

# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

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

Vol. 12 No. 8 – AUGUST 2015



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

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

## **From The Editor's Desk**

We look around us and see many people with many kinds of lifestyles. We see many with an apathy to Christ who are careless about their relationships, morals, habits, attitudes, spiritual life, and religion. Fortunately, we also know those who are different. We see those who are dedicated in serving their fellowmen, some of them professing Christ and some operating on the foundation of being a good citizen and useful in society. There are humble people and proud people. There are rich people and those who want to be rich. Some strive lawfully and others unlawfully. We see poor people who are frustrated and those who are content in their poverty.

We live in a world that is full of sensuality, materialism and covetousness. This is where God has placed us; however He does not want us to be of the world. Jesus prayed "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15)

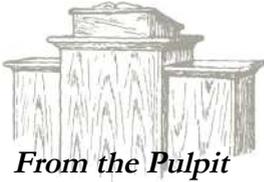
Apathy to God's word leads to neglect and even death physically and spiritually.

"When the ill-fated Titanic steamed majestically through the darkness on her maiden voyage to New York, April 14th, 1912, more than two thousand people were enjoying the snug comforts of its lavish compartments, secure in the belief that neither wind nor storm nor wave could prevail against them. One of the dramatic incidents of that tragic night is recalled by the Washington Post: "In the wheel room, a ... uniformed officer hummed at his task as he directed the destinies of the Titanic that even then was setting a speed record. The phone rang. A minute passed! Another minute! The officer was busy! The third precious minute clicked away. The officer, his trivial task completed, stepped to the phone. From the crow's nest! 'Iceberg dead ahead! Reverse the engines!' But too late! As he rushed to the controls, the pride of the seas' crashed the berg head on amid the deafening roar. Three precious minutes! Attention to trivial details and the big important opportunity slipped by until too late! A case of apathy leading to neglect. 1503 people paid with their lives for that officer's apathy and neglect, (*Adapted from Robert G. Lee's Sourcebook of 500 Illustrations.*)

How many of those who died were ready to meet God?

Ephesians 5:15-16 says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

With sincere effort holy living is within each Christian's reach and apathy will not lead to holy living nor our heavenly destination safely. J.v.L



*From the Pulpit*

The Spirit of Apathy  
Wilmer Eshbach  
Orchardville Mennonite Church 2004

With joy I greet you in Jesus name this morning. I think of the words in Hebrews: Let us consider, let us hold fast to the profession of our faith without wavering and let us consider one another to provoke one another to love unto good works not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. **Hebrews 10:23-25**

I think it certainly puts together the thought of assembling with the saints and holding fast our profession and certainly appreciate the effort to that end this morning in our brother's devotional as the opening exercises of our worship service.

I invite you to turn with me to Judges I want to consider this morning "The spirit of apathy." The word apathy whilst not used in the Bible is closely related to indifference, it means unconcerned, a listless condition is the definition of apathy.

The word spirit as used in our title the spirit of apathy bears the thought of an outlook, a frame of mind, the prevailing tendency or attitude. We could reword this as the attitude of indifference. I'm not this morning so much concerned about or at least my focus on not so much being concerned about whether you got up in time this morning or not all or whether you are apathetic about your overweight problem or even if you are a bit unconcerned about the balance in your bank account.

That is not my focus this morning although it could be anyone all three of these areas could actually be an indicator of a spirit of apathy as well in some things that really do matter and even possibly relate to the focus our consideration this morning.

The Scripture does say that he that is faithful in the least is also faithful in much and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. **Luke 16:10.** I think it is very apparent that correlation between the spiritual and the mate-

rial is frequently quite evident however our focus this morning it is primarily on the spirit of apathy in relation to our spiritual life and outlook on the spiritual issues of life.

The Lord has clearly told us in the book of Matthew that because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold, **Matthew 24:12**. You know it's sort of a ho-hum attitude, one individual when asked about his relationship with the Lord his response was something like this: Well I don't know I suppose I'm satisfied if He is.

Well this morning brothers and sisters that is exactly the issue, is Jesus satisfied with me? the songwriter asks and that is the issue, is Jesus satisfied with me, does He see a living sacrifice aflame on the altar of consecration, does He see a living sacrifice holy committed as the love slave of Jesus Christ in willing consecrated service or is that kind of loyalty and that kind of commitment only expressed when it is time to make money? Or when the offer comes to play games or go hunting.

Where or in what area, on what level does the spirit of apathy leave you and me and we really wake up and pay attention and get excited about it and give our best.

This morning the answers to these types of questions I believe are a fair barometer to the inner recesses of our heart and the spiritual temperature of our lives, it tells us and indicates what spirit I am of.

I recently read part of an article, I did not read it all, it was simply a secular article in a secular magazine that came to our house in the mail but it caught my attention maybe some of the rest of you got it too it was a sort of a box-holder flyer but it was describing discovering the passion of your life. I'm not sure of the exact title but something like that and I realised that this was just the opposite of our consideration this morning but I would just like to read a little bit from that article.

The writer of this article said:

“Many things in life will catch your eye but only a few will catch your heart, pursue those. Why? Because your odds of success are greatly increased when you put your time and energy toward things that matter most. These wants and goods are personal and are generally something we look

forward to doing or having. Oftentimes (and notice this phrase) oftentimes we are willing to sacrifice in the moment right now for these things that we want most in the future. They are the motivators behind our thoughts and actions. For my father it is going hunting, for my wife Tammy it is a game of rook or a bar of chocolate, how paltry a motivator!”

I’ll stop reading there.

For the Lord it was the joy that was set before Him that was the motivating factor that moved Him to despise the shame and endure the cross.

Does that motivate us and stir us to an all-consuming passion to press toward the mark for the prize as well or do we yawn and rather drop off to sleep in these kinds of discussions?

Well let’s move on to our subject at hand: The Spirit of Apathy.

As I said I realise that was just the opposite of what we were discussing but it does relate and I would like to use Samson this morning as an example of one who was afflicted with the spirit of apathy.

Now we could take Samson and use those of his exploits against the Philistines for the Lord as an example of consuming passion as well, and I want to be fair to Samson, but you know the fact the reason that Samson ended up in the Philistines’ prison house grinding for them was not because of his all consuming passion for the Lord and Israel it was rather because of his what I’ll call the spirit of apathy as it relates to these all important issues.

Well in the first place I would ask the question and attempt to answer it in a number of points: What is a spirit of apathy?

In this portion of our discussion we also want to consider some of the effects and expressions of this spirit to define it.

Well in the first place what is the spirit of apathy?

Maybe I ought to introduce you to Samson first, Judges Chapter 13, you remember Manoah and his wife were given a message that they were going to have a son and he was to be a Nazarite from the womb and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines.

**Judges 13:24-25**

<sup>24</sup> And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. <sup>25</sup> And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

There is an introduction to Samson, he grew up, the Lord blessed him, and the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times.

My first answer to what is this spirit of apathy? is that it is indifference about things that really matter.

Notice chapter 14 and verse three, when Samson saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of Philistines. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father; Get her for me; for she pleases me well. **Judges 14:2-3**

I think there we see shining through a spirit of indifference about something that really mattered.

Here was a contemplation of marriage with an enemy of God's people and it became very apparent as we read on there that this was indeed an enemy of Samson and God's people.

The Lord had clearly outlined there were not to be mixed marriages with the nations around them but to Samson that did not really matter a lot what the Lord said about that.

Now I realise that it says this was of the Lord (**Judges 14:4**) and we know that the Lord does move in mysterious ways to accomplish His purposes at times but we also are clearly aware that God's will was for His people not to marry heathens, not to find marriage partners among the heathens around them, but Samson did not consider that to be an issue of real import he was indifferent about something that really mattered.

The Lord knew that individuals who married heathen partners where at extremely high risk of losing their relationship with Him, the God of Israel, in exchange for the gods of their partner and the Lord knew that if His people would get involved in free and frequent interchange and in marriages with the heathen they would inevitably cease to be His own peculiar people.

And so to the Lord who is the instigator of the true value system this really mattered.

The Lord has always been and still is very jealous for our success in the spiritual matters of life and brethren and sisters when He gave to us the Scriptures He did not give one command too many or leave out one that really mattered.

And to be unconcerned about following His direction in the Scriptures really matters.

Are you unconcerned about your private devotions?

Do you say: Oh I'm so tired I think I'll just leave it till tomorrow?

The Lord said it is thereby you grow spiritually in partaking of the milk and meat of the Word. That really matters.

Are you unconcerned about something that really matters? Are you unconcerned young people about your deception to your parents or maybe it is just that you resist their direction. The Lord said honour, obey your parents. That is at least until you 18 years old, right? No.

That's not what the Scripture says. He knew what is well for us and what isn't and this morning that matters, that really matters.

Are you apathetic about respecting, praying for and obeying those are over you in the Lord?

After all that is just brother so-and-so is idea.

But really He has set the members everyone in the body as it has pleased Him and He expects order and harmony in the body and that really matters.

Does it matter if you dangerously and recklessly endanger your life physically?

You know we generally get very concerned if we discover that we have eaten something poisonous or been injured and lost a lot of blood or suddenly come face-to-face with a coiled rattlesnake, we get very concerned, suddenly all forms and shades of apathy leaves us because of these other life-threatening issues.

Well beloved this morning be not deceived these few areas that I just referred to in the spiritual realm are no less life-threatening issues and they

are not just for time and for this corruptible body to be concerned about they are for all eternity and for a never dying soul.

So what is the spirit of apathy?

It is being unconcerned about things that really matter for your life.

Well in the second place: What is the spirit of apathy?

It is an outlook that puts more emphasis on the comforts and pleasures of now then the effects of then.

And I notice that here in chapter 14 again, Samson said in verse three: Get her for me for she pleases me well.

And he even went and had shall we say an evaluation session with her he went down and talked with the woman and she pleased Samson well,

**Judges 14:7**

I think it is the mentality that we hear: Let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. I'm young only once, I'm going to enjoy it while I'm young.

One young woman made the comment when she was challenged and encouraged by those who were concerned about things that really mattered in a courtship they were challenging her to clearly and carefully evaluate her perspective partner she made this comment: "I am going to marry him regardless of what anyone says!"

And today she is experiencing the aftermath of separation.

The seeds of apathy contain the fruit of remorse and regret and even frequently spiritual death.

Hezekiah uttered those infamous as well as revealing words: Good is the word of the Lord for there shall be peace and truth in my days. **2 Kings 20:19.**

Somehow it seemed as though he was simply content if the now was pleasant and comfortable but was little concerned about the after effects.

And brethren and sisters that is the spirit of apathy at work.

Apathetic diligence.

Those are two contrasting terms but as I use them I trust you will understand them, apathetic diligence in private devotions contains the fruit of failure in the face of temptation.

Indifference about family worship contains the fruit of apathy toward Congregational involvement, unconcern about adopting current fads such as low maintenance haircuts and scruffy unkempt appearance that is expressed by beltless trousers and shirttails hanging out and shoelaces dangling.

I believe unconcern I would say about adopting current fads contain the seeds of wholesale rejection of the separated way of life.

Indifference towards support of a scriptural brotherhood's direction on practical issues of life whether it is an equal yoke involvements or nonresistance issues such as lawsuits and accepting government aid and separation issues, church administrative issues, indifference towards support of a scriptural brotherhood direction on practical issues of life contains the fruit of individualistic isolation I'll call it that where everyone is independent without the surrounding support group of a concerned and loving brotherhood and we have seen it happen repeatedly.

Lack of diligence in getting off your easy chair after a hard day at work to help train up the child in the way he should go contains the fruit of sleepless nights and hot tears and frustrated efforts.

Brethren and sisters to indulge in apathetic ease in spiritual matters, O everything will turn out all right somehow, has an excruciatingly high pricetag in this life and many times in the eternal hereafter if unrepented of.

And so again I would say what is the spirit of apathy?

It is more concerned with the pleasures and comforts of now than the effects then.

In the third-place what is the spirit of apathy?

It is characterised by serious miscalculations in judgement.

And it mentioned that Samson had a bit of an evaluation session with this Philistine woman a woman of Timnath of the daughters of Philistines.

In verse seven of chapter 14 again he went down and talked with the woman, he had that evaluation session but his judgement was grossly miscalculated she pleased them well. And if you go over to chapter 16 it says it

came to pass afterward that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. **Judges 16:4**

His apathetic attitude toward life gave him poor judgement in some very important areas and I had to think again also of the church at Laodicea and their apathetic indifferent and lukewarm attitude that brought them to this conclusion he says in **Revelation 3:17**: “Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing! that was the conclusion of their evaluation but the Lord’s evaluation which is a true one has this to say: And knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.”

There was nothing that they needed they thought they had everything that they needed. How could anyone arrive at such a gross misjudgement?

Well it can happen when we are indifferent about things that really matter. Sometimes parents fail to discipline their children properly because they fear they will antagonise them when in reality that approach assures an antagonistic relationship.

I shared this before but I’ll share it again, my neighbour told me one day he was building a go-kart racetrack for his boys so that he could get the racing fever out of them before they go out to drive on the road.

How could you arrive at such gross miscalculation?

He was seriously miscalculating.

At times parents’ side with their children against church authority or maybe it is school issues.

I really cannot understand what is behind that I find it very difficult to sort that out in my mind but you know that so often that only helps to build disrespect for parental authority it does just precisely the opposite of what I suppose parents are trying to do with that.

Somehow at times we play with the thought that if we would just loosen the standards a bit on play activity, dress standards and vehicle guidelines it would be easier to have a satisfying church life.

But I would ask this question in answer to that thought and I know probably all of us think that but when has pampering the flesh ever enhanced one’s ability to crucify it and thereby free us from carnal handicaps and difficulties?

Well then indifference toward spiritual things and an apathetic spirit leads one down the road of serious missteps and miscalculations with many a corresponding bill to pay.

In the fourth place what is the spirit of apathy?  
It expresses itself in erratic behaviour.

And I would just take us to chapter 14 of Judges and verse seven tells us that this woman pleased Samson well and we get over to verse 19 in the last part of the verse it says his anger was kindled and he went up to his father's house.

In verse 18 the last part this was now his attitude toward this woman that pleased him so well he said unto them, if ye had not ploughed with my heifer, you had not found out my riddle and his anger was kindled and he went up to his father's house.

In chapter 15 in verse three and Samson said concerning them, this was after he went back to see his wife following their wedding reception the father had given her away remember and he was pretty upset about it,

And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure. <sup>4</sup>And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails. <sup>5</sup>And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards *and* olives. <sup>6</sup>Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire. **Judges 15:3-6**

You would almost think that Samson would now be content but no, he says **Judges 15:7-8** And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease. <sup>8</sup>And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

He was we could say expressing apathy.

*The conclusion of the message will be published in the September issue.*

## THE BOOK OF BOOKS

*By A. Roth for the Gospel Herald.*

Books, like companions, are of three different kinds: good, bad, and indifferent.

In speaking of books the Bible is the foremost. There is none other like it. It is a book in a group all to itself, containing the revealed will of God from heaven, the man who rejects the idea that the Bible is the revealed Word and will of God puts himself on the same level with a heathen.

The precious Word of God is the one book that should have the foremost place in our home, in the Church and wherever literature is under consideration. It should be read more than any other book, obeyed more readily and should mould the character of our lives.

The Bible is a real Book, a treatise expressed in literary form, a message conveyed by means of written language in sentences grammatically constructed. Its doctrines are clearly stated. Every important event mentioned in it is so well set forth that the enemies of the Christian religion have vainly sought for ages to bring any damaging evidence of real merit against the Bible.

The Word of God should be both read and studied. As a reading book it should be our daily companion. We should open it frequently, read its simple message believingly, rejoicing that God has placed the blessed story within our reach.

We should have not only religious books but books with the right kind of religion in them. A book that does not teach the true meaning of the Bible should be discarded from our library. The most harmful book is the religious book that teaches unsound doctrine. You had better read the sermons of the Christian ministers than to read the book called "Sermons by the devil." You had better read about actual mission work in Chicago and other cities than to read the visionary work told about in, "What would Jesus Do?" [In His Steps]

In this last day and age of the world much fiction is read. We cannot condemn everything that bears the stamp of fiction as absolutely sinful. But much evil has come from reading this kind of literature. The reading of a high grade novel prepares one for the reading of some that are anything but high grade. The atmosphere of a novel is unreal, makes the mind dreamy and unfits it for solid reading and destroys the capacity for simple

faith. It tries to make impurity decent, crime attractive and hypocrisy noble. May we never say, "This does not matter, I see no wrong in it. I don't believe we need to be so particular." Many have been induced to do great crimes and many have been led astray by this impure literature.

I think it is all right to keep supplied with literature that throws light on any business in which we may be engaged. Books for the culture of the mind or for general information are right in their place. The fact that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians was a positive advantage to him, having laid all upon the altar of the Lord. So with us, an intelligent citizen is also an intelligent church worker providing he realizes that the Bible clearly teaches that there are only two places where we can spend eternity. At one place there is joy, at the other weeping and gnashing of teeth. It also teaches that if we do not yield willing obedience to all the divine commands of God, our fellowship with Him will be broken. It does not teach us to shirk difficulties but to overcome them.

How thankful we should be for our Bibles! How anxious we should be to study its sacred pages! How earnestly we should strive to faithfully obey its precepts! for like anything else the Bible may be understood better the more it is studied.

*From The Gospel Herald March 13, 1909 p.794.*



Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

### *GATES AND DOORS*

I would like to share a few of my thoughts and meditations on doors and gates. Beside literal doors and gates, there are also figurative gates and doors. The Bible does not always use the word doors or gates, but we see, by interpretation, that is what is meant as a way of entrance into something. In the introduction to the word door as found in Cruden's Concordance, the following definition is given: "often used metaphorically in the Bible as 'the entrance to anything,' as our Saviour says, 'I am the door,' the entrance into the kingdom."

The Bible has numerous instances where metaphorical doors or gates are presented the choice whether we will enter or not is suggested. Looking at the Scriptures, we frequently find verses that refer to doors and gates.

Following are just a few for illustrations.

**John 10:1** "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber"

**Matthew 7:13-14** "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"

**1 Corinthians 16:9** "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me"

**Revelation 3:20** "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"

**Revelation 21:12** "And [the city] had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates"

I will not be able to do this subject justice, but I will touch on a few examples and then try to give practical illustrations.

We have the account of Adam and Eve's experiences at the very beginning of time as recorded in Genesis. They were given the choice of obeying God. The choice was either eating the forbidden fruit or taking God entirely at His word. In not using the "door" of obedience, they lost the right to remain in the Garden. Their choosing was very flawed! They were cast out with no opportunity to return. They were kept out by a flaming sword at the gate. Not only that, they also lost the joy that they could have retained had they refused to listen to the tempter.

Then we have the experience of Cain. He was given a choice. "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" **Genesis 4:7**. He did not choose wisely. What misery he brought on himself because he did not enter the door of reconciliation with his brother.

Before the flood, the people had a choice to enter the "door" of righteousness. They were warned what would happen if they did not change. Re-

penitance was the door for them. They did not enter the proffered gate. They were given another 120 years to look for the door of repentance. How good and kind the Lord was, but they spurned His goodness and lost their lives through the flood (Genesis 6)

In Genesis 11, we find the story of Abraham. After getting to know the Lord, he wanted to obey Him, and so he entered the right gate. He left his father's house and land in obedience, because he believed God's promise. Due to his entering the door of obedience, the Lord gave him a special blessing. God promised that He would make of him a great nation. It was his choice to go through the "gate" of obedience. And so he became an ancestor of Jesus (according to the flesh), the Son of God who would give His life for Abraham and his posterity. Abraham's choice had far-reaching rewards and includes us.

Isaac and Jacob, son and grandson of Abraham, chose to follow Abraham's God. They went through the proper door and, in turn, passed the opportunity to choose wisely to their children.

Abel, Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, Rahab, Joseph, and Noah are but a few more examples of wise choosing. They entered through gates or doors of wisdom. They were not only blessed but became examples for all, including us. There are many other examples we can read about. These examples include our forefathers, who left the old country because they had convictions that the land they were moving to would be better. We have a tremendous heritage because they went through the gate of obedience, and so we together with them have many natural and spiritual blessings.

A few further thoughts: The door to salvation is not earned and was not opened to us by parents or any organized creed. It is also true that we cannot open the "gate" for our children to enter salvation. But it is easier for them to make the choice of going in at the strait gate to the narrow way if they are shown the gate and the way.

One of the most important doors for us is the door into the kingdom of God. After we go through that door, we come to the door into the church. Here the important question is whether we will buy the complete plan and go through the door into the church by receiving water baptism. We know that this is the only way for us to complete our commitment.

We all have goals we would like to attain. For many it seems their goal is to have eternal life on their own terms. Others, again, are willing to pay the price of self-denial and so enter the "gate" to heaven. We must stay "entered" in, or we will lose direction and fail, at the final end, to enter into eternal rest. What precious rewards are given us personally for entering the right doors! We will enjoy present and eternal benefits.

We have the story of the shepherd and the sheepfold in John 10. Jesus is the door into the fold, that is, into the kingdom of God. We know there is no other way. Sometimes people walk around the wall of that sheepfold looking for another opening. But there is no other. To enter into the door of the sheepfold requires self-denial. There are many people who do not want to be self-denied; therefore they cannot find the door. They are looking in the wrong place. They want to be on the inside, but they are not willing to pay the price exacted at the gate. They try to climb over the wall by good works or by merit of a family background or some doctrine that makes it seem easier. But they cannot find rest and peace.

There are doors for Christians to open. We can open the door of fellowship with others and the Lord. We can choose the door of self-denial. We can choose the gate of obedience. We can choose to open the gate of happiness. We can choose to take our hopes and disappointments to the Lord through the gate of prayer. We can choose to make a joyful noise to the Lord. This list could go on and on. In every situation, we can choose doors that will spell joy or disappointment.

Some choices are hard to make, but they will, if we choose rightly, open for our good. Sometimes when we must make choices, we may walk around walls that have doors or gates, but we cannot see them at the moment. We may "knock our heads" against the wall, but that will not open the door. We must find the door even though it may mean asking, seeking, and knocking.

Sometimes we want to have open doors, but we cannot tell whether or not they are open. We need to know, because we want the Lord's way, but we are not sure whether we understand the way. The decisions we make are often not easy, but we do want the right door to open. God will lead us through the door of understanding directly and give us the assurance we

need. At other times, we will need to step out in faith, believing that God knows and will direct our steps.

We can be assured that the prayer for an open door or gate will be heard. God has promised it!

So there are the two sides. We can choose to be on the inside or the outside. Let's choose well. If we choose the right side, we will have blessings in life and the hope of everlasting joy in the future. Beside this, we will be a blessing to others.

*Brother Thomas*



### "SIGHT, RICHES, HEALING OF THE MIND"

Some time ago in the article, "A Concern for Our Time," I wrote that I felt to follow up with an article on the healing process of a troubled person. The title of this article, a line taken from the song "Just as I Am" (Christian Hymnal, no. 303) speaks what is on my heart concerning the healing that the Lord has given me. How healing will come to you I cannot say. But I have a simple trusting faith that God is good. What He extended to me in His mercy, He is also willing to extend to others who may be in a similar struggle.

I'd like to take you back to my later teen years, which is somewhat more than twenty-five years ago. I remember an extremely dark time in which my thoughts and emotions were so disarranged that I felt life could not continue this way. It had been expressed to me that those who entertained thought patterns like I had often had emotional problems later in life.

One day while working at a dairy farm, I just felt that I would try praying sincerely, together with fasting, asking God to help me. As I recall that day, it was in the latter part of the day that my burden was sure: we, like Elisha, must learn to go on without our "Elijah." There is work to be done and grace to accomplish it.

The Old Testament record is rich with godly good-byes, but the New Testament, likewise, bears witness to this common ingredient within God's plan. The apostle Paul was well acquainted with painful good-byes. We see how difficult "good-bye" must have been for him when we read anyone of his letters. He repeatedly and earnestly expresses his longing to revisit his brethren and enjoy their fellowship in person. We see how these feelings were shared towards him as we read Luke's account of a heartfelt godly good-bye: "And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again" Acts 21:5-6

Here, as Paul and his companions are leaving Tyre pushing on towards Jerusalem, we find a model of godly good-byes. Time that can be shared together becomes accomplished, a decision and a way is marked out, everyone with a heart to feel shares in the parting, it is bathed in prayer, the ship sails, leaving some to return home again. What made the good-byes bearable for Paul was that he never lost sight of God. This is best evidenced in the last chapter of his last letter to his beloved Timothy (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Paul had fought the fight, finished the course, kept the faith, and there was nothing left for him to do. And so, he looks to God and rejoices in what God will accomplish "at that day."

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, we are reminded that our Lord Jesus Christ began His work with a good-bye (Philippians 2:6-7). It is beyond our understanding how Jesus would choose to say goodbye to the Father and come to walk and live upon this earth with such a stiff-necked people. Out of a well of love deeper than we can imagine, a Light left heaven and shined upon the earth. In John 16:28, our Lord tells us, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."

We are not told much of the grief our Lord suffered simply from being apart from the Father. But we have a vivid record of His heartache as He prepared to return. John 13 begins by telling its readers that "Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Fa-

ther." This, and the next four chapters, expresses the depths of His love and concern for His own, who would remain in this world.

In John 14:18, Jesus promises us that He will not leave us comfortless. This is a promise we should claim. Jesus is well acquainted with suffering, even the suffering of saying good-bye. And He does not want one of us to be left comfortless. In John 16:7, He even tries to explain to His sorrow-filled disciples that it is expedient for Him to go away. We can imagine the hurtful confusion. But Jesus tenderly and patiently assured them (and He assures us) that out of a painful good-bye would come the joy of an in-dwelling Comforter.

Oh, faithful brother, do you believe it? Our feelings often betray us, but our Lord is faithful. Oh, sister serving the Lord day by day, can you join that cloud of witnesses who have persevered the sorrows of good-bye. When we so incessantly want understanding and answers, can we accept Jesus' words, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12)? Can we trust Him and allow His Comforter to put joy in our hearts? Can we replace the melancholy of good-bye with the hopeful words of our Lord, "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

May we faithfully keep our eyes on the One who knows us best, believing that every good-bye can be a godly good-bye.

*Brother Darren*



## A STUDY OF THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

In all Biblical truths, God reveals enough of Himself to bring to life a living faith in Him. As His consistency is revealed and believed, that which God chooses to leave obscure is willingly and confidently left with Him. The Martyrs' Mirror and the writings of Menno Simons contain ample conviction on the doctrine of Christ's incarnation, but space does not permit recourse in this article. However, the same scriptures they cite will carry us on this matter also.

**Genesis 3:19**—One consequence of sin, by God's decree: the body returns to dust, from whence it was taken. The fact that Christ's body did not even begin to decay is proof that His body was not of this earth.

**Genesis 3:15**—The first promise that Someone would come to redeem the human race.

**Job 14:4**—"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." There was no possibility for humanity to contribute to their salvation.

**John 1:14**—The Word was made flesh. This was a divine intervention in the human family.

**Luke 1:35**—This Being was holy, called the Son of God.

**Luke 2:49**—"I must be about my Father's business." Here Jesus, as a boy, disclaimed His earthly "father" and recognized His Heavenly Father.

**Luke 2:51**—His mother Mary pondered the complex matters of His beginning and character.

**1 Corinthians 15:47**—"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven."

**Hebrews 7:3**—"Without father, without mother." Christ was a being without beginning and end.

**Hebrews 7:16**—"Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment for natural conception and natural succession], but after the power of an endless life."

**Hebrews 10:5**—"But a body hast thou prepared me.

**Romans 8:3**—"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

**Philippians 2:7**—"And took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Take note that this verse and the previous one point to the resemblance only.

**Colossians 2:9**—"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

**John 2:25**—"And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." Christ's complete deity was already familiar with man's need.

**Acts 2:31**—"Neither his flesh did see corruption." His body did not begin to go back to dust between the crucifixion and the resurrection, as ours would have.

**Acts 8:33**—"In his humiliation [incarnation] his judgment was taken away" from Him. His wish was to, in time, reveal His glory with the Father to His

children, which now He had laid aside (John 18:24).

**2 Corinthians 13:4**—"For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God." Through His humiliation, they seized hold on Him, but through His death and resurrection, His judgment was restored to Him.

**Hebrews 2:10**—"For it became him ... to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Suffering did not perfect Christ, but suffering made perfect the atoning work of Christ.

**Hebrews 5:8**—"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." The word learned in Greek also means "had knowledge of." For example, "He had knowledge of obedience," or, "His willingness to suffer spoke in behalf of His unquestionable obedience to God."

Following are more scriptures that merit meditation:

**Hebrews 2:16**—"For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham" (the italics are KJV text). Removing the italics, which indicate missing or unclear text in the original manuscript, leaves this verse with less difficulty.

**Hebrews 4:15**—He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Our language uses the same word for the tempter as well as the tempted. To be tempted does not necessarily mean that a temptation results from it. Christ being "tempted" could mean that He allowed Himself to be approached to do wrong, to which approach He subjected Himself. It does not mean that He was having a desire for wrong aroused within Him. Would not such a thought accuse His deity?

"Say he of him, whom the Father hath sanctified. . . "(past tense, John 10:36). During the years of temptation, either directly by the devil or through others, Jesus forgave sin. God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). The forgiveness God bestowed rested upon the complete qualifications of Christ, who had been slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Christ acquired no further qualifications through sanctification during His bodily presence upon the earth. It was His willingness to endure suffering and death that culminated in perfecting the eternal sacrifice (Hebrews 2:10).

**John 8:41**—"Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be

not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." This is a possible derisive reference to Christ's questionable birth (supposed by men). When Joseph discovered the condition of Mary, his espoused wife, he, being just, wished to place her aside quietly (Matthew 1:18-20). An angel prevented him from doing so. His obedience to God's dictate exposed him to ridicule, along with the Child.

The blind man in John 9:34 was rebuked by the Jews, "Thou wast altogether born in sins." Using this premise, the Pharisees also sought to disqualify the authority and position from which Christ sought to teach them. But so clearly was the work of the Holy Ghost established as having its beginning in heaven that this was the way chosen. God also stepped into our shame and had His beginning amongst us in our disgrace and redeemed us, bearing our shame. So marvellous was His plan, and yet He remained "separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Hebrews 7:25).

Are we consistent with our conviction on the deity of Christ when we allude to His struggle in the Garden as His humanity recoiling from fulfilling the promise made from the beginning, upon which the patriarchs rested and accepted the grave? On numerous occasions, He stated His full purpose and intent in coming from the bosom of His Father (Matthew 16:23-28; Mark 9:12; Luke 9:22; John 17:4, and others). Is our depraved mortality able to get more than just a glimpse of His love for sinners when, in becoming the sin offering who knew no sin, He exposed Himself to feeling the rejection of His Father with whom He had been one and was loved before the foundation of the world (2 Corinthians 5:21; John 17:24)?

The spilt divine blood is the atonement required by God for sin. Man has nothing but inherent inability to be anything but sin. The cross shows us our justly due part of judgment, which, when we truly see it, the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world (Galatians 6:14; Colossians 3:5). God Himself, bearing the defilement of His wilful creatures, accomplished a work of such magnitude that He thereby made available to man, by faith, His own righteousness.

Do we not need carefulness in bringing the human dimension into Christ?

Does the thought of Christ's humanness attract us because of the empathy He would have for our weaknesses, thereby seducing us away from needed sanctification? If we do not scripturally discern the incarnation of Christ, we place a handicap on our relationship with an all-knowing God.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches the incarnation as Christ's deity compromised through Mary. It teaches that the seed of Mary was miraculously cleansed from sin, thus claiming that Christ was born of an "immaculate conception." Hence the Catholic statement, "Hail Mary, mother of God." The Reformation, which protested many things about the Catholic Church, had no other light on the incarnation. The churches that sprang from the Reformation still teach the Catholic doctrine, with some modification. This is the literature people are exposed to in our time.

Our Anabaptist faith is the only one that has been consistent through the ages. It teaches the salvation plan as wholly and completely wrought from within the Godhead, conceived by the Holy Ghost, atonement by the Son, and the acceptance of that sacrifice by the Father (Matthew 1:20; Mark 10:45; Romans 12:1). The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost each took a role, and from the Godhead comes the salvation plan for the human family. Has our vision and convictions been affected by seeds sown by the Reformation churches? I trust this is a proper concern for this doctrine.

*Brother Paul*



Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

*GLORY IN THE WORD*

A glory in the Word we find  
When grace restores our sight;  
But sin has darkened all the mind:  
And veiled the heavenly light.

When God's own spirit clears a few,  
How bright the doctrines shine!  
Their holy fruits and sweetness show  
Their Author is divine.

How blessed are we, with open face  
To view Thy Glory, Lord  
And all Thy image here to trace,  
Reflected in the Thy Word  
*Campbell's Collection*

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