

# 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****NEW YEAR—WHAT IS NEW?**

Does the year 2009 have any worthwhile significance? The Church program is not dependent on the turn of the year.

It is doubtful that God's calendar has any connection with the world's calendar. In due time and in the fullness of time, God sent His Son to save His people from their sins, but it was not on January 1 in the year 1. Even the wild speculations of the few dates set for Christ's return to earth have not been at the end or at the beginning of the year.

Nevertheless, man attaches many things to the changing of years, and often it is meaningful.

What is new about this New Year that is really meaningful to life? Is there new faith, new hope, or new possibilities for the well-being of man? "Watchman, what of the night? ... The morning cometh, and also the night" (Isaiah 21:11-12). Is 2009 a morning, or is it a night? Mornings give promise, hope, and opportunity. To the sick whose night has been doubtful, the morning brings assurance of another day. Those who are perplexed with problems often feel that, after sleeping over it, the morning will have direction. "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" (Song of Solomon 6:10). What intelligent man looks into the New Year as unto a morning?

From the creation on, God has never been out of touch with His creatures; He has spoken to them, provided for them, and reassured them of a blessed state in the end, providing they would obey and follow Him.

At the closing of an era, God used His servant Malachi (the last prophet) to bring a final message to His people, Israel. Following this, there was to be a four hundred-year silence, and then God would speak again, bringing in a new era—the gospel age.

When Malachi delivered God's message, the nightshades had already fallen upon the people. However, the concluding statements were exciting as they made reference to a new day, a Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His wings. The message is again offering itself very meaningful and is capping it with the hope of a morning, a better day, it does not mention 2009 or any particular year.

The message begins with "The burden of the word of the Lord." Jesus spoke about this burden: "How often I would have gathered you ... but ye would not." This burden was again shown when God spoke to the churches

of Asia through John the Revelator. And through the generations since, this burden has become more intense.

Through this prophet, God stated to His own (Jacob's descendants) that He had loved Jacob above Esau (His own today above others in the world), making them more responsible as well as more accountable. In turn, they were not offering to Him their best, but polluted bread, and were bringing that which was torn, lame, and sick. "Should I accept this of your hand? ... cursed be the deceiver."

No one questions whether our blessings merit giving to the Lord, but do we give the first and best or the inferior and the least? God said, because of this, "...I will curse your blessings ..." (Malachi 2:2). That which has more than filled the storehouses shall turn and devour you. To have a blessing withdrawn is one thing, and to have it cursed is quite another. "Therefore have I also made you contemptible [despised by men and disgraced] ... " (Malachi 2:9). In chapter 2, verses 10-15, He speaks about adultery and divorce, which is again at an all-time high and which is making itself felt in the church more and more. In verse 16, He says, ... take heed to your spirit."

In that day Israel called God their Father but did not honor Him. They called Him Master but did not fear Him (Malachi 1:6). Multitudes call God "Father" but have never become His children. The fear of God is also waning. Disrespect for man and God is very evident.

Malachi must have been thrilled to look beyond this dark four hundred years and be able to proclaim, "Behold, I will send my messenger [John the Baptist]... and the Lord [Messiah], whom ye seek, shall suddenly come..." (Malachi 3:1). The message spoke of a "fullers' soap," of a "refiner and purifier of silver," and of "judgment," counseling them to "return unto me" (Malachi 3:7).

Regardless of the dark night and the silence, there were those who feared the Lord and who spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it (Malachi 3:10). God is very conscious of that remnant—in Noah's day, at Malachi's time, and at the present time (Romans 11:5). "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, ... I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Malachi 3:17).

This new era, this new age, and this morning is now in its closing hour. The message has been so true, but who really believes it today? Homes are divided, children against parents. Christendom is divided. The Bible is dis-

believed more and more. More and more Christians are becoming indifferent and even disloyal to their former vows. Selfishness is dominating more and more lives, with the love of money being the motive of life.

What is the good word for 2009? Not only are the economic, the moral, the social, and the spiritual fiber under strain, but the very structures are in question. Nothing is stationary long enough for one to establish himself. Religious philosophers, who are far out in left field on biblical doctrines, show increased concern of the signs of the times, the demonic forces at work among Christian believers, subtracting and adding to the Word of God, and organizations in outright defiance to God and His Word. The great thrust is deception in any of its many forms—either ditch, just so it is off the way. Not every dramatic utterance, spectacular scene, or state of an overmastering feeling or a state of ecstasy is of God. Beware of such.

World governments are now speaking of a new world or of a utopia, but the Word of God has the message of the age: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

The answer to the dilemma is not found in hanging our heads and trying to find a writing in the sand; it is found in lifting up our heads and looking up. Let this be the key word from henceforth forevermore and especially in whatever time the Lord is allowing before His return to claim His own.



## **MINISTER'S CORNER.**

### **THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST: A BIBLE STUDY GUIDE**

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:16-18).

"We believe in one true, united, organized, visible church of God, which constitutes the true believers, which is the pillar and ground of the Truth, and which is called to be a light unto the people." John 17; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; 5:23; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 12:22-23; Revelation 2; 3

**Why a Church?**

1. When God created man, He made him a social creature that needs the

company of other people for normal development and happiness. Men and women need the association, help, and sympathy of others to grow in body, mind, and character.

2. The hunger for human companionship is, therefore, a divinely implanted instinct, a God-given hunger within man for his highest good. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Rom. 14:7).

3. Since man is also a religious being, God arranged for a divine society wherein His redeemed children live and grow spiritually.

### **What Is the Church?**

1. The Church is the community of those who are united in God by a common faith. Because they are united with Christ, they have many things in common: joys, hopes, aspirations, problems, and aims.

2. The Church is the new and spiritual Israel. Abram and his descendants became the nation of Israel, the people of God in the Old Testament. The Church is the spiritual Israel of the New Testament. She is a called-out people, trained to worship the one true God; so that through them, the knowledge of the true God and the practice of true worship would be brought to all peoples of the earth.

3. The Church, God's people, are no longer a nation united by ties of blood, but they are united by the bond of faith in Christ. They are not separated from the general society of men by geographical boundaries but by moral and spiritual boundaries. Members of the Church of God live as sojourners in the world.

4. She is a community of believers. From Pentecost the believers grew steadily in numbers. They kept closely together as they shared in the common enjoyment of their newly-found faith. They also shared materially with each other in their joy and fellowship as they worshipped their risen and glorified Savior.

5. The Church is not of human origin; she was established by Christ. He controls this divine society and has determined her constitution and by-laws. She is His Church.

6. The kingdom of heaven is not the same as the organized, visible Church of God. Repentant sinners are born into the kingdom, baptized and become members of the Church.

7. The Church is both an organism and an organization. As an organism, she exists as one united body with all members functioning mutually as the Head (Christ) directs. As an organization, her various offices and gifts co-

operate for their services to be the most effectual. By divine directions, this organization has her officials and rules of order for three reasons:

- (a) that members may be of mutual service to one another.
- (b) that members may be fortified against the evils of this world.
- (c) that members might unite their resources to better carry out the Great Commission, the work Jesus entrusted to them.

### **The Church**

1. Cannot be compared to a democracy (a government where supreme power is held by the people).
2. Cannot be compared to a theocracy (a government by officials considered divinely inspired).
3. Cannot be compared to an autocracy (a government by one person having unlimited power).
4. The true Church is like a monarchy, which is a government where one person rules with absolute sovereignty. She is a government having a chief of state with life tenure. It is important to remember that the monarch is not some pope, bishop, presbytery, council, committee, conference, or board but is none less than God Himself.

It should also be remembered that

- (a) No human was consulted when the Law was given.
- (b) There was no referendum of the gospel of Christ submitted to the apostolic church for its approval, revision, or rejection.
- (c) There is a fearful penalty attached to any effort to modify, add to, or take away any part, however large or small, of the Word of God.
- (d) Reverently, we stand in awe in the presence of God, recognizing that the gospel was conceived in the mind of the Infinite God, and therefore it is perfect wisdom and love.
- (e) Two things must be avoided: liberalism and legalism. Liberalism takes very little concern of the conduct and beliefs of its members. On the other hand, legalism emphasizes, with exactness, the small details in its members' lives, which in effect usurps the work of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Work of the Church**

1. The Church provides the right atmosphere for the converted soul to grow in Christian character and experience. The Spirit of God works through the testimony of people and their influence upon each other.
2. The Church is to be an example and pattern of holy living, demonstrating the practical application of the Word in daily life.

3. The mission of the Church is to carry the gospel to the entire world.
4. The Church is in the world to do Christ's work of bringing men and women to Him.

### **Illustrations of a Working Church**

1. It is said that in a properly built bridge, the load is distributed evenly over the entire structure. Bridges have collapsed, resulting in loss of lives, because of structural failure to distribute the load evenly. Does the Church of today suffer from such an uneven strain? This may happen when some shirk responsibility, which is then thrown upon someone who is already overburdened.

2. The illustration of the Church as the body of Christ brings out the deep and sincere sympathy that should exist between her members. In a natural body, if one member is injured, the whole body feels pain and distress. So in the body of Christ, the Church, there is a close sympathy between the members. Thus they share their joys and experiences in fellowship.

3. The apostle Paul uses another illustration as he describes the church. Christ is again called the "head" of the Church, but Paul thinks of Him here as her leader, guide, or supporter (Eph. 5:23-32). As a husband should love, support, and care for his wife, so does Christ love and care for the Church. He gave His life for her; He is purifying and cleansing His church so that He may have a pure and beautiful Church, one that shall be spotless, undefiled, pure, and without any blemish. The Church, the body of people who are saved by faith in His atoning blood, is the Lord's highest care and concern.

### **The Working Church**

1. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

2. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets; thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:27-28).

3. In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul sets forth the reasons for organization in the Church:

- (a) perfecting of saints
- (b) work of the ministry

(c) edifying of the body

(d) unity of the entire body

4. Wherever people live or work closely together in any way, there is sure to be some organized way to carry out their common purpose. The work to be done has to be distributed among the members of the society or organization according to the ability of each one. Christ is the Head of the Church. He does all the planning of the work of the Church. He sets the goals to be reached. From Him, through the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, are given the instructions to each member in order to achieve His desired goal. After Christ returned to the Father, the Holy Spirit guided the disciples in their activities and directed them in what to do.

5. The ordinances Christ gave to the Church help to keep her in proper working condition, both as individuals and as a collective body. They were conceived in divine wisdom, instituted by divine authority. Every Christian should keep them with deep appreciation.

6. The Church is not a sailing vessel made to carry men and women from earth to heaven. She is, rather, a company of saints united into a body for carrying out the great work of God which Jesus began.

### **The Church and the World**

1. When Jesus referred to the "world," He meant all the forces that are arrayed against God and His kingdom. People who do not love and serve God are of the world.

2. Jesus taught His disciples that they should expect opposition from the world. This is because Christ was hated and persecuted by the world.

3. To become a member of God's Church means that one separates himself from the sin and vices of the world.

4. The Church, being separated from the world, is subject to misunderstanding, hatred, and ridicule. This has been the history of the true church since its beginning and will continue as long as it faithfully reprove the world of sin and error.

5. Persecution and opposition from Satan's kingdom, the world, has not greatly hindered the true Church. What has hindered the testimony of the Church has been false teachers, false doctrine and practice, and insincere brethren professing to be Christians who remained inside the Church.

6. Christians are required to submit to the government in all civil matters. They are to suffer instead of denouncing or being part of any attempt to overthrow the government that persecutes them (1 Pet. 4:12-19).

### **When a Church Fails**

I. The church at Galatia: unsteady, unstable, lacking assurance. The people of Galatia had received the gospel with a ready response. Soon someone came among them, teaching that to really be saved they must keep the Law of Moses also. Because they lacked stability, they were easily swayed and began to take up that false teaching. To be true to God the church must be mature and stable in order not to be pushed from her foundation by unscriptural teaching (Galatians 1:1-5).

2. The church at Ephesus: a church lacking love. Only forty years after the church was planted at Ephesus, this startling message was received from Heaven, "You have left your first love." This church had many commendable works, toil, and endurance, but an inner decay had destroyed their love for God. Likewise today, a church member may be faithful in attendance and perform the tasks he is asked to do but not with a perfect love or with his whole heart.

3. Pergamos: a church of lax moral life. The church at Pergamos was located amid very evil surroundings, "where Satan's seat is." These evil surroundings had an influence on the life of the church members. This church failed to keep itself clean from the impurity and immorality that prevailed around them. It allowed or tolerated those members who did not hold the true faith (Revelation 2:12-17).

4. Sardis: a spiritually dead church. This church had departed far from the ideal set for the church of Christ. It had no spiritual power and, though still existing and performing as a church, was as good as dead and useless (Revelation 3:1-6).

5. Laodicea: a lukewarm and worldly church. Another church in affluent and prosperous surroundings, yet they received the most serious message of the seven churches. The weakness of the church at Laodicea was her lack of spiritual fervor, resulting in lukewarmness in spiritual things. Affluence often brings with it a feeling of independence, self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, and worldliness. It is always dangerous for a church to be satisfied with herself.

### **How the True Church May Be Known**

The true Church of God is built according to the pattern of God's Word. Menno Simons briefly notes six signs whereby the true church of Jesus Christ can be identified:

1. The salutary (beneficial or promoting health) and unadulterated doctrine

of His Holy and Divine Word (in other words, where the Word of God is preached and taught in all its purity).

2. The Scriptural use of the ordinances of Christ, namely, baptism and the Lord's Holy Supper (communion).

3. Obedience to the Holy Word.

4. Sincere and unfeigned love to one's neighbor.

5. Where the name, will, Word, and ordinance of Christ are confidently confessed in the face of all cruelty, tyranny, tumult, fire, sword, and violence of the world and sustained unto the end.

6. This sign is the pressing cross of Christ, which is borne for the sake of His testimony and the Word. This very cross is a sure indicator of the Church of Christ, as can be seen by the example of Jesus, the apostles, prophets, and many other true Christians.

### **In Conclusion**

The Rock upon which Christ built His Church has kept her safe through every kind of oppression. She gladly spilled her blood when led as a lamb to the slaughter. Her love and devotion is to the living Word, Jesus Christ, whom she follows faithfully wherever He leads. Her voice can still be heard, along with the Spirit's voice, saying, "Come."

She is quickening her steps as she sees the approach of the Bridegroom, who will soon return to receive her to be with Him forever. "And the Spirit and the bride [the true Church] say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst say, Come ... He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly" (Revelation 22:17-20).



**AN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR OUR SISTERS IN THE LORD.**

**I. THERE WERE MANY NOTABLE WOMEN GOD USED IN THE BIBLE.**

Eve - the mother of all mankind - Genesis 3:6

Miriam - the co-leader and prophetess - Numbers 12:1-2; Micah 6:4

Deborah - the patriotic judge and prophetess - Judges 4:4

Ruth - the woman of constancy - Ruth 1:16

Hannah - the ideal mother - 1 Samuel 1:20 - 12:19

Abigail - the capable woman - 1 Samuel 25:3, 18-19

The Shunammite - the hospitable woman - 2 Kings 4:8-10

Esther - the self sacrificing woman - Esther 4:16

The Canaanite - the woman of faith - Matthew 15:28

Mary Magdalene - the transformed woman - Mark 16:1 & 9

Elizabeth - the humble woman - Luke 1:43

Mary - the woman chosen of God - Luke 1:30-38

Mary of Bethany - the woman immortalized by Christ - Matthew 26:13; Luke 10:42

Martha - the worried housekeeper - Luke 10:40

The Woman at the well - John 4:29

Dorcas - the benevolent seamstress - Acts 9:36

Lydia - the business woman - Acts 16:14,15

Priscilla - co-laborers of Paul and discipler of Apollos - Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3

Phoebe - a special messenger and servant of the church - Romans 16:1-2

## **II. WOMEN PORTRAYED SOME SPECIAL DISTINCTIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.**

Women were the last ones at the cross - Mark 15:47

Women were the first ones at the tomb - John 20:1

Women were the first to proclaim the resurrection - Matthew 28:8

A woman was the first witness to the Jews - Luke 2:37 & 38

Women participated in the first prayer meeting - Acts 1:14

A woman was the first European convert - Acts 16:14

A woman laboured with Paul and discipled Apollos alongside her husband - Acts 18:18-26

Women contended in the gospel ministry alongside Paul - Philippians 4:3

## **III. GOD USED SPECIAL WOMEN TO DELIVER INSIGHTFUL MESSAGES TO HIS PEOPLE.**

Miriam - Exodus 15:20

Deborah - Judges 4:4

Huldah - 2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:12

Ana - Luke 2:36

## **IV. GOD WANTS TO USE WOMEN IN SPECIAL WAYS TO HIS GLORY.**

Their skills are used to provide for His work - Exodus 35:25

Their compassion and provision ministers to the poor - Proverbs 31:20

Their small sacrifices are greatly esteemed by God - Luke 21:2-4

Their kindness teaches respect - Proverbs 11:16

Their noble character is an honour to a husband - Proverbs 12:4

Their wisdom builds a strong home - Proverbs 14:1

Their modesty and decency bring honour to God - 1 Timothy 2:9-10

Their example of self-control and ministry of discipleship produces godliness in younger women - Titus 2:3-5

Their submission, purity, and reverence wins an unbelieving husband. - 1 Peter 3:1-2

*The preceding compilation, "The Worth of Women," is adapted from the Thompson Chain Study Bible – Courtesy of wayoflife.org.*



## **SNAPSHOTS.**

Brief excerpts from historical publications.

## **ANABAPTIST MENNONITE VIEWS OF THE CHURCH.**

**Anabaptists** worked out their doctrine of the church in the light of ancient tradition and a thorough study and application of the scriptures. Hubmaier, Sattler, Schiemer, Rothmann, Stadler, Simons, and Philips had all been priests in the church of Rome. Hubmaier and Rothmann had also been Protestant clerics, Roman Christianity had long assumed the validity of the Volkskirche, (*The peoples church JvL.*) that is, that with the exception of heretics and Jews everyone in Europe belonged to it by virtue of baptism.

**Anabaptism** broke completely with this pattern after initial uncertainty. By 1527 the vision in Switzerland was clear. The church was now identified as the gathered congregation of believers who have voluntarily entered it by baptism upon confession of faith. Only those can be members who are obedient to Christ. Love is the chief mark of the church. That love expresses itself, according to the Hutterite Stadler, in complete self-denial, meaning especially the surrender of all private property. It is a community of mutual aid in which nothing is held back from those in need. Peter Riedeman contributes seeing the church being a lantern in a dark place, a beacon to light the way to those in the darkness of this world.

**Anabaptism** transferred what in Catholicism were sacerdotal powers, i.e. the priest only concept, to the whole Christian congregation (i.e. the priesthood of believers See 1 Peter 2:9

Of interest is Dirk Philips' description of the church which he identified as the whole divine community of angels and redeemed humanity in heaven and on earth as. This was a traditional Catholic way of denoting the church's borders. He also said that the true church is to be found wherever the Word is preached truthfully and where the sacraments are administered according to the Word, which is the classic Protestant definition of the church. But he adds to these the **Anabaptist** emphasis on the visibility of the church. It is seen because its members live public lives of obedience to Christ. Also we have Bernhard Rothmann's view of the church which largely varied not from the rest of **Anabaptism**. Although he professed some Anabaptist doctrines he was a participant in the violent Münster rebellion and should not be considered as an Anabaptist or Mennonite.

**BALTHASAR HUBMAIER,**

*"Twelve Articles," AD1526-1527,*

I also believe and confess the existence of the holy, universal Christian church. That is, a community of saints, a brotherhood of many pious and believing men, who with one accord acknowledge one God, one Lord, one faith and one baptism. They are called together, regulated and ruled here on earth through the only and living Word of God. This church is beautiful, without spot, unerring, pure, without wrinkle, unblamable.

You are her head and bridegroom; you will be with her even to the end of the world. O my God, let me and all Christian men be found in this church at last. May we be one with her in faith and doctrine, and hold all that you have commanded us in your Word, and root up all that you have not planted. May we not be led astray by any human invention, opinion, teaching of the Fathers or popes, councils or universities, nor ancient usages, nor be brought into error by them. But where a man will not heed the threefold fraternal admonition, nor desist from his sins, I believe in my heart that the church has the power to exclude such a one, and to regard him as a publican and a heathen.

**BERNHARD ROTHMANN,**

*"Confession of Faith," ca. AD1533*

Rothmann believed the church to be a congregation of only baptized believers. In his *Confession* he wrote, "The church of Christ is a gathering of the believing children of God who praise the name of God. No one else belongs in it...The Scriptures richly testify that faith comes from hearing the Word and that the holy church be built only of those who believe. It cannot be denied that the true proclamation of the holy gospel started the holy church...The second thing through which the holy church is built is holy baptism. Baptism is the entry and gateway to the holy church; therefore according to God's order no one may be allowed into the church except through baptism. That is the common usage of baptism.

Therefore the first thing which all people and each one in particular who are to be brought into the knowledge of God and the holy church of God must encounter, is the preaching and the hearing of the divine Word. It is the source of faith. Christ is the foundation on which the holy church is erected and built. This foundation must be laid before the church is built on it; it must be laid through the proclamation and witness of the gospel. The true witnessing to Christ and the preaching of the gospel is the first means by which the church is prepared. The church is gathered, erected and built of those who believe. They will be led into unity and sanctification as Christ prayed—John 17—and be preserved by the Father. The Scriptures richly testify that faith comes from hearing the Word and that the holy church be built only of those who believe. It cannot be denied that the true proclamation of the holy gospel started the holy church.

**MENNO SIMONS,**

*"The New Birth," AD1537*

These are the holy Christian church which has the promise; the true children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ. For they are born with him of one Father, they are the new Eve, the pure chaste bride. They are flesh of Christ's flesh and bone of his bone, the spiritual house of Israel, the spiritual city Jerusalem, the spiritual temple and Mount Zion, the spiritual ark of the Lord in which is hidden the true bread of heaven, Christ Jesus and his blessed Word, the green, blossoming rod of faith, and the spiritual tables of stone with the commandments of the Lord written on them. They are the spiritual seed of Abraham, children of the promise, in covenant

with God and partakers of the heavenly blessing.

They are the children of peace who have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and know war no more. They give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

Their sword is the sword of the Spirit, which they wield in a good conscience through the Holy Ghost.

Their marriage is that of one man and one woman, according to God's own ordinance.

Their kingdom is the kingdom of grace, here in hope and after this in eternal life.

Their citizenship is in heaven, and they use the lower creations such as eating, drinking, clothing, and shelter, with thanksgiving and to the necessary support of their own lives, and to the free service of their neighbor, according to the Word of the Lord.

Their doctrine is the unadulterated Word of God, testified through Moses and the prophets, through Christ and the apostles, upon which they build their faith, which saves our souls. Everything that is contrary thereto, they consider accursed.

Their baptism they administer to the believing according to the commandment of the Lord, in the doctrines and usages of the apostles.

Their Lord's Supper they celebrate as a memorial of the favors and death of their Lord, and an incitement to brotherly love.

Their ban or excommunication descends on all the proud scorners—great and small, rich and poor, without any respect of persons, who once passed under the Word but have now fallen back, those living or teaching offensively in the house of the Lord—until they repent.

Their fight and struggle is against the devil, world, and flesh all their days, pressing on toward the prize of the high calling that they may obtain it. So they prove by their actions that they believe the Word of the Lord, that they know and possess Christ in power, that they are born of God and have Him as their Father.

#### **MENNO SIMONS**

*"Reply to Gellius Faber," AD1554*

With this I will terminate the doctrine of the churches, and conclude this subject with the following questions and answers, which I trust, by the

grace of God, will give the industrious reader no little gain and bring great clarity.

Question. What is the church of Christ?

Answer. A community of saints.

Q. With whom did she originate?

A. With Adam and Eve.

Q. Of whom is she?

A. Of God through Christ.

Q. Of what kind of servants is she begotten?

A. Of those who are irreproachable in doctrine and life.

Q. Whereby do they beget her?

A. By the Spirit and Word of God.

Q. To what purpose do they beget her?

A. That she may serve, thank, and praise God.

Q. Of what mind is she?

A. In her weakness, of Christ's mind.

Q. What kind of fruits does she bring forth?

A. Fruits which are conformable to the Word of God.

*The True Signs by Which the Church of Christ May Be Known*

1] By an unadulterated, pure doctrine. Deuteronomy 4:6-5:12; Isaiah 8:5; Mathew 28:20; Mark 16:15; John 8:52; Galatians 1.

2] By a scriptural use of the sacramental signs. Mathew 28:19; Mark 14:22; Mark 16; Luke 22:19; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 11:22-23. 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:12;

3] By obedience to the Word. Mathew 7; Luke 11:28; John 7:18; 15:10; James 1:22.

4] By unfeigned, brotherly love. John 13:34; Romans 13:8; 1 Corinthians 13:1; 1 John. 3:18; 4:7, 8.

5] By a bold confession of God and Christ. Mathew 10:32; Mark. 8:29; Romans 10:9; 1 Timothy 6:13.

6] By oppression and tribulation for the sake of the Lord's Word.

Mathew 5:10; 10:39; 16:24; 24:9; Luke 6:28; John 15:20; 2 Timothy 2:9; 3:12; 1 Peter 1:6; 3:14; 4:13; 5:10; 1 John 3:13

## PETER RIEDEMAN

*Through Whom Is Gathered Together One Holy, Christian Church.* AD 1542

We confess also that God has, through Christ, chosen, accepted and sought a people for Himself, not having spot, blemish, wrinkle, or any such thing, but pure and holy, as He, Himself, is holy. Therefore is such a peo-

ple, community, assembly or church gathered and led together by the Holy Spirit, which from henceforth rules, controls and orders everything in her, leading all her members to be of one mind and intention (so that they want only to be like Christ, to partake of His nature, and diligently to do His will), cleaving to Him as a bride and spouse to her bridegroom, yea, as one body with Him, one plant, one tree, bearing and giving one kind of fruit, as Paul says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God", and again, "The same Spirit assureth us that we are children of God."

Since, then the church is an assembly of the children of God, as it is written, "Ye are the temple of the living God," as God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people," "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be your father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."

Therefore is the assembly of the unjust and sinners, whores, adulterers, brawlers, drunkards, the covetous, selfish, vain and all those who lie in word and deed, no church of God, and they belong not to him; as Paul says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Thus is not only their assembly not a church of Christ, but none of them can be or continue therein unless he repent of his sins, as David says, "The sinner shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous." After him John also says, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither that worketh abomination and lies; but they which are written in the living book of the Lamb. But outside are dogs, sorcerers, and whoremongers, idolators, murderers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie."

What The Church Is....The church of Christ is the basis and ground of truth, a lantern of righteousness, in which the light of grace is borne and held before the whole world, that its darkness, unbelief and blindness be thereby seen and made light, and that men may also learn to see and know the way of life. Therefore is the church of Christ in the first place completely filled with the light of Christ as a lantern is illuminated and made bright by the light: that His light might shine through her to others.

**DIRK PHILIPS,**

*A Visible Not an Invisible Church.* ca.AD1562

The church of the Lord, although existing in spirit and in truth, is nevertheless also visible. The reasons are as follows: 1] The name church or congregation indicates that it is not only invisible, but also visible, for the term used is ecclesia, that is, a gathering or congregating together. 2] Christ Jesus Himself chose His apostles (John. 15:16), and gathered them together as a church, and thus was not always invisible in Jerusalem and Judea. 3] The apostles, according to the command of the Lord, through the preaching of the gospel, in faith and truth, and by proper Christian baptism, and the power and unity of the Holy Spirit, gathered a church (Mathew 28; Mark. 16). This was not an invisible body, for they did not write nor send their epistles in a general or indiscriminate way to all people, but specifically denominating the believers and God-fearing people, designating the places and calling many persons by name. How is it possible for all this to be invisible?



## **ANGELS OF GOD**

*By Brother Nolan R.*

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22).

What is this "innumerable company of angels"? Who are they, and what is their purpose? Let's take a look at what the Bible says about angels.

*Angels are real.* They are created beings, created by the God who made you and me. "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Nehemiah 9:6).

*There are fallen angels.* The devil, the foe of our soul, is one of them. "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his

angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev. 12:7-9).

*Angels are immortal.* They are stronger than men and have great power, but we are not to worship them. "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36). "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word" (Ps. 103:20). "And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which sheaved me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God" (Rev. 22:8-9).

*Angels have an order in which they serve God and praise Him.* The Bible alludes to four orders, which are listed here:

*SERAPHIMS.* The only place in the Bible that speaks of seraphims is Isaiah 6:1-4. The power of these seraphims is demonstrated here, for when one cried to another his voice shook the doorposts of the temple.

*CHERUBIMS.* "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:20-22).

Cherubims in the tabernacle: "And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims: and he spake unto him" (Numbers 7:89).

Cherubims in the temple of Solomon: "And within the oracle he made two cherubims of olive tree, each ten cubits high" (1 Kings 6:23). "And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims: For the cherubims spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above" (2 Chronicles 5:7-8).

This helps to explain these verses: "And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth;

thou hast made heaven and earth" (2 Kings 19:15). "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth" (Psalm 80:1). "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth" (Isaiah 37:16).

*MICHAEL, THE ARCHANGEL.* "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia" (Daniel 10:13) "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9). "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thesalonians 4:16).

*GABRIEL, GOD'S MESSENGER.* "Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation" (Daniel 9:21). "And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings" (Luke 1:19). "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth" (Luke 1:26).

*Angels act in behalf of God's children.* "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are the not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:13-14).

*Angels will be the reapers.* "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matthew 25:31). "The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels" (Matthew 13:39). "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried" (Luke 16:22). "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31).

*Angels in our lives today.* What place do angels have in our lives today?

What is the difference in their work and that of the Holy Spirit?

While angels are created beings, the Holy Spirit is one with God Himself. Angels sometimes take on human form, but is there any place in the Scriptures where a human form was identified as the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is an authority in Himself, but when angels have spoken to men, they were doing so under orders from God. The Holy Spirit brings discernment and understanding to the hearts of God's children while angels mostly minister to physical needs.

Jesus said His "little ones" have angels. Who are the little ones? Could it be anyone who puts his trust in God? "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8).

Do the events of our times bring us sadness and grief? Do the times we are living in sometimes bring us despair and the awareness that Satan is trying so desperately to overpower us? In the great spiritual battle raging around the globe this very hour, there are Satan and his angels, and there are God and His angels. Which side do you believe will have the final victory?

There is hope! Those on God's side have no reason to be disheartened. Satan wants the Christian to forget who is on the believer's side, but when a Christian understands the help he has, he will not be cast down and dismayed. He has God and the host of heaven standing beside him! "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Psalm 34:7). "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psalm 91:11).

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## MAKING A FRESH START

"Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." - [Eph 4:22-24](#). "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." - [Rom 13:14](#).

WE CAN all start afresh! However far we have ascended, there is something higher; and however far we have fallen, it is always possible to make a fresh start. We need to take our place in the School of Christ and be taught by Him ([Eph 4:20-21](#)).

"The old man" which we must "put off" is clearly our former manner of life. If we have not put it entirely away, let us do so now by an immediate act of faith in the living Spirit. It does not take long for a beggar to put off his rags and take instead a new suit of clothes, and it need not take a moment longer to put away habits and thoughts, ways of speech and life which are unworthy of the children of God. Do it now, and look up to the Holy Spirit to keep renewing you in the spirit of your mind.

But more than this, let us "put on the new man," which is the life of Jesus Christ, that ideal which is in the likeness of God, and which the Lord created for us by His blessed life and death and resurrection. But to enable us to live this life we need the daily help of the Holy Spirit. He entered our hearts at the moment of regeneration, and has been with us ever since. We may not have realised His entry, but we believe it because of the assurance of [1Cor.6:19](#); [Rom.8:9](#); [Eph.3:16](#). For my part, I like to begin every day, before lifting my head from the pillow, by saying, "Thou art within, O Spirit of Christ, though I feel Thee not."

If the Holy Spirit be ungrieved He will witness to our sonship; He will enthroned Christ as King of our life; will keep the self-life in the place of death; will give us a hunger for the things of God; He will give power in witness-bearing. In order to have a strong and blessed Christian experience, the one thing is to see that we do not grieve the Spirit. I do not think that we can grieve Him away, but we may greatly limit and restrain His gracious work by insincerity of speech, the nursing of an unforgiving spirit, any kind of over-reaching or fraudulent dealing, impurity of speech, or failure in love. We may be bound, so as not to be able to move our arms, by a number of cotton threads, quite as tightly as by a strong rope-thong. Let us take care not to grieve Him by such inconsistencies.

**Fulfil in me, O God, those desires of goodness which Thou hast created in my heart, and perfect the work of faith, that Jesus Christ may be glorified in me.**

**AMEN.**

## Dying to Self

When you are forgotten or neglected or purposely set at naught,  
and you do not sting and hurt at the oversight, but your heart is happy,  
being counted worthy to suffer for Christ,  
that is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed,  
your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger  
rise in your heart, or even defend yourself,  
but take it all in patient loving silence,  
that is dying to self.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any  
impunctuality, or any annoyance, when you can stand face to face with  
waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility and endure it as Jesus en-  
dured it,  
that is dying to self.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any cli-  
mate, any society, any solitude, any interruption by the will of God,  
that is dying to self.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your  
own good works, or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to  
be unknown,  
that is dying to self.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than  
yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no  
rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart,  
that is dying to self.

*Author Unknown. From "The Christian Example" May 7, 1965.*

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