may, whether there be few or many.... Such gathering should take place with wisdom, moderation, good sense, discipline, friendliness, and a quiet manner, all the more so because we can see that the day of the Lord is near at hand....

When they come together and they have no appointed leader, they should admonish one among them whom they regard as capable in a friendly and pleasant manner to read or speak to them according to his God-given gift. Or else someone may personally offer himself for service out of love. One after another should be allowed to speak—depending upon whether something has been given to him as Paul teaches (1 Cor. 14)—and offer his gifts for the improvement of the members in order that our congregation be not like those falsely claiming to be such where only one and no one else may speak. But before they begin to speak they should fall on their knees (1

Tim. 2:1) and faithfully call on the Lord that he will grant them to speak fruitfully. At the conclusion they should diligently admonish one another to walk by the mind of the Lord and steadfastly to remain in him, faithfully to wait and watch for the Lord until he comes.... When they depart, they should once again call and pray to the Lord for all the members and their needs and for all men according to the instruction of our dear brother Paul (1 Tim. 2:1). Further they are to thank God for all his gifts and goodness (1 Thess. 5:17), and, according to the opportunity before they leave to break bread with one another in memory of the death of the Lord (1 Cor.11:24).

Whenever they have thus come together an elder, or if there is none, a senior brother, should, for the Lord's sake, be concerned for the poor members. This should be done with wise, sincere, gentle, not offensive nor aggressive, but earnest, emphatic words that their hearts may be moved to willingness and mercy and that the way and power of love grows according to God's pleasure. Above all a brother should always have a box or bag nearby with the knowledge of the church members, so that every member knows that a free offering or thanksgiving may be put into it if the Lord so admonishes either during the meeting or after. This must be done in order that, whenever necessary, the poor may be given something according to the necessity of each and the amount available. The brother who is in charge of the money is to distribute it with diligent care in a good conscience and the fear of God. It is not to be done as the world does it with its poor without investigation or examination of life, whether it is necessary or not, whether the recipient is a miser or not. For it is a holy office (Acts 6:1)

Peter Riedeman: Concerning Singing.

Paul says, "Sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." For this reason we say that to sing spiritual songs is good and pleasing to God if we sing in the right way, that is, attentively, in the fear of God and as inspired by the Spirit of Christ.

For it is for this reason that they are called spiritual songs: namely, that they are inspired and made and composed by the urge of the Spirit, and also attract and move men to blessedness. Therefore, since they are composed and made by the inspiration and urge of the Spirit of Christ, they must also be sung as inspired by the same Spirit, if they are to be sung aright and to be of service to men.

Where this is not the case, and one sings only for carnal joy or for the

sweet sound or for some such reason, one misuses them, changing them into what is carnal and worldly, and does not sing songs of the Spirit, but of the letter. Likewise also, he who enjoys listening for the music's sake—he hears in the letter and not in the Spirit, so with him also is it without fruit; and because they are not used, sung and heard aright, he that so does sins greatly against God; for he uses his word, which was given for his salvation and as an urge to blessedness; as leading to the lust of the flesh and to sin. Thus, it is changed by him into harm, for though the song in itself is spiritual, yet is it to that man no longer a spiritual song. It is a worldly song, for it is not sung in the Spirit.

He, however, who sings in the Spirit, considers diligently every word, how far and where it goes, why it has been used and how it may serve to his betterment. He who does this sings to the Lord's praise, to the betterment of both himself and others and as an instigation to a godly life. This is to sing well; to sing in any other way is in vain. Thus, we allow it not among us that other than spiritual songs are sung.

Dirk Philips, "The Lord's Supper," 1564

But to a right observance of the Holy Supper belong the following essentials: *First*, there must be a Christian congregation that has assembled in the name of the Lord and that declares and shows the Lord's death with a true faith and confession, that just as Christ Jesus gave and committed to his apostles and all believers the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, so he freely gave them his body and blood as a gift for an eternal salvation (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23).

To the Supper belong admonition, and a sincere remembrance of the suffering and death of the Lord, of the conformity to his suffering and death, of unity of the Spirit and of faith, of love to God and the neighbor. All of these belong especially to the observance of the Lord's Supper (Phil. 3:10).

Second, we believe that this Supper must be taken with those only who are the friends of God, the true Christians, who have accepted the gospel and have amended their lives, and who, upon confession of their faith, have been properly baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19). In this faith they are faithfully concerned to lead a Christian life, and diligently meditate upon conformity to Christ, his suffering and death, his burial and resurrection; in short, to be one body with Christ and all the saints. These, and no others, are, according to the teach-

ing of the gospel, to be renewed by this Supper, admonished and confirmed in the fellowship of Christ and all the saints.

Third, this Supper is to be observed harmoniously by all believers (as many as are gathered together) and not by one alone, as commonly happens. For thus the Lord ordained, and thus he desired it to be observed; all Christians must conform thereto. For if it is not right to despise or alter a legal will made by man, how much more it is improper to despise the testament of Jesus Christ or to break his commandments (Gal. 4:15 [141]).

Moreover the minister is to observe the Supper with the congregation, and the bread is to be broken. What the Lord did, the apostles continued to observe. Hence Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 10:16): "The bread which we break," etc. And Luke writes: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And they were together daily in the temple, breaking bread from house to house" (Acts 2:46). This means that the disciples gathered together to break the bread. Therefore the bread must be broken in the Supper, and both parts of the Supper, that is, the bread and the cup, must be given, divided and received by every one. No one is to eat his own bread by himself, which is what is done in the world. Whoever does this shows that he is eating his own supper, and not the Supper of the Lord.

Fourth, Paul admonishes us that every person should examine himself before he eats of that bread and drinks of that cup (1 Con 11:28). For whoever has not true faith in Jesus Christ, is not a member of the body of Christ, will not die and live with Christ, has not genuine love for Christ and his neighbor and is not in one body with Christ and all the saints, can never rightly observe the Supper (which is a sign of divine and brotherly love and unity), not rightly discern the Lord's body. For in the body of Christ two things are especially noted, namely, the Head and the members. The Head, which is Christ, reminds us that from it we all receive grace and life (Eph. 1:23), and that one must cleave to the Head alone. From it also we take an example of love and remember how faithfully the Lord Jesus Christ served us. Then we must take note of the members of the body with whom we are one, and remember how Christ has served us with his gifts and is still serving us. With the gifts which we receive from God—be they spiritual or natural—we likewise serve our members for the perfecting and edifying of the body of Christ, and all this in love. This, then, is what it means to rightly discern the body of Christ.

IF JESUS WERE IN OUR MIDST TODAY.

What kind of a statement or question is that?

Why would we bother thinking about something that could never happen? Times are so different now. We have always known a world in which Jesus was the central theme, at least at Christmas time. If He were physically among us today, would that mean that He didn't come when the Bible says He did or that He would never have left after His resurrection? Perhaps He still would not have died?

Let us look at some of these questions and more. Hopefully the following essay, although somewhat imaginary, will cause us to realize that the real reason for Jesus coming to earth was to save us poor, lost creatures from certain eternal destruction.

What would Jesus think of me, my wife, my children, my financial affairs, etc., if He were to come to my house for a visit? If these are our first thoughts, perhaps it is time to make some changes in our priorities. Hopefully, though, we would be overjoyed and humbled at the prospect of serving our Lord in a true physical sense. In all this, let us remember that He sees and knows all what we have and do, even though He is not right beside us.

What would be the first things I would tell my Lord if I were to have one afternoon of visiting? Would it be all about what I had accomplished? Things like: "Look at all the poor people I have helped out! See how much money I put into the treasury! Did you know that two of my children have won an award three years in a row for the highest grades in their class? See how hard I have worked to give my wife all she wants, and my children have need of nothing!" Would we point out how well dressed our children are, how we only buy them things that are of a high quality, and how they stand out in a crowd as very cultured and well trained? Would I remind Jesus that I was Sunday school superintendent, that I spent six years on the mission field? Would I let Him know that I had memorized more passages in the Bible or gone to more voluntary projects than any of my peers? No, this would all be useless; Jesus knows this all anyway. It would hurt Him no more if He were right in our presence than it does even now as He looks down from heaven.

That times are different now than when Jesus was on earth is indeed, the truth. This in itself makes it a little hard to imagine what it would be like if He were here among us today. How would He travel? Would He take the bus or maybe hitchhike? If he traveled in a car, would He be able to stop just anywhere and help a blind man see or cast out devils? How would we in our modern age respond to someone who made His way from place to place by walking?

Another question that comes to mind is: Who would His disciples be today? We must remember that He chose men from all walks of life. The apostles he chose were everything from a fisherman to a tax collecting official. Would we perhaps be surprised by who would follow Jesus if He were on earth?

We might think that our faith would be strengthened if He were among us. But let us remember that faith in Christ is not built on seeing Him but in believing on Him. If we only had faith when He was near us, what would we do when He was on the other side of the world preaching to and healing others?

Another thing to consider is that if He were on earth, the Comforter, or Holy Spirit, would not be here to help us and guide us. Any questions we might have, or grievances, troubled thoughts, anxieties, and burdens would have to be written down or saved until such a time when He was around and could hear our troubles. We need to also remember that we would not be the only ones needing to pour out our hearts to the Master.

Which church would Jesus go to on Sunday to preach? Would it be the newest or the fullest church? Would it be in a church in which the members were well satisfied with what they have? Maybe He would teach the children's Sunday school class. Jesus used children as an example for us; so maybe that is who would get His attention.

Who would Jesus heal today? Would He even be allowed into the large, sophisticated medical centers of our day? Perhaps He would go to the prisons and correctional institutes, and there He would find people ready for His message and healing. He might also go to the food lines and soup kitchens and there find an audience just waiting for His message of hope.

In whose home would Jesus find the same companionship that He had with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus? It surely would not necessarily be the home of the pastor whose church had the largest membership or the family who gave the most to the cause of some mission effort. It might just be the

home of a sincere follower living in a little mud hut somewhere across the waters.

If you were to be seen by someone who had just seen Jesus, would that person recognize you as one of His followers? If someone were to come to your church, would he say, "This must be Jesus' church"?

Let us look at some of the blessings we have that would not be ours if Jesus were still in our midst. If Jesus had not left, the Holy Spirit would not be here to lead and guide us. Ever since Jesus left, He has been busy preparing a place for us. Had He stayed here on earth, the glory of our eternal home would be compromised.

Had God planned it that way, having Jesus here among us would be as real a blessing to us now as it was when He came. To have Him stop by our house or place of work to visit would surely brighten anyone's day. To ask Him face to face about some perplexing happening in our lives and then to hear Him with His own voice speak words of truth would surely help us face some of life's difficulties. Once again, though, let us remember that we can have all this through the Holy Spirit.

May God bless us all with true thankfulness that we live in the new dispensation when the gospel is for everyone, whether rich or poor, upper class or lower class, Jew or gentile, black or white. Truly, the plan of God cannot be improved upon.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor" (Romans 11:33-34).

Brother Tim.



True Pastors

"And he gave some ... pastors ... For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith ... " (Ephesians 4:11-13).

These pastors are not chosen because they have thrust themselves forward or have been placed in the office by any human contrivance. True pastors are called and placed by God. They are called to do heavenly work in an earthly environment.

The Greek word translated pastor in this passage of Scripture is often

translated "shepherd" in other places in the Scripture. The work of a pastor is the work of shepherding the flock of God. How carefully the shepherd watches over his sheep! If any is footsore or injured, he attends to that one, pouring in oil and wine and binding up where it is needed. He feeds them with food that is convenient for them—provisions he has received from the Word. God said to Israel, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3:15).

When God calls a leader, He calls a man who has a meaningful relationship with Himself. In this relationship, obedience to the Holy Spirit is pre-eminently pursued. It has become a way of life for him to choose God's will over personal preferences. He is devoted to his Heavenly Father and trusts Him for guidance. He is a good follower.

As God places this man as a pastor over His sheep, He expects him to continue in the same humility in which he began his ministry. In sharing with the Ephesian elders, Paul's testimony as he recalls his ministry was, "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews" (Acts 20:19). Paul was always very aware that to follow God would cause him to suffer in the flesh. And he admits to being tempted to take an easier way when faced by the tenacious persecution of the Jews.

Even though tempted and tried, Paul victoriously avows, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have skewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

Some pastors today are keeping back counsel that God would have them declare to His people. Reasons for this may include a desire to be popular and socially accepted, a secret love of worldly things, and loss of heavenly vision. These all indicate a lack of the true Spirit-imparted love of God. The "angel" of the church at Ephesus had left his first love but maintained his zeal (Rev. 2:4). It can be the case that a pastor's zeal will outlast his love. The only way offered to rectify this sin is to repent (Rev. 2:5). The duty of repentance here urged would extend to all the points in which he had erred.

Public preaching is appreciated by the believers. Members of the congregation pray for and desire to be fed the bread of God by their faithful ministers. A true pastor seeks God's inspiration for the message, trusting the Holy Ghost for its organization and delivery to the flock. In preaching the Word, a pastor's chief concern is that God's message will reach the people

untainted by selfish motives. A commendation of "that was a beautiful message" is appreciated by the pastor, but may the preaching always be such that the beauty is registered in the soul and not only by the senses!

God is sending many inspiring sermons that are preached each Sunday morning to the congregations across the nations. As He blesses this work, may He likewise affect a greater consciousness of the need for visiting and teaching "house to house." The North American church may be suffering because of an imbalance in the ratio of public preaching versus personal sharing. (*Note: This is certainly the case in our experiences with Australian churches. The Editor.*) The home setting allows a more particular application of remedy to the spiritual needs of the laity. Pastoral home visits have always been a work of the Christian pastor.

Isaiah gives vivid prophecy as to the nature of the coming great Shepherd of the sheep. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isa. 40:11). Jesus' life on earth was everything that had been prophesied. In fulfilling the will of the Father and having made the supreme sacrifice for sin, He then commissioned His disciples to carry this gospel to all the world. The initial work of the gospel is to bring people into the sheepfold of God. The succeeding work is to keep them there. With a view to this, Jesus, in preparing Peter to be an apostolic pastor, said, "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15). This injunction is significant. All pastors since Peter should likewise strive earnestly to appropriately nourish the little ones. With these lambs lies the prospect of the perpetual prosperity of the flock.

A pastor should know the names of the children in his congregation. He will pray for them and show his interest in their lives by speaking to them and inquiring after their well-being. He will share experiences with them within the realm of their interest. When God calls them to repentance and conversion, the pastor shall be there. He will likewise be available for any counsel parents ("those that are with young") may be seeking as their children come to spiritual birth. Young Christians need to know that they can go to their pastor any time with any problem. Pastors, show your appreciation for the youth of the congregation. It may open the door into their lives when they need spiritual advice.

Moses was called by God to shepherd His people. He brought them out of the delta plains of Egypt, through the wilderness, and on to Canaan. It is

evident that Moses was a true pastor. The record in Psalm 106:23 portrays Moses standing in the breach. When the people began to murmur and complain and alienated themselves from God by their disobedience, Moses interceded for them. He begged God to bring them again into His favor. When God granted his prayer, it did not generate pride in Moses' heart. He rather exclaimed, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them" (Num. 11:29). How he yearned that his people could experience the same inspiration he had received! Are some of today's pastors lacking in this yearning over the flock?

Brother Robert.

We pray the Lord of the harvest to send or raise up pastors with a true shepherd's heart for His remnant people in Australia. JvL.



MODESTY, SIMPLICITY, AND ECONOMY

One existing Mennonite church conference statement says "we teach and practice modesty, simplicity, and economy in everything—in clothes, in homes, in farms, in machinery, in automobiles, and in all we possess or handle" This statement covers a large spectrum in life.

Questions are voiced at times by numerous people in relation to what does this mean to us today? But here the thought is mostly about one question in particular and that is whether the testimony of simplicity in practice and teaching still fits us these days.

Making it more precise, just what does the word simplicity mean? Reader, what does it mean to you personally? Does your life qualify as an example of the statement? Do you think an uncomplicated, simple lifestyle can be attained and practiced today, or has it become an elusive ideal and an obsolete dream?

Quite often one hears reference made to "the good old days," with an apparent certain longing for what seems to have been a simpler and lower-key lifestyle. In the day and age we are living, things appear to be increasingly complicated and involving. This fact can become a burdensome hindrance to true spirituality, and it's putting us in a place of strenuous test on

the subject of simplicity. We need to pause and consider: behind the facade (the image we portray), where and with who is our allegiance? What really is important to you? How serious is your commitment to God, and what is it doing to the way you live? Does it influence what you have, how you dress and show yourself, and what you do?

David the Psalmist claimed to have attained a right attitude in relation to this issue. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself..." (Ps. 131:1-2).

In Luke 21:34, we find some teaching that applies to the subject at hand. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged, with ... the cares of this life." Among other things, Jesus was encouraging His followers to keep their commitments in earthly things limited enough and simple enough so they wouldn't drown out their faith and their obedience to the will of God. That is one aspect of simplicity.

To bring one's life into accord with the godly objective of simplicity will require personal commitment and initiative. Good things usually don't happen by themselves. Second Timothy 2:3-5 says, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." Herein is the thought that we shall have backbone and keep our lives simple enough to stay free before God and able to serve Him while we are here on the earth.

First John 2:15-16 reads, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." These verses indicate the requirement of a certain inward and outward detachment from earthly things and activities. The sincere Christian's affection is focused on more noble things.

This does not say that we shall go and hide in a cave, or anywhere else, and wait for the Lord to take us home. Jesus prayed for His followers, recorded in John 17:15, to this extent, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." We are instructed in other scriptures to redeem the time and be occupied until He comes. However, we shall have a watchful eye, not shuttered by

the things and activities of the world.

In Mark 6:8-11, Jesus gave some interesting instruction for the twelve disciples about the simplicity of their travel gear and preparations. What do you think: should this serve as an example to us about traveling light through life?

As one pursues simplicity, caution is in order, though, lest one become unbalanced in other ways. This could happen in various ways. It is usually of no value to sacrifice one principle in an effort to gain another. Among other potential problems, an unbalanced desire for simplicity could lead to self-centeredness and a lack of care for others. Those who are minded to simplify their lives must be careful not to do it at the expense or inconvenience of others. Or one might dodge his duties and thereby place his obligations on those around him. Certainly, the Golden Rule needs to be considered in the pursuit of scriptural simplicity.

Another caution would be about falling prey to temptations of feeling superior to those who do not live as low-key or uncomplicated as we may have chosen to live.

One more related scripture quote comes from 2 Corinthians 1:12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." An aspiration of living a life of simplicity and godly sincerity, as mentioned in the foregoing scripture, should always be synonymous with humility and pursued by the grace of God.

Let us pray God to give us a sense of direction in this issue and to find His way of blessing for our time of sojourning here on the earth.

Brother Luke, Pennsylvania.



Compiled & Edited by: J van Loon

E-mail: shimara2@bigpond.com

Web: www.anabaptistmennonites.org