

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.

In the November 2008 issue in this section there appeared a brief discussion on “The Need of Conviction or Firmness of Belief.” Recently an article relating to Christian convictions came across my desk and these were the closing remarks in that article. May they be an encouragement to all.

Open Quote: “Let me now encourage you to have some Christian convictions, and let me make some strong suggestions to you about these.

Number one, make sure your convictions are biblically based. When you believe something is wrong, you had better have a good Bible reason for believing it. You ought to know where the Bible talks about that, and if you don't think you can remember it, write it down so you can show people. Have biblically based convictions, not just opinions.

Number two, when you have a conviction, be firm. Don't waver no matter what crowd you are with, no matter what environment you find yourself in. If it is wrong to wear a bathing suit walking down the street, it is wrong to wear one in the swimming pool. The water doesn't have anything to do with it. That is why you have to be careful about where you go swimming. Do you expose your body to the lustful thoughts of others? They are going to think it whether you like it or not. Be firm in your convictions.

Number three, be kind when you have convictions. Don't be a smart alek. When the time comes to express yourself, or to say no, or to give a reason, be kind about it. Learn your reasons, and know them, and don't be nervous, and don't be angry, and don't be snappy. Be kind about it.

Number four, don't act superior. Don't act like you are better than somebody else. That's the first charge they are going to make against you, I guarantee you. Anytime you ever have a conviction about anything, whether it be about music, or drinking liquor, others are going to say that you think you are better than they are. People have been saying that for centuries. That is not anything new. So don't act superior. Just let them know you aren't going to do that thing.

Number five, if you have to talk to somebody about these things deal with the heart first. All of this is a matter of the heart. You might get somebody straightened out on the matter of the clothes they ought to wear and they may still be just as lost as they were before you met them. Before I talk to anybody about clothes or anything else, the first thing I want to know is what about the heart? Have you been saved? Acts 15:9. Has your heart been purified by faith? Romans 10:9. Have you believed in your heart that God raised Christ from the dead? The first thing I want to know is about the heart and salvation. All that I said here tonight applies to those who are saved. If you haven't been saved, it's not going to help you or your soul one way or the other to change your clothes. It's not going to help at all. If Jesus does not live in your heart, that is your first need. You first have to come to Christ.

If you are saved it is still a matter of the heart. If I were talking to a Christian about this, the first thing I would want to talk to him about would be the heart. Is your heart right with God? If your heart's not right with God, you are not going to be able to understand any of this. You're going to resent every argument, and resent anybody even bringing up this discussion. The Bible talks about the heart. Hebrews 10:22--"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." God is talking to Christian people there. And in verses 24 and 25, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to 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." It's a matter of the heart. *Close Quote.*



The following article has already been published separately on our website but is reprinted here for those who do not have or use the internet. JvL.

MINISTER'S CORNER.

TIME AND ETERNITY A BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Preface

At first glance this topic doesn't strike us as being a doctrine. Yet the Bible speaks much about the fact of the afterlife and the destiny of the soul. There are many different beliefs in the world of what the afterlife is and how it will be.

Time is the season God gives for one to prepare for eternity. And He commissions those who choose Him to help others in time with the gifts and opportunities He provides. God holds the church responsible in this season to carry the true light to the world.

Time is a precious commodity. It is not a renewable source; for when it is gone, it is gone forever.

We tend to take for granted the time God gives us. We forget that it is a gift, as was also our birth.

There is a tendency in modern Christianity to play down and lessen the seriousness of the afterlife, especially the judgment and sentence of the sinner. The following quote is copied from the Mennonite Encyclopedia article on Eternity: "The person with considerable formal education is more inclined to critical reflection, or poetic indulgence, such as 'Dancing across the meadows of eternity,' heard at a Mennonite Church (MC) General Assembly in 1987."

Time

"This term is commonly taken for the measure of motion, or for the duration of anything. It is also taken for opportunity, or the favorable moment of doing or omitting anything. Ecclesiastes 8:5 says, 'And a wise man's heart discerneth both time and Judgment. He knows both what he ought to do and what are the fittest seasons for doing it'" (A. Cruden).

1. "So teach us to number our days" (Psalm 90:12). The time allotted to

each one is the same. Each and every person has 24 hours, or 1,440 minutes, or 86,400 seconds in a day. No more and no less.

2. "Redeeming the time" (Ephesians 5:16). Making the most of your time; using the present opportunities to the fullest. "Time is redeemed when we carefully embrace and improve all the occasions and opportunities which the Lord presents unto us for His glory and the good of others and ourselves: not suffering these seasons to be stolen from us and lost by cares and thoughts about the world" (A. Cruden).

3. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time" (Colossians 4:5).

4. "Occupy, till I come" (Luke 19:13).

5. The time God has allotted us is like a raw product that needs to be developed into something useful, or it is like talents given to a servant to be increased in value for the master to receive upon his return. What we are and what we will have accomplished in life will be the result of the use of our time. Lost time is never found again; it is gone forever, never to be regained.

6. Life is like the springtime of eternity. Springtime is the season when we sow the seeds in expectation of the harvest. Some seeds are of short maturity; they mature early for the reaping while other seeds mature later. Likewise with life; the sowing is done in time while most of the reaping, both good and bad, will be done in eternity. The one most important purpose in life is preparing our never-dying soul for eternity.

The Use of Time

Take notice of the questions designated with an asterisk* Ponder them carefully, answer them to God.

*Is the time allotted to us our time, or is it God's time? Will we someday give account to God for how we used His time?

The moments God has allotted to us, which consist of our lives, can be likened to a series of consecutive square spaces. These spaces, each representing a moment of our time, we must fill, and we are at liberty to fill them according to our choosing.

1. Some spaces will be filled with legitimate and necessary things (relating to that which sustains life and health).

2. Some spaces will be filled with unselfish things. These are things that go

beyond the call of duty—plus-service for your fellowman. Included is that which is done for Christ's sake, receiving no material recompense or reward.

3. Some spaces we may fill with selfish things (time spent selfishly for one's personal pleasure or enjoyment).

4. Excluding the legitimate and necessary things, let's assume all the squares representing our selfish moments are filled with red and all the unselfish squares are filled in with blue. What hue does God see when He views your life? "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20).

5. Since creation it has always taken 365 days to make a year. When God set this in order He saw that it would be sufficient time for us. This has never changed, and it never will. *We all agree that "time flies," so who and what makes it fly?

We live in a time of many inventions, and most of them are meant to make things more convenient for us and to save time—not make time, which we cannot do. This, in turn, allows us to put more living into the same amount of time. *Is God receiving His share of your "saved" time? Will we, someday, be required to give account of our "saved time"? *Are we using our saved time to benefit the kingdom of God or to benefit self?

6. Sometimes it is too late, as the following indicates: On the banks of the Niagara River, where the rapids begin to swell and swirl most desperately, preparatory to that final plunge, is a signboard that bears the words, "Past Redemption Point." Even while one feels the firm soil beneath his feet, a shiver of horror passes through one's soul as he looks upon the turbulent waters and realizes the full significance of the sign "Past Redemption Point." None can retrace his steps if he passes that point. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6). King Saul called upon the Lord, but He did not answer. It was too late!

Idleness is condemned in the Bible: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her ... (Ezekiel 16:49).

Patience

1. Patience is said to be the hardest of all Christian virtues to learn.
2. Accepting God's time schedule is a severe test in some instances.

(a) "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). The Bible uses many illustrations from nature to teach us that everything has its season and that man must accept what God set in order or suffer the consequences of lost opportunities. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20). "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When the branch is yet tender, and putting forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matthew 24:32-33). This account is recorded in three of the Gospels!

(b) King Saul was an example of impatience when he offered the sacrifice before Samuel arrived (1 Samuel 13:8-13).

3. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8)

If we calculated recorded time (6,000 years) into one 24-hour day (12 o'clock midnight to 12 o'clock midnight), it would work out something like this perhaps:

Time begins, 12:01 a.m... Time ends, 12:00 midnight

(a) Because of wickedness, God destroyed the earth with a flood-8:00 a.m...

(b) God sent Jesus as the Savior of the world-4:00 P.M.

(c) Columbus discovered America (1492), Menno Simons (b. 1496)-9:50 p.m...

(d) Anti-creation publication Origin of the Species. Charles Darwin 1859 -11:30 p.m.

(e) Seventy years (three score and ten Psalm 90:10)-16 minutes, 45 seconds.

(f) Thirty-five years-8 minutes and 23 seconds.

(g) Eighteen years-4 minutes and 12 seconds.

Are we living in the last of the last time? Peter says, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7).

What Time Reveals

There is a law called Sowing and Reaping. This law was established by God and conforms to His word. Mortal man cannot alter it. One cannot ignore it, and its voice cannot be silenced.

1. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Let us never be fooled. The attitudes, reactions, feelings, thoughts, and emotions you harbor and foster now will

have a tremendous bearing on you half a lifetime from now, let alone determining your eternal destiny. The kind of books you read, the kind of songs you sing, the things you give your time to and take an interest in now, are the little seeds we are planting, and someday they will bear their fruit.

2. We should take this seriously, because those innocent-looking seeds, whether good or bad, that show up in school, in youth, in business dealings, in marriage, or in the brotherhood were planted long ago, perhaps even by our parents. We will be no more successful trying to hide them or cover them than the lazy, dishonest boy who placed all his seeds in one hole and covered them! He thought nobody would notice. Time will not erase sin; it only reveals it. The Bible says, "And be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). Yes, it will all be revealed, if not in time than certainly in eternity. How sad, because then it will be too late; for time will be no more. It is disturbing when we think that we will harvest throughout eternity that which we are planting today!

Time Is Absolute

Time waits for no man. "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

Time Also Is Relative

Everything in time is relative to other points of reference. Our calendar uses the birth of Christ as a "benchmark" for historical events. All events happening before the birth of Christ are recorded as B.C., and all events that happened after the birth of Christ are recorded A.D. A year is measured by days, and a day is measured by hours, minutes, and seconds. Distance is measured by miles and feet; miles and feet added together will circle the globe. Everything on this earth has a beginning and an ending.

This is not so with eternity. Eternity has no starting place, and there is no point where anything ends. There isn't anything in eternity that will become old or worn, and nothing will be made new. There will be no second chance, no starting over. Nothing will be lost, and nothing will be found.

The idea of time simply will not be. Eternity will never be half over or even a fraction of a percent over, as those terms are relative to time. No matter how long a space you can imagine, eternity will never advance beyond the stage of "just began." This is because eternity will always be the same—time will have stopped; so the duration will forever remain the same.

In eternity, joy will be complete at God's right hand. Think of the endless ages in which we will be in His hallowed presence, in the fellowship of saints and angels, in the fullness of perfect bliss and glory, in a place where farewell tears are never shed and sorrows never come. At the same time, those who were set on the Lord's left hand in the judgment will be in the deepest anguish. Words fail to describe the grief and anguish of hell. Jude refers to it as "the vengeance of eternal fire," and the Revelator adds, where they will be "tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

In eternity there will be no combinations of emotions, such as joy mixed with sorrow. It will either be all joy or all sorrow, depending on which hand one is placed. Time has interrupted eternity for a brief season, but when time ceases, eternity will be divided into two realms. There will be a right and a left. These realms will be known as heaven and hell. The two will be separated by a great gulf so vast that no man can cross it, no, not even the angels of God.

In the Light of Eternity

The Wise Man refers to a man saying, "All the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow" (Ecclesiastes 6:12). Think of a shadow as the result of a dark and ominous cloud advancing upon us. Then think of this shadow as the shadow of eternity. Then weigh, in the light of eternity, the things that are important to you now. Some common misconceptions of men are: "Have fun; you are only young once." "I earned it, so I will enjoy it." "Earn all you can while you can." "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." "I will seek the Lord sometime." "Tomorrow or some more convenient time." "Before I die; if not before, then I hope there will be time on my death bed."

The Brevity of Life

What the Bible says about our time here on earth:

1. Life is brief. "We spend our years as a tale that is told" (Psalm 90:9).
2. Like a shadow. "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding" (1 Chronicles 29:15).
3. Like a flying shuttle. "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (Job 7:6).
4. Like speeding messengers. "Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away" (Job 9:25).
5. Like a handbreadth in extent. "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth: and mine age is nothing before thee" (Psalm 39:5).
6. Like a shepherd's tent. "Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent" (Isaiah 38:12).
7. Like a vanishing vapor. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

In Conclusion

In the light of these things, is it any wonder that the patriarchs of old, while gazing steadfastly by faith towards heaven, looked for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," and confessed themselves "strangers and pilgrims on earth"? Also, that the disciples and martyrs, in the face of death, earnestly and joyfully glorified God and exhorted others to be steadfast and faithful? They looked forward and thought of the wonderful and glorious things God has prepared for those who love Him.

As we meditate on these things, may our prayer be that God will grant us life and strength that we might have more opportunities to share this vision of a blessed eternity.

Min. D.G. Michigan



Seasoned Speech (Part 1)*M.S.G. PA.***A Well of Life.**

"The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life" (Proverbs 10:11).

An Oriental traveler, trudging up and down over dusty hills, quickened his step at the sight of verdant trees shading a well. A farmer threshing grain under the burning sun welcomed a pitcher of cool, freshly-drawn well water. Children, hot and panting from their play, clustered around the village well to draw up brimming bucketfuls of refreshing water.

A weary traveler on the pathway of life, bowed under a heavy burden, straightens his back and lengthens his stride at the sound of a few well-chosen words of encouragement. An elderly saint approaching the valley of the shadow of death receives gratefully strengthening words of comfort. Young children, listening to their Sunday school teacher, attentively soak in the words of life.

Words can be both refreshing and life-giving. What blessing, comfort, edification, and even life may flow from the tongue. But words contain as much potential for evil as they do for good. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21). A stream of won can carry either hurt or healing, violence or peace, death or life. What makes the difference? What is the source of the potency of words whether good or bad?

Just as a well taps into an underground reservoir of water, so speech flows from the hidden springs of the heart. Jesus succinctly stated, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). Words are powerful because they reflect the character of the speaker. Because of this, a person's character either increases or decreases the value of his words.

Words are potent because they are the product of a thinking, reasoning being. Sometimes we excuse a slip of our tongue by saying, "I didn't think before I spoke." The tongue, however, never moves of its own volition—it forms words only as commanded by the brain. What we should say is, "I did not intend to reveal what I was thinking." Too often we focus on controlling our lips when we should focus on controlling our minds.

A righteous man's speech carries the power of life because it flows from a life-giving source. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). God often

uses a man's tongue as a channel to bring life to another.

Sometimes it seems as though the source is dry when we know we should speak. Then we in faith must claim the promise, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord" (Proverbs 16:1). God will not fail to give us the words we need to speak for Him. May our hearts be wells that are tapped into the living water so our words can carry life to others.

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SNAPSHOTS.

Brief excerpts from a historical perspective.

ANABAPTIST MENNONITE VIEWS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Anabaptists rejected the complex of doctrine and drama which characterized the Roman Mass as a sacrament. Because the Mass was at the very heart of Roman Christianity, this rejection was sufficient to brand Anabaptists as heretics. In Roman eyes it was tantamount to denying Christ and therefore Christian faith.

Anabaptists indignantly refused to acknowledge as Christian what they considered a manipulation of Christ and his sacrifice, often for human gain.

Anabaptists equally rejected the Protestant discussion about the nature of the presence of Christ in the bread and wine. They regarded such a discussion as totally beside the point, and switched the discussion to a consideration of the presence of Christ in the "body" of believers, for which there was clear scriptural warrant. The presence of Christ was viewed, not as sacramental, but expressing itself in the exercising of the "rule of Christ" and in ethical and moral terms.

All strands of Anabaptism give evidence of a twofold interpretation of the Supper. It was, on the one hand, a remembrance of the love of Christ which expressed itself in dying for his own. Jesus and his sacrifice were the foundation of Christian life and of the church.

On the other hand, the Supper was seen as a celebration of the oneness and unity of the church brought about by Christ's death. The body of Christ, understood by Anabaptists in a very literal sense as the visible community of believers, was the presence of God in the world. The new peaceful, reconciling community was reality. The Supper was a joyous recognition of that fact. Peter Riedeman and Dirk Philips repeat the parable from the *Didache*, (*An early Christian work, also called the Teachings of the 12 Apostles*) about the wheat and the grapes scattered far and wide, coming together into one loaf and one cup. The bread and wine were therefore signs of unity as well as signs of sacrifice. The themes of sacrifice and unity were also combined. Even as Christ had given Himself for them without reservation, so participation in the Supper signified a readiness on the part of all to give spiritual and material aid without grudging, and even life itself, for the sisters and brothers.

Conrad Grebel, circa 1524

The Supper of fellowship Christ did institute and plant. The words found in Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and 1 Corinthians 11, alone are to be used, no more, no less. The server from out of the congregation should pronounce them from one of the Evangelists or from Paul. They are the words of the instituted meal of fellowship, not words of consecration. Ordinary bread ought to be used, without idols and additions. For [the latter] creates an external reverence and veneration of the bread, and a turning away from the inward. An ordinary drinking vessel too ought to be used. This would do away with the adoration and bring true understanding and appreciation of the Supper, since the bread is nought but bread. In faith, it is the body of Christ and the incorporation with Christ and the brethren. But one must eat and drink in the Spirit and love, as shown in John 6 and the other passages, Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, and as is clearly learned in Acts 2. Although it is simply bread, yet if faith and brotherly love precede it, it is to be received with joy, since, when it is used in the church, it is to show us that we are truly one bread and one body, and that we are and wish to be true brethren with one another, etc. But if one is found who will not live the brotherly life, he eats unto condemnation, since he eats it without discerning, like any other meal, and dishonours love, which is the inner bond, and the bread, which is the outer bond. For also it does not call to his mind Christ's body and blood, the covenant of the cross, nor that he should be

willing to live and suffer for the sake of Christ and the brethren, of the Head and the members..... It should not be used without the rule of Christ in Matthew 18:15-18, otherwise it is not the Lord's Supper, for without that rule every man will run after the externals. The inner matter, love, is passed by, if brethren and false brethren approach or eat it [together]. If ever thou desirest to serve it, we should wish that it would be done without priestly garment and vestment of the Mass, without singing, without addition. As for the time, we know that Christ gave it to the apostles at supper and that the Corinthians had the same usage. We fix no definite time with us, etc.

Balthasar Hubmaier, circa 1525.

Fifth: After we have clearly known the unspeakable goodness of God in faith out of the Word of God we should be thankful to God for it that He has so fervently loved the world, that He has not spared His only Son, but has given Him for us all into death. Yes, the death of the most shameful cross in order that we could be saved. Thus Christ Jesus, our Saviour, has ordered and instituted a beautiful remembrance in his Last Supper in order that we should not forget Him. For when He and His disciples were eating one with another He took bread and gave thanks and said: "Take and eat, that is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me." In the same manner also He took the cup and gave them all to drink and said: "Take and drink. This is my blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me." Here you must see clearly that the bread is bread and the wine is wine as other bread and wine are, but nevertheless thus instituted by Christ to an admonition and a remembrance that as often as we break the bread with another, distribute it and eat it, that we remember in faith His broken body given for us on the cross. Thus one can see clearly that the bread is not the body of Christ, but only a remembrance of the same. Similarly, the wine is not the blood of Christ, but also a remembrance that He has shed His blood on the cross for the cleansing from sin for all those who have faith even as the sign before the inn is not the wine, but a sign of the same. For it behooves us to remember what Christ has done for us, to announce it loudly and to be eternally thankful for it. Thus Paul earnestly admonishes us when he writes to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 11: As often as you eat bread (notice: he calls it bread and it is bread) and you drink the cup, that is the wine (notice:

it is wine that men drink), you should announce the Lord's death until He comes. Notice, he says: Until He comes. Thus we hear that He is not here, but that He will come at the hour of the last judgment in His great majesty and glory openly as the lightning flashes from east to west.

From this follows and we clearly learn that the Last Supper is nothing else than a remembrance of the suffering of Christ, who has given His body for our sake and shed His red blood on the cross for the cleansing of our sins.....Whoever now observes the Supper of Christ in the fashion described and regards the suffering of Christ in firm faith, the same will also thank God for this grace and goodness and will surrender himself to the will of Christ, which is what He has done for us. We also now should make our life, body, material goods and blood available to the neighbour. That is the will of Christ.

Dirk Philips, circa 1564

When we examine and look closely into the words of Scripture in order to understand them thoroughly, and to lay hold of the true sense and understanding of it that accords in all cases with the Scriptures, and is contrary to no Scriptures or the faith we find the following. The Lord Jesus Christ, out of His great, overflowing love, gave His body for us, and shed His blood for us. He instituted the Supper with bread and wine as a memorial, that through the bread of His body given for us, and the wine of His blood shed for us, we might with thanksgiving remember. Hence the words of Christ at the Supper: "This is My body," this is My blood," must be understood spiritually, for how else could it be that in the Lord's Supper the bread and wine were at the same time bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ, the communion of His body and blood, and a memorial of His suffering and death, a new testament or the blood of the new testament, and that at the same time all Scripture be reconciled? We will now look carefully into all these Scripture passages and by God's grace thoroughly explain them.

In the first place the Lord Jesus Christ instituted His Supper with bread and wine, and this accords perfectly with the statement, that He is Himself the living bread, come down from heaven, by which souls are spiritually nourished by faith unto eternal life John 6:33. He is also the true vine: John 15:7, planted by the true husbandman, God his Father. His Word is the pure wine: Isaiah 55:1, by which the believing soul is refreshed and made

joyful in the Holy Spirit. Hence, as often as Christians eat of the bread of the Supper and drink of the wine, they are admonished and reminded of this.

After giving thanks, Christ broke the bread, gave it to His disciples, and said: "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you." On account of these words there is much dispute and chatter both among the learned and unlearned. Many firmly maintain that Christ is bodily in the bread. With this we do not agree, and do not understand the words cited above literally, but spiritually.

Menno Simons, circa 1552. (Complete Works of same)

Similarly we believe and confess concerning the Lord's holy Supper that it is a holy sacramental sign, instituted of the Lord Himself in bread and wine, and left to His disciples in remembrance of Him. Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; 1 Corinthians 11. It was also taught and administered as such by the apostles among the brethren, according to the commandment of the Lord, in which in the first place the Lord's death is proclaimed. 1 Corinthians 11. And it also serves as a remembrance how He offered His holy flesh and shed His precious blood for the remission of our sins. Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:19.

Second, it is an emblem of Christian love, of unity, and of peace in the church of Christ. Paul says, For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread. 1 Corinthians 10:17. For as a loaf being composed of many grains is but one bread; so we also being composed of many members are but one body in Christ. And as the members of a natural body are not disharmonious, but are altogether united and at one among themselves; so it is with all those who are in Spirit and faith true members of the body of Christ. For this reason this same supper was called by Tertullian a brotherly meal or love feast.

Third, it is a communion of the flesh and blood of Christ. As Paul says, The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 1 Corinthians 10:16. This communion consists in the fact that Christ has accepted us in his great love, and we are become partakers of him. As Paul says, We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. Hebrews 3:14.

Since it is a sign of such force which is left of Christ, that it is to repre-

sent and admonish us of His death, the love, peace, and unity of the brethren, and also the communion of His flesh and blood as was said, therefore none can rightly partake of this Supper except he be a disciple of Christ, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone, who seeks the forgiveness of sins in no other means than in the merits, sacrifice, death, and blood of Christ alone; who walks in unity, love, and peace with his brethren, and who leads a pious, unblamable life in Christ Jesus, according to the Scriptures.

Here you have the true Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ with its symbolism and mystery briefly stated, which the mouth of the Lord has left and taught you by His holy Word. If you would be a proper guest at the Lord's table and would rightly partake of His bread and wine, then you must also be His true disciple, that is, you must be an upright, pious, and godly Christian. Therefore prove yourself according to the doctrine of Paul before you eat of this bread and drink of this cup, for before God no feigning counts.

Christ did not institute this ceremony as though mere bread, wine, and eating are pleasing to Him. Oh, no. He has left this sacrament with you in order that you might by it faithfully observe and carefully conform yourself to the mystery represented by this sign or sacrament. For not the ceremony itself but the matter represented by it, if rightly understood and fulfilled in actions, constitutes a sincere Christian.

Michael Sattler in Schleithem Confession, 1527.

III. Concerning the breaking of bread, we have become one and agree thus: all those who desire to break the one bread in remembrance of the broken body of Christ and all those who wish to drink of one drink in remembrance of the shed blood of Christ, they must beforehand be united in the one body of Christ, that is the congregation of God, whose head is Christ, and that by baptism. For as Paul indicates, we cannot be partakers at the same time of the table of the Lord and the table of devils. Nor can we at the same time partake and drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. That is: all those who have fellowship with the dead works of darkness have no part in the light. Thus all who follow the devil and the world, have no part with those who have been called out of the world unto God. All those who lie in evil have no part in the good.

So it shall and must be, that whoever does not share the calling of the one God to one faith, to one baptism, to one spirit, to one body together with all

the children of God, may not be made one loaf together with them, as must be true if one wishes truly to break bread according to the command of Christ.



TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE

Man is set apart from the rest of creation by his ability to acquire knowledge, to understand that knowledge, and then to apply it to diverse aspects of his life. Unquestionably, it was God's intention to endow mankind with a superior ability to understand, to make choices, and that their choice would be to love and obey Him. Yet the mere acquisition of knowledge does not bring man to proper spiritual understanding, nor does it bring one into favor with God.

Let us remember that the love chapter teaches us that "And though I have ... all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2). Knowledge and wisdom born and exercised by love are wonderful gifts of God. Without love, knowledge can actually be a hindrance.

The apostle Paul taught on love versus knowledge in 1 Corinthians 8:1-3: *"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him."*

In this scripture, the subject is the refraining from food offered to idols. But the same would be true of any point of scriptural doctrine or practice of the people of God. All spiritual virtues must be preceded, overlaid, motivated, and exercised by love. When love takes second place, we have fallen into the essence of legalism. We quickly become exalted in our knowledge and will, increasingly, be a hindrance to the Lord's work. In so doing, we know nothing yet as we ought to know.

When one is born again and receives the Spirit of God, he is given a new heart. He now chooses truth instead of lying, purity rather than lustfulness, generosity and service instead of selfish living; humility displaces

pride, etc. He does these things without being taught by man to do so. In one way, this is knowledge enough. However, to be steadfast and unmoving in the face of temptation, one needs more than a feeling that this or the other is the right thing to do. Every believer needs a rudder to keep him from veering off to extremes, or even to falsehood and deception. For this he is greatly benefited if he is sure of the biblical principles and the witness of the saints through the ages on the issues he is facing.

Furthermore, to be an effective witness of the wonderful gospel he has believed, every Christian needs to know the reason for his faith. How can one convincingly advocate something he is not able to defend by solid authority? How can one bear a ringing testimony if he only has a feeling that what he is advocating is true but hopes he is not asked to "give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15)?

Complacency is a great enemy to growth in spiritual knowledge. Just as the heir of a great estate is sometimes unmotivated in maintaining and growing his assets, so a Christian tends to relax in his assurance of salvation. If he feels fine in his relationship to God, he may slide into the mode of enjoying the good life the Christian culture provides. The words, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18), carry little meaning or urgency to those having this mindset. We may be sure the Holy Spirit often calls to deepening and searching for the hidden treasures, but such calls are easily dismissed by comparison with many others who are just the same.

Growth in knowledge requires effort and sacrifice. There is only so much time in life. It will be dedicated to our highest priorities. If our priority is

a pleasant social life, economic advancement, a self-indulgent life style, etc., spiritual growth will fall by the wayside. To acquire the treasures of knowledge, we will need to dedicate time and effort to pursuing them. When one is tempted to pick up the newspaper or some light reading instead of something upbuilding to the spiritual man, a choice needs to be made. The company of sober Christians is a great asset in deepening one's desire for the truth and stimulating him to pursue it. A bishop is a lover of good men (Titus 1:8), meaning those who are virtuous, spiritually minded, dedicated. So are all those who are intent on setting their feet in the way of truth.

Those who have received the gift of spiritual understanding are charged with the tremendous responsibility of stewardship. Parents are in the forefront of accountability to pass on the love for truth. A deep sense of reverence and obedience are even more important than formal teaching. Children will soon sense the fervency in father and mother when they recount the old Bible stories. As they grow older, they will be strongly influenced by the attitudes and conversations they remember from their youth. Parents who convey to their children a desire to know and obey the truth have left them a valuable legacy.

Likewise, the church and the ministry must not be negligent in "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Spiritual nurturing and mentoring have an important place in producing productive, spiritual children. Paul referred to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon as his sons. We assume this was not because he had fathered them biologically, but because he had begotten them in the truth. We may not expect our young to grow properly on their own any more than we can expect a garden to be productive without care. Guidance is needed, personally, publicly, privately, in an organized way or spontaneously. This work is easily neglected.

Finally, may we all "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Col. 1:10-11).

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"No one knows the height, depth, and length of a man in whom Christ lives and rules. God measures His children to find their usefulness—how and when He can use them."

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