

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.**THE GLORY OF CHRIST**

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." — John 1:14.

THE GLORY of Christ is apparent, as we study the titles which are given to Him in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel.

The Word (John 1:1). As the words we speak reveal our character, so Jesus is the speech of the invisible God. He has uttered or declared God (John 14:9). The Psalmist said that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork to the ends of the earth, but in the fairest panorama of the starry heavens, or sunset clouds, there was never such a presentation of God in nature as we have in Jesus.

The Creator (John 1:2-3). In the strongest language he could command, the apostle inscribes the Name of Jesus on all things that are in heaven above and in the earth beneath. The iron of which the nails were made that transfixed Him to the Cross; the wood of which it was composed, the thorns which composed His crown, all were due to His creative fiat.

Life and Light (John 1:4). It pleased the Father that life should reside in His human nature, as its cistern and reservoir, so that from Him we should derive eternal life, communicated through faith. In His life is light.

The Messiah (John 1:10-11). "He came unto His own."

The Shekinah (John 1:14). Now and again, during our Lord's earthly career, the curtain of His human nature seemed to part and to emit some gleams of the radiant splendour of His Being. It was so on the Transfiguration mount, and again in His Resurrection and Ascension. The glory was full of grace and truth.

The Only-Begotten Son (John 1:12-14). We may be sons, thank God, but He was The Son. Whatever is implied in that phrase "Only-Begotten," He is separated from the noblest of the children of men by a measureless and impassable chasm. Yet how wonderful it is, that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Let us give glory and homage to Him!

MINISTER'S CORNER.*THE FADING CHRIST**By Brother Glen.*

The "Christian" world is now at its most exciting yearly time—commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. But are people seeing Christ in the sharp focus in which the Bible presents Him—"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)?

Suppose a painter would paint a new portrait of the same individual every year, beginning after that person's death. Imagine that there were no pictures that he could consult, forcing him to rely only on his memory. How accurate would the thirtieth or fortieth portrait be? Probably, each year's new picture would bear less and less resemblance to the real person. If at the last he were permitted to draw from the memory of others, he would surely seek out those who had known the individual the most intimately.

In a similar way, the picture the world paints of Jesus bears only a fading resemblance to the Christ of the Scriptures. Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world, fades farther and farther into oblivion with the passing of time. Yes, the world knows about the historical Jesus, but they scarcely recognize the true Christ.

The humble children of faith, on the other hand, know Him intimately through the Word and Spirit. They have a far more accurate and true vision of the Lord and Saviour. True believers know Him as the One who shed His precious blood to redeem them from sin (1 Peter 1:19). They "know that, when he shall appear, they shall be like him; for they shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). They know this because they are now walking with Him.

A perplexing element of religious strife is stamped on current world issues. Because of this, the news media is giving more and more attention to religious belief and faith. In this the revered figures of the past, such as, Abraham, Jesus, Peter and Paul, come under re-examination. That they were actual historical figures, still greatly influencing the world scene today, is quite readily acknowledged. But can the pen of secularly minded men and women describe Truth, as relates to the world's crisis and need? No, Truth is a matter grasped only by living faith. Faith provides true wis-

dom and understanding, which is seeming foolishness to the world (1 Corinthians 1:20; 2:6; 3:19).

Much of the news media's attention to Christianity and its beginnings contains a subtle erosive element affecting simple, trusting faith. Repeatedly, that which our faith, based on the Scripture, believes to be fact and truth is presented as a likely myth or not substantiated by historical evidence. The Holy Bible is treated as a mere ancient book rather than the Word of God. How all this new scrutiny and interpretation of Christianity figures into that last great battle between truth and error is a question. If the net effect is that the true Christ from heaven fades from view, men are getting, at the best, a distorted look at Jesus.

It is a question what the long-range consequences of this type of material will be, especially on hungry-for-reading adolescent and teen-age children. One ponders whether there is a behind-the-scene power at work here. It does appear that the bottom line is that true faith in the only Almighty God and in His Son, Jesus Christ, is questioned, not strengthened.

Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). Faith makes this real and precious to true believers, but the spirit of worldly wisdom ignores, and even disdains, it. The Christ in the world's portrait does not offer Himself as a sacrifice to redeem sinners. Neither is He alive forevermore (Revelation 1:18), in their picture, seated at the Father's right hand (1 Peter 3:22). Some "experts" even paint Jesus as a mere political figure, caught between Rome and Jerusalem as He tried to affect a reformation. What a distorted picture!

So we have a paradox here. While a historical Christ is being pictured more and more to the world due to political developments, we have a fading Jesus. The testimony of the sacred Scripture, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21), is blotched in the world's picture. Tragically, because of diminishing faith, the true Christ is receding into the obscuring haze of secular interpretation.

Who will paint the true picture? Surely, those who actually know Him are the best qualified. Indeed, because Christ lives within humble, contrite believers (2 Cor. 4:10-11), they actually are the living portrait of the Saviour of the world. And because the eternal, unchanging Jesus (Hebrews

13:8) is the life within them, that image will be the same from generation to generation (Colossians 3:4). How the world needs the true picture!

A visit several years ago to the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. was an eye-opener for the writer. Of course, the terrible crimes committed against the Jews during World War II numb the mind. But the explanation the Jews give as to the cause of the Holocaust also gripped my attention. Surprisingly, they begin with Jesus: He was born to Jewish parents, in time He gathered a following, and eventually created such unrest that the Romans crucified Him. Later, it is claimed, the early Christians heatedly blamed the Jews for Jesus' death. That accusation and accompanying hatred toward the Jews, it is said, has permeated Christianity all through history, culminating in Christians slaughtering the Jews in Europe.

Is that the true picture of Christ and His church? We cry, No, those dear people have misunderstood! But look at it from another perspective. "Christians" without the peaceful, loving Christ living within have painted a grossly flawed portrait of Him. "Christians" often waged war and persecuted others. Terrible deeds of inhumanity have been committed in the name of Christ. And so, sadly, looking at the picture of Christ that false Christianity is painting over time, the true Jesus is fading and fading.

Who will paint the true picture of Jesus? A fading and distorted portrait of Christ is misleading Jews, Moslems, "Christians," and the entire world, setting a fearful stage. Let God's children take up Heaven's chorus and sing:

"Unto you is born a Saviour,"
 Angels sang from on high;
 God so loved He has given
 His own Son to bleed and die.

Lift Him up, higher, higher!
 Let the world see the love in His eyes;
 He's the only hope of promise,
 And it's time a dying world has realized.
 ("*Lift Him Up*" Rosa Henry)



ENDURANCE

One of the definitions of endure is: to last; to abide; to suffer or sustain without yielding. For the child of God, this is a very pertinent attribute in the day in which we are living. The Scriptures are very clear on this subject, and the Lord's own words in [Matthew 24:13](#) are, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." The apostle Paul wrote in different epistles of the need to "hold fast" to sound doctrine, to our profession, and to not grow weary in the Christian walk.

The five foolish virgins are an example of people who did not endure to the end. Surely it would not do an injustice to this parable to say that they had a good experience of salvation and for a time enjoyed the joys Christian life has for believers. Many sermons have been preached on this parable, and it is not the concern of this article to expound on this. However, let's note that their lamps had gone out for a lack of oil. One of the lessons our Lord surely wants to teach with this parable is that the basic element of the Christian life is that the Holy Spirit needs to be present to provide oil in the believers' lives, otherwise their lamps will go out.

The present day and age is conducive, in many countries, to a life of ease. The true worshipper of God needs to keep the vision that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost ([Romans 14:17](#)). We have many examples in the Bible of faithful servants of God who endured many things to obtain an eternal crown. Then we also read how our faithful martyr brethren endured, for they looked for a city not made with hands.

May it be our lot, then, to do as the Word says in [Hebrews 12:2](#), "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Brother Frank.

**ETERNITY—ARE WE READY?**

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" ([1 Corinthians 2:9](#)).

The above scripture has often been a real inspiration to me. Oh, that somehow our spiritual eyes could be opened and we could, as it were, en-

vision standing on the threshold of eternity and taking that long look into the great beyond. It seems that far too many times the reality of time and meeting God wants to elude us.

Time is over; eternity has dawned. For a brief moment, we gaze into that celestial city. We see our loving Saviour with His arms outstretched saying, "Welcome home, my child; well done." Then we are home and rest from our labors. We are free from sin, no more sadness, no more crying, no more sad good-byes; there is perfect bliss forevermore. We "see the river gently flowing, feel the gentle breezes blowing." And there I see, just over the river, my loved ones beckoning me. They seem so happy and so free.

And now we gaze over on the other side, on the terrible scene of hell. No human can comprehend or describe the torment there. In [Revelation 20:15](#) we read, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Think now of the song in our Christian Hymnal, "Oh, eternity! Long eternity! Hear the solemn footsteps of eternity."

Those who go there will be forever lost. They will never have a second chance to turn to our loving Saviour. They will never hear those pleading words, "Come home, ... come home, ... Ye who are weary, come home! Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling, Calling, O sinner, come home!" They will never hear a loving word spoken.

Then we look into heaven again and see all the glory and bliss there. There we see our loving Saviour, whose tender pleading we felt. We see our loved ones so happy and so free, singing praises to God. Then to think that here I am forever burning in anguish, falling further and further away from God. Lost forever, oh, how sad!

Would to God that we would not in any way neglect that great salvation. This applies first in our own lives, then in the lives of those around us, those of our families and the many others who are not saved. Let us be up and doing. Let us pray for each other and not faint by the way, praying earnestly that the church wilt earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints ([Jude 3](#)).

Written with loving concern.

Brother Calvin



FEAR NOT

"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" ([Isaiah 43:1-3](#)). What a blessed promise from our God who knows all things!

As we read these verses for devotions one morning soon after the tragic happenings in America, I thought of all the fears and anxiety in the world around us. I was impressed with the blessed thought that we can trust in God who cares and understands.

The fear of God, which causes reverence towards Him, is a necessary ingredient in our Christian lives. But when we look at the waves around us, as Peter did, fear grips us, and we begin to sink even though the Lord is close by. Then He commands us, Fear not! These words are found many times in the Holy Word and are often followed with some promise of blessing if we obey.

The above verses were spoken to God's children in a time of trouble. When the Saviour of the world was born in Bethlehem so many years later, it was also a dark time for God's children. He told both Mary and Joseph, "Fear not, this is my work." The angel told the shepherds, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" [Luke 2:10](#). Another verse in [Luke 12:32](#) says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Matthew 10:28 tells us to not fear those who are able to kill the body, but to fear him that is able to cast us into hell. Therefore we need to evaluate what really is causing us to fear. If we are fearful because it looks like Satan is in control, then we need to remember that even though he is powerful and we are no match for him, we can trust in an Almighty God who always will be in control. I believe that God allowed the catastrophe to happen to wake us up to the fact that we have no continuing city here but are headed for eternity one day at a time. In times like these, we need to put on the whole armor of God that we will be able to stand in the evil day.

When a loved one goes astray, a certain fear grips us that asks: What if? These fears are very real, but we must look to God and His promises and

continue to pray in faith that God will have His way.

Sometimes sickness strikes a loved one, and we fear being the next. We begin to notice our aches and pains and seek medical help before we go to the Great Physician and ask Him to check us out. Sometimes we are overcome with the trouble we are in and take medication instead of bringing our burdens to the Lord. Before we know it, we use these things to see us through, and they become a way of life for us.

Really, the Lord would gladly carry our burden for us if we would only bring it to Him. It may be that we even have a fear of what the Lord will ask of us if we make a full surrender. We forget that another one of His promises is that He will always give us grace for whatever He asks us to do.

Ephesians 6 tells us what we need for armor today to keep our fears at bay. First of all, we need to realize whom we are fighting against. It is not brother or sister so and so who offended us, but the ruler of the darkness of this world using our loved one or some situation to cause us to fall. In all situations, we should learn what the truth is and stick to it. If we are not sure what it is, let us wait upon the Lord.

The breastplate of righteousness must be God's righteousness and not our own. Doing what is right from the heart is needful. Be prepared to spread peace and not strife. When we hear of strife, let us see how we can bring people together and not wedge them further apart. The shield of faith will help us to "fear not," but to go forth confident that God will take care of us and see us through. Accepting the gift of salvation to protect our head will keep us humble, and then we will be ready to take the sword, which is the Word of God, and fight the enemy. Praying always is needful. May our prayers not only consist of asking, but more so of thanksgiving. And as we find ourselves in a thankful state of mind, we will find that our fears have subsided, and we can go on our way rejoicing.

Brother Wayne.



The Messiah Comes.

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Genesis 49:10.

Each time we reflect on the birth of Christ, it should create within us a special thankfulness. Like Mary, we should pause to reflect on what the Messiah's coming means for us. "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

The word Messiah appears only twice in the Bible. The Hebrew name Messiah and the Greek name Christ translate literally as "anointed one." Christ, who was foreordained before the foundations of the world, was to be the redeemer of a sinful human race. As we think of His humble birth, the greatest gift ever given, we should be inspired to faithfulness. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Matthew 2:1-12

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, ²Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. ³When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. ⁵And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, ⁶And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. ⁷Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. ⁹When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. ¹¹And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child

with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."

The first prophetic glimpse of the promised Messiah is found in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Two thousand years later, God promised Abraham that through his lineage a redeemer would come to save the world. In numerous passages throughout the Psalms, David wrote about the coming of the anointed one, who would establish a spiritual kingdom. Inspired by the Spirit, Isaiah penned many prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. One of these impressive passages tells us, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). Jeremiah spoke about a "righteous Branch" coming out of David. Ezekiel also wrote, "Thus saith the Lord God; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it" (Ezekiel 17:22). The ninth chapter of Daniel foretells the Messiah's coming, the length of His ministry, and His crucifixion. These are but a few of the many notable prophetic messages found throughout the Bible which "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

More than seven hundred years prior to the birth of Christ, Micah prophesied the birthplace of the Messiah: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

Bethlehem, earlier called Ephratah, means "the house of bread." The city of David was also home to Boaz and Ruth, who are in the lineage of Christ. It was destined to become the place where God would deliver His gift to mankind. Divine providence, through a decree issued by the Roman Emperor which authorized a census and a tax, led Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. The distance from their hometown, Nazareth, to Bethlehem was roughly eighty miles, a journey of eight days on foot. After the birth of the Christ child, this city was the ultimate destination of the wise men.

According to Bible historians, the wise men, also referred to as magi, came from the area of Babylon where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers converge, which is about 800 miles east of Jerusalem. Today, this area would be located within the countries of Iraq and Iran. Possibly, the eastern wise men continued to draw knowledge from the prophecies of Daniel and were influenced by the posterity of the Jewish captives living in Babylon. For many years they had diligently watched the heavens for the "Star out of Jacob" (Numbers 24:17).

Jesus was probably between forty days and one year old when the wise men arrived in Jerusalem. They inquired, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east" (Matthew 2:2). The wise men then followed the star to Bethlehem where they found the Christ child and presented their gifts to Him. Although the Bible does not reveal many details about the wise men, several things can be inferred from the recorded account: their perseverance in finding the child, their faith in God and the leading of the star, their sharing of their gifts unselfishly, and their expression of humility in worship.

The coming of the Messiah fulfilled the types and shadows of the old Law. It ushered in the dispensation of the new birth and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It was a joyous time for those with soft and tender hearts who were patiently waiting for the promised Redeemer. Christ's birth inspired in them thankfulness for God's incomprehensible gift of love. Jesus was a perfect gift. As we ponder this gift, it is difficult to grasp the love God has for the souls of men—a love so great that He sent His only Son as a sacrifice for sin.

We should also ponder the humility of our Saviour and His willingness to become flesh. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8). It must have been a quiet, humble scene in the stable that first night. If we also humble ourselves, we can experience the quiet peace felt on that Bethlehem night.

Another beautiful message contained in the Christmas story is that of the light. The glory of the Lord illuminated the area where the shepherds were tending their sheep. That light and the message they received inspired them to go with haste to find the newborn child and worship Him. The wise men

trusted the light of the star to guide them to the Saviour. The apostle Paul was also transfixed by the light of Christ. In sharing his conversion experience before the tumultuous mob of Jews in Jerusalem, he spoke of losing his vision because of the "glory of that light" (Acts 22:11). His sight was restored as he followed the Spirit's leading. Down through the corridor of time, beginning with the apostles and continuing until today, millions of faithful followers of the light have shed their blood and suffered for the cause of Christ. Today, the light of the Spirit will also guide us if we are willing to follow. Joy and peace flood our hearts as we humbly obey the quiet voice of the Spirit.

This Christmas season, as we read the precious story and sing carols, let us be mindful to impart the beauty of Jesus' birth to our children, grandchildren, and others who listen. It is truly a blessing to gather our families, give simple gifts, sing hymns, and pray together. Additionally, let us not forget to share the glorious gospel story with our friends and neighbors; our witness can be beautiful and inspirational as we sing the Christmas carols that ring out the story anew.

1. Why did the wise men go first to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem?
2. Does the way the world celebrates the birth of Jesus affect the way we observe the season?
3. Did the saying, "The darker the night, the brighter the light," apply at the time of Christ's birth? Does it apply today?
4. Do Jesus and the Father receive sufficient glory in our observance of Christmas?



SNAPSHOTS.

Brief excerpts from historical publications.

NON-RESISTANCE

For the **Anabaptists** both the rejection of participation in government and nonresistance are a refusal to use the sword. Both are based on the distinction between the old and new covenants. The use of the sword was allowed in the old, but was not taken into the new covenant under Christ.

There has been extensive discussion of this aspect of **Anabaptist** conviction over the years. James Stayer, author of *“The Doctrine of the Sword in the First Decade of Anabaptism 1967”* has shown that the conviction about the total rejection of the sword came gradually among the Swiss. That the same thing happened among the South German and Dutch Anabaptists we have known for some time. Nevertheless, the very first witness to the total rejection of the use of the sword comes to us from Conrad Grebel. It was this position which, after some attempts at a middle position, prevailed and is articulated in the Schleitheim Confession.

It is instructive that the setting for the discussion was not about secular wars (such as in the twentieth century which was in the future) but rather the holy war, the war for the defence of Christian faith. **Anabaptists** then would think of the sword as turned against fellow Christians either on the field of battle or in the exercise of church discipline.

Persons who opposed the official decisions of the church, said **Anabaptists**, should not be proceeded against with the sword, but should be dealt with by the restoring process of church discipline, including the ban. Thus non-resistance is not simply a matter of refusing to bear arms in wartime, although that is certainly included. Rather it is a totally new life orientation in which all human relationships are governed by patience, understanding, love, forgiveness, and a desire for the redemption even of the enemy. It is part of the new way of ordering human relationships under the new covenant.

One of the basic problems with the use of the sword, argued **Anabaptists**, was that killing a person destroyed any possibility of improvement or repentance. Robbing anyone of the freedom to decide for Christ was a grievous wrong, and constituted a usurpation of divine prerogative. Basically, **Anabaptists** believed that the use of the sword in human relations was counterproductive. It served only to produce more hostility, more vengeance, more chaos. It was too final in its action, especially when such action was frequently unjust. Once the sword had spoken, the injury could not be rectified.

Conrad Grebel, "Letter to Thomas Müntzer," 1524.

Moreover, the gospel and its adherents are not to be protected by the sword, nor are they thus to protect themselves, which, as we learn from our brother, is thy opinion and practice. True Christian believers are sheep among wolves, sheep for the slaughter; they must be baptized in anguish and affliction, tribulation, persecution, suffering, and death; they must be tried with fire, and must reach the fatherland of eternal rest, not by killing their bodily, but by mortifying their spiritual, enemies. Neither do they use worldly sword or war, since all killing has ceased with them—unless, indeed, we would still be of the old law. And even there [in the Old Testament], so far as we recall, war was a misfortune after they had once conquered the Promised Land.

**Additional comment to the preceding statement from Conrad Grebel.

Hans Hut, who was a disciple of Thomas Müntzer, was not an absolute nonresistant. His position can be described as "Interim-nonresistance." The sword, he argued, had been put away until God would tell them to take it out again. Until then they were to be nonresistant. Hut and his followers expected the world to end soon, and they believed that God would use them to destroy the ungodly. This use of the sword has normally, in Christian history, been called the holy war, that is, war in defence of God or Christian faith. The Münsterites took a position very much like that, except that they considered the end-time to be already upon them.

Felix Mantz, "Admonition," 1526, *Martyrs Mirror*.

Whenever a person brings forth genuine fruits of repentance, the heaven of eternal joy is, through grace, purchased and obtained for him by Christ, through the shedding of his Innocent blood, which he so willingly poured out; thereby showing us his love, and enduing us with the power of his Spirit, and whoever receives and uses it grows and is made perfect in God. Only love to God through Christ shall stand and prevail; not boasting, denouncing, or threatening. It is love alone that is pleasing to God; he that cannot show love shall not stand in the sight of God. The true love of Christ shall scatter the enemy so that he who would be an heir with Christ is taught that he must be merciful, as the Father in heaven is merciful. Christ never accused anyone, as do the false teachers of the present day; from which it is evident that they do not have the love of Christ, nor understand his Word; and still they would be shepherds and teachers; but at last

they will have to despair, when they shall find that everlasting pain shall be their recompense, if they do not reform. Christ never hated anyone; neither did his true servants, but they continued to follow Christ in the true way, as he went before them. This Light of life they have before them, and are glad to walk in it; but those who are hateful and envious, and do thus wickedly betray, accuse, smite and quarrel, cannot be Christians.

Michael Sattler, Schleithem Confession, 1527.

ARTICLE VI. We have been united as follows concerning the sword. The sword is an ordering of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and kills the wicked, and guards and protects the good. In the law the sword is established over the wicked for punishment and for death, and the secular rulers are established to wield the same.

But within the perfection of Christ only the ban is used for the admonition and exclusion of the one who has sinned, without the death of the flesh, simply the warning and the command to sin no more.

1. Now many, who do not understand Christ's will for us, will ask whether a Christian may or should use the sword against the wicked for protection and defense of the good, or for the sake of love. The answer is unanimously revealed: Christ teaches and commands us to learn from Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart and thus we shall find rest for our souls. Now Christ says to the woman who was taken in adultery, not that she should be stoned according to the law of his Father and yet He says, "what the Father commanded me, that I do" ([John 12:50](#)) but with mercy and forgiveness and the warning to sin no more, says: "Go, sin no more." Exactly thus should we also proceed, according to the rule of the ban.

2. Second, is asked concerning the sword:

Whether a Christian shall pass sentence in disputes and strife about worldly matters, such as the unbelievers have with one another. The answer: Christ did not wish to decide or pass judgment between brother and brother concerning inheritance, but refused to do so. So should we also do.

3. Third, is asking concerning the sword:

Whether the Christian should be a magistrate if he is chosen thereto. This is answered thus: Christ was to be made king, but he fled and did not discern the ordinance of his Father. Thus we should also do as he did and follow after him, and we shall not walk in darkness. For he Himself says: "Whoever would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross

and follow me." [Mark 8:34](#). He himself further forbids the violence of the sword when he says: "The princes of this world lord it over them, etc., but among you it shall not be so." [Matthew 20:25-26](#). Further Paul says, "Whom God has foreknown, the same he has also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son," etc. [Romans 8:29](#). Peter also says: "Christ has suffered (not ruled) and has left us an example, that you should follow after in his steps." [1 Peter 2:21](#).

4. Lastly one can see in the following points that it does not befit a Christian to be a magistrate: The rule of the government is according to the flesh, that of the Christians according to the Spirit. Their houses and dwelling remain in this world, that of the Christians is in heaven. Their citizenship is in this world, that of the Christians is in heaven. The weapons of the Christians are spiritual, against the fortification of the devil. The worldly are armed with steel and iron, but Christians are armed with the armor of God, with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and with the Word of God. In summary: as Christ our Head is minded, so also must we be minded as the members of the body of Christ through Him, so that there be no division in the body, through which it would be destroyed. Since then Christ is as is written of Him, so must His members also be the same, so that His body may remain whole and unified for its own advancement and upbuilding. For any kingdom which is divided within itself will be destroyed.

Hans Denck, "Concerning True Love," 1527.

No Christian, who wishes to boast in his Lord, may use power to coerce and rule. For the realm of our king consists alone in the teaching and power of the spirit. Whoever truly acknowledges Christ as Lord ought to do nothing but what He commands him. Now he commands all his disciples to teach evildoers and to admonish them for their improvement. If they will not listen we should allow them to be heathens and avoid them.

Menno Simons, "Blasphemy," 1535.

All of you who would fight with the sword of David, and also be the servants of the Lord, consider these words, which show how a servant should be minded. If he is not to strive, and quarrel, how then can he fight? If he is to be gentle to all men, how can he then hate and harm them? If he is to be ready to learn, how can he lay aside the apostolic weapons? He will need

them. If he is to instruct in meekness those that oppose, how can he destroy them? If he is to instruct in meekness those that oppose truth, how can he angrily punish them that do not as yet acknowledge the truth? Paul says: if God peradventure will give them repentance.

Menno Simons, "Reply to False Accusations," 1552.

The Scriptures teach that there are two opposing princes and two opposing kingdoms: the one is the Prince of peace; the other the prince of strife. Each of these princes has his particular kingdom and as the prince is so is also the kingdom. The Prince of peace is Christ Jesus; his kingdom is the kingdom of peace, which is his church; his messengers are the messengers of peace; his Word is the word of peace; his body is the body of peace; his children are the seed of peace; and his inheritance and reward are the inheritance and reward of peace. In short, with this King, and in his kingdom and reign, it is nothing but peace. Everything that is seen, heard, and done is peace.

O beloved reader, our weapons are not swords and spears, but patience, silence, and hope, and the Word of God. With these we must maintain our heavy warfare and fight our battle. Paul says, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but mighty through God. (2 Corinthians 10:4) With these we intend and desire to storm the kingdom of the devil; and not with sword, spears, cannon, and coats of mail. For he esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. (Job 41:27) Thus may we with our Prince, Teacher, and Example Christ Jesus, raise the father against the son, and the son against the father, and may we cast down imagination and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought in obedience to Christ.(2 Corinthians 10:5)

True Christians do not know vengeance, no matter how they are mistreated. In patience they possess their souls. Luke 21:18. And they do not break their peace, even if they should be tempted by bondage, torture, poverty, and besides, by the sword and fire. They do not cry, Vengeance, vengeance, as does the world; but with Christ they supplicate and pray: Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60.



SPIRITUAL GROWTH VERSUS CHANGE.

It has pleased God to give life a small beginning (physically and spiritually), and He has made provision for necessary growth. Physical growth is not as problematic as spiritual growth.

God has not only made provision for growth; it is in His divine will that man should mature. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). It is said that Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). This growth shall continue until the Christian comes into "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Points of particular interest are growth in knowledge of our Lord, increase in wisdom, and growth in favor with God, coming to a full-grown man. In this day of much learning, new ideas, new interpretations, and new concepts in most fields are emerging. The Bible, with all that is written and in all that it stands for, has become a fertile field for research, to the extent that much that was light has become darkness and that which was once knowledge has become ignorance. Change is interpreted as growth or as a departure from the life of a child unto maturity.

It is important to note that growth is an increase in size by adding new matter into the living organism; whereas, to change is to alter by substituting foreign matter.

The eight-pound boy at birth becomes a one hundred fifty-pound young man in his late teens. It is the same boy, only more of him. He has not changed—the temperament is the same, the vital body organs are the same, and he has the same parents. This is growth. What he has put on is a composition of the original substances.

The green twig stuck into the ground by the horticulturist buds and shoots forth many branches in a few years, increasing to ten feet in height and many feet across, and bears fruit. It is still the same twig, but much more of it. This is growth; for it is an increase of the original.

The illustrations are not a matter of change, but of growth; for in changing there is a moving away from the original and substituting something of a different organism. The only thing that can be said in this case is that it surely has grown.

A mature man whose life has been molded in sinful living from boyhood

becomes a new creature in Christ upon accepting Christ as Saviour through the process of the new birth. Even though he is a babe in Christ, he walks in the newness of life. He is different! It is not spiritual growth that makes him different but a change of attitude or affection, of desires and choices. This man has changed. What you see of him now are not new shoots from the original. The former has perished, and a new man has come forth.

A "babe in Christ" is made partaker of a divine nature in Christ Jesus, and the characteristics are humility, meekness, and openness to correction and teaching. Since he is born of God, he naturally accepts the teachings of the Lord as direction for his life. He also accepts those of like precious faith as his brothers and sisters in the Lord, desiring to be in their fellowship. In this fellowship, each one endeavors to enlarge their understanding of the Lord and His plan for mankind. This knowledge is an incentive to unite all in the faith, to be one in understanding and wisdom. As each one continues in this way, they increase in the knowledge of the Lord and in favor with God and come unto the full stature in Christ.

In this process, many times certain scriptures become more meaningful, and some obscure passages become real relevant; the doctrines of the Word and the regulations of the Church take on a new dimension. This is growth. It adds new matter to the living organism. This is not change. The properties are the same.

It is not uncommon to have someone remark that when he accepted the Lord and the Church, he did not understand much about the matter, and in those young years, his confession of faith was shrouded in ignorance, but now he feels differently about some things. This is growth, an increase in knowledge and understanding, and it does not take away from the original but adds to it. However, it must be said that when new beliefs and new light place a shadow on the confession of faith—of separation, nonconformity, nonresistance, submission, and obedience to authority—it is not growth, for the simple reason that it is not an increase of the original organism. It is a change of views.

The Scriptures say that in God, the Father of lights, there is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17). This would mean that when God turns, He casts no shadow; for we know that God has turned, doing not what He said He would, but in so doing it was for salvation for mankind and for a glory to His name. Too often, a Christian who is considered rooted and settled casts a shadow upon his integrity by a change in attitude

or behaviour. "I had a lot of faith in my brother, thinking he was sound and stable, but after what he did the other day, I am in trouble."

To move away from restricted zones into areas where one can have more liberties, even believing to enjoy the fellowship of the Spirit more by not being hampered by former convictions and regulations, cannot be growth; for it is an exchange of ideas.

Another important item in growth versus change is proportion—the relationship of one part to another. That eight-pound boy has a proportioned body—every member is of normal size, giving good balance. When matured, the body is much larger but still properly proportioned; every member is healthy and able to coordinate. The same is true of the twig in becoming a tree; its branches are proportioned, well rounded and standing erect.

The babe in Christ, in a matured state, is proportioned—not top-heavy, not lopsided, not maimed, but well balanced.

God has so ordained that all living things are proportioned, which gives balance and coordination. However, some Christians, in their attitudes and behavior, are like growing trees with growing branches on one side and withering branches on the other, resulting in a decided leaning and being subject to breaking.

Those who are majoring in God's love, mercy, and longsuffering are underestimating the importance of God's holiness, righteousness, and judgment at the same time. Or when the emphasis is placed too much on love, joy, and peace, one is apt to lose sight of self-denial, cross bearing, and ignoring of the world. Such attitudes are not conducive to spiritual growth, for they do violence to Bible teaching.

➤ To accept the Bible, with all that it stands for, as the pure, inspired Word of God and later qualify some parts of it as of man and not inspired is change and not growth.

➤ To accept a belief as a conviction from God, confessing to have peace and forgiveness from God, and later believe it to have been an emotional affair is change and not growth.

➤ To accept the Church as the Lord's Body and vow fidelity to what she subscribes and then later lower her to the level of other churches is change and not growth.

➤ To accept only those who belong to the same fellowship as brothers and sisters in the faith and later incorporate all who follow Christ is change.

- To receive the Church interpretation of Bible doctrines as authentic and later identify them as rules of men is change.
- To accept it as scriptural to discipline disobedient members, even to the point of excommunication, and later apply it only to grave sins is change.
- To believe that the scriptural avoidance was meant to be physical as well as spiritual and later believe it to be only spiritual is change.
- To believe that the marriage vow is for life, for better or worse, and now believe marriage can be dissolved by divorce and one can marry another is change.
- To believe that the Scriptures ask parents to administer the rod of discipline to their children in order to bring them back into obedience and later come to tolerate "free expression," hoping experience will mold them, is change.

All these items are not a shoot from the original organism; consequently, they are change and not growth.

Some would quote Paul to gain liberty to forsake [the old paths] and take on new ways. Paul said, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11). If Paul had spoken this in regard to his maturing as a Christian, he certainly would have done an injustice to the gospel he preached. Paul spoke this in regards to the perfect life to come when he would be set free from this earthly body.

What then shall be said about the updating and modernizing among the believers and, also, in the Church? There are things tolerated, used, and sanctioned now that were not acceptable a century ago. Is it growth, or is it change? Does it add to spiritual life, or does it subtract from spiritual life? There are the telephone, the car, the modern power machinery, the new homes, the furnishings, the clothing styles, etc. Upon what basis can it be said that it is not change but growth?

The Bible speaks about the four corners of the earth, but when it is generally accepted that the earth is round and has no corners, it does not cast a shadow upon God's creation. The Bible speaks about the sun standing still for a given length of time; it is now generally accepted that the sun is stationary and the earth revolves, but that casts no shadow upon the matter in hand. So, also, in Christian progressiveness there are those items that, at first glance, are not beneficial for Christian life or work. But, upon a second look, it is evident that they would help promote a good cause, even to

the edifying of the saints and the saving of the lost. Then, if they can be adopted with unity and in fellowship, it can be growth. If in any way it weakens or impairs a doctrine, it is not growth but change.

We teach consistency and moderation, for this is gospel. However, we will admit that the landmark of consistency in dress and other matters has been moved in the last century. Today we request consistency in dress, homes, furnishings, and cars. We stress moderation in operations and holdings, for it is scriptural. However, in this there is a wide margin from a century ago. We would say that it is not change, but growth, for it does no violence to consistency or moderation, and it makes the total effort more effective. It must be admitted, though, that in some areas we have allowed and accepted things that have not stimulated spiritual growth; rather, they have caused retardation.

It will be important to note what those items of the past that were accepted after controversy and some degree of reluctance have done to the witness and to the fellowship and to the expansion of the Lord's work.

The assignments of the Church have been many and far-reaching. If the methods of communication, the methods of conveyance, and the knowledge of how to earn for our own bread and for the poor and to spread the gospel had not been changed or improved upon, the outreach of the Church would not be what it is today. That which increases Christian witness and makes the work of the Lord more efficient and effective should be considered growth.

The Church is always going through painful times, and, hopefully, they can be growing pains and not dying pains.

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Emmanuel

He came as an infant, so helpless and small;
But He was the Maker and Ruler of all.

He came with one purpose, to die for man's sin,
That He our eternal redemption might win.

Long, long had the promise been given to men,
By prophets repeated again and again.

A Horn of salvation, a Dayspring of light;
A Day Star to dawn and to banish our night.

The bearer of pardon, salvation, and peace,
Of gladness, and joy, and the captive's release.

Our Wonderful Counsellor, Teacher, and Friend,
Whose mercy and tenderness never shall end.

Emmanuel — God with us — never to die;
Our King who shall reign through the ages on high.
— Ada Wine.

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