

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.**

**God's Purpose for Us**

There is not a spider hanging on the wall that doesn't have a purpose; there is not a weed growing in the corner of the church lot that doesn't have a reason for being there; there is not a single insect fluttering in the breeze that does not accomplish some divine decree; and I will never believe that God created any man or woman, especially any Christian man or woman, to be a blank, and to be a nothing. He made you for a purpose. Find out what that purpose is; find out your niche, and fill it. Even if it is something small, if it is only to be someone who picks up trash at the side of the road, or one who mows the church lawn, do something in this great battle for God and truth.

*Anonymous.*

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May the grace and peace of our Lord and Saviour abound in your life in the time allocated to you in these the final days before the coming of Christ Jesus to take His people unto Himself.

The Lord bless thee all

*Joseph van Loon.*

**MINISTER'S CORNER.***Bro. Gladwin Koehn.***PEACE ON EARTH***"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"*

Thus the holy angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds on the hills of Judea. Their proclamation expressed the Father's great heart and wish for the entire earth for all time. Truly, the child Jesus, born in humble circumstances, was the Prince of Peace from heaven. Despite all the wars and strife since the birth of Christ, Jesus did bring peace to the earth. The problem is that men do not recognize its essence.

At the close of His ministry Jesus said to His apostles, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). We understand by His use of the personal pronoun 'My' that His peace is distinct from that which the world gives, or imposes. He said that He was "leaving" His peace with His followers. His peace, and the charge of propagating that peace, has always been a foundational point of faith with the remnant of true Christians through the centuries since that time.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelations 14:12).

"The faith of Jesus" not only refers to having faith in Christ as the Savior, but to that doctrine that He believed and taught. Jesus received His doctrine, or faith, from the Father (John 7:16). He said His words were not His own but the Father's (John 14:10). That which He received of His Father He faithfully taught to His followers. It was His faith.

The cornerstone of that faith was, of course, that He would lay down His life for the redemption of mankind. It was His faith that He alone could do that. But He, being the perfect example, expected that His followers should also live out the angelic pronouncement heard by the shepherds. His disciples were to take up the witness of His peace in their hearts and show it to the world. Of all Jesus' teachings, the peace doctrine is perhaps the one that requires the greatest crucifixion of self in order to live it. The world repudiates it vehemently.

All major religions pay lip service to loving peace. But none truly comprehend that the essence of peace is being at one with God through having one's sins forgiven. Excepting the true faith of Jesus, none of the prominent religions insist that its adherents deny self and suffer for the sake of true peace. Many people are ready to fight for what they call peace but refuse to suffer the denial of self, much less persecution, for the sake of true peace. Only a true follower of Jesus Christ can and will do that. The value one places on this peace is determined by how much he is willing to bear his cross for the sake of God and others.

It is intriguing to note that enmeshed in the present world scene of strife and turmoil are three false religions. Arverd Wiggers, a student of prophecy and author of; "It May Be Later Than You Think", has raised the question whether the three unclean, frog-like spirits spoken of in Revelation 16 could be behind these three false systems of belief (Rev. 16:13-14). These three are Islam, Judaism, and nominal Christianity. Jesus being the only eternal Truth, any religion that does not embrace Him and live His teaching must be a false one. Furthermore, these three false religions have tremendous political power. Each is claiming to love peace, even as their political and military arm is waging war.

One hesitates to place nominal Christianity together with other false religions. But pondering the multitudes who are traveling to eternity, consoled by a false hope due to a watered-down gospel, what else is one to conclude? This "other gospel" (Galatians 1:6-9) (*See previous article "Another Gospel" in the October issue. Ed*) with "another Jesus" (2 Corinthians 11:4) makes the way of salvation so broad that almost anything fits thereon. It knows nothing of bearing the cross of suffering for the sake of peace. In a broad sense, like other false religions, it has deceived nations of people. In false Christianity is a great mystery, and when one begins to catch a glimpse of the implications, he may well be amazed as John the Revelator was when he saw the vision of the great whore (Revelations 17:1-6).

False Christianity is identified most clearly by its tacit rejection of Jesus as the Prince of Peace. If loving one's enemies and being nonresistant in spirit and action, together with living a life of purity and holiness, are the defining elements of the faith of Jesus, then to compromise these points is to corrupt the faith. Hence, the world-tainted Christianity prevalent today is a corrupted and deceptive mutation of the faith.

Jesus' peace was fostered by that deep-settled assurance that He was doing the Father's will. The Holy Ghost bestows that peace upon Christ's disciples who walk in obedience to His Word. A true, humble disciple of the Lord has peace—he doesn't need to strive for it. It is just a "natural" result of Jesus living within. "For He is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14). Consequently, as Jesus suffered as a result of being obedient to His Father's will, so will His followers.

True defenseless, peace-loving Christians have, through the centuries, been caught in the gears of the religion-political machine. It was just such a situation that led to the martyrdom of many of our brethren in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The corrupt heart of man, nor the sinister mind of Satan, has not changed since that time, and the sobering reality is that such things could repeat themselves should conditions be right.

The Christmas season is traditionally a joyous time. The western world, or the "Christian" world, will remember the birth of Jesus and mingle the "story" in with the festivities. There certainly is something in this that we are glad for. But how the heart longs that men would honor Christ's birth in truth by knowing His peace in the heart! Now is a time when the true Christian should honestly prove his heart. Is he or she truly at peace with God through Christ Jesus? Then he will be at peace with his fellowmen and bear effectual witness to that Heavenly proclamation, "On earth peace, good will toward men."

*"God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things ... when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"* (Hebrews 1:1-3).

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## On Celebrating Christmas

On the premise that it *can* be easier to consider principles of conduct when not embroiled in the practice, Nigel Pibworth offers the following thoughts on Christmas.

.....  
 Christians should primarily observe 'Christmas':

[A] When it can be shown that Christ was born then, and that the Holy Spirit appointed the day.

[B] When there is a clear scriptural principle that calls for its observance.

[C] When the proof is given that the apostles and early Christians of the first century kept it.

### Some Principles to Consider

#### 1. The authority of the Lord

The festival is not from the Lord. There is no hint in the New Testament that we should set a date apart for the celebration of the birth of the Saviour. The Apostles (whom the Lord particularly promised to lead into all truth) and the early church knew nothing of this celebration. If this festival is not from the Lord with His authority where does it come from? If this thought is new to you please research the origin of Christmas. Note that this principle, if faithfully adhered to, disposes of all arguments based on tradition and expediency. 'What says the Lord?' 'Have we His authority?' is the true position for His followers today as in the first century.

**Scriptures to ponder.** *Leviticus 10:1; John 15:14, John 14:26, John 16:13; Matthew 16:22-23; Deuteronomy 12:29-30; Revelations 22:18.*

#### 2. Truthfulness

This principle prevents us calling a day Christ's birthday without warrant. It prevents us even suggesting it. Where do lies come from? The festival is not associated with truth. Can truth be linked with 25 December, 'mass of Christ', 'carols', 'pictorial scenes', and the whole associated trappings of paganism. Compare the truthfulness of the feast which we are exhorted to keep with the lies bound up with 'Christmas'.

**Scriptures to ponder.** *John 15:26, Proverbs 23:23; Joshua 24:14, John 18:38, 1 Corinthians 13:4-6; 1 Timothy 3:15.*

### 3. True worship

In the old dispensation there were special days, weeks, months and years. When we come to the New Covenant the picture is different. There are no yearly festivals, no sabbatical year, no grand temple, no impressive ritual; but a simple gathering of God's people in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Apostle Paul was deeply concerned over the Galatians wishing to keep the Jewish feast, although these had been originally appointed by God. Surely such feasts have more to recommend them than a Gentile feast appointed in demon worship.

**Scriptures to ponder.** *Galatians 4:9-11; Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 9:1; John 4:23.*

### 4. Separation

Satan ever mixes and he early blended Christianity and Heathenism. As with many other things the mid-winter pagan feast was 'Christianized' into 'Christmas'. If our attitude to such mixtures as priestcraft, baptismal regeneration, Mary worship, state churches etc. is clear, why not to 'Christmas' – a similar product. If 'Christmas' is Babylonian surely there is a clear call to separation unto the Lord.

**Scriptures to ponder.** *2 Corinthians 6:4-18; Matthew 13:33; 1 Kings 12:27-29, Romans 12:2.*

### 5. Stumbling block

The festival with its focus on the babe without the cross and resurrection distorts the gospel and drugs an already sleepy and sentimental Christendom. Christ is the living Lord now at the right hand of God soon to return in power and glory. 'Christmas' is sensuous, worldly and gluttonous and causes many Christians to backslide. The pragmatic principle from which many evangelical Christians defend its observance is leading more to man's opinion and 'will worship' and less to the Scriptures. If we can keep 'Christmas' without scriptures, we can do anything, just as men appoint. Are other religious feast days and so called 'saints' days stumbling blocks?

**Scriptures to ponder.** *1 Samuel 15:15, Hebrews 13:8; Colossians 2:23.*

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**SCRIPTURAL POEMS:**

By: John Bunyan, 1628-1688. .

**The Book of Ruth.**

*Concluded from the November Issue.*

*Chapter 3.*

Then Naomi said, Shall I not, my daughter,  
Seek rest for thee, that thou do well hereafter?  
And is not Boaz, with whose maids thou wast,

One of the nearest kinsmen that thou hast?

Behold, this night he in his threshing floor  
Is winnowing Barley, wash thyself therefore,  
Anoint thee, put thy clothes on, and get down  
Unto the floor; but make not thyself known,  
Till he hath eat and drank, and shall prepare  
To lie him down; then take good notice where

He goes about to take his night's repose,

And go thou in there, and lift up the clothes  
From off his feet, and likewise lay thee down,  
And what thou hast to do he will make known.

And she made answer, Whatsoever thou

Hast me commanded, will I gladly do.

And down unto the floor she hasted, and  
Forthwith fulfilled her mother-in-law's command.

So now when Boaz had his heart refresh'd,  
With meat and drink, he laid him down to rest,

Near to the heap of corn; she softly came,  
Uncover'd's feet, and lay down by the same.

And, lo! at midnight, as he turn'd him round,

He was afraid, for at his feet he found

A woman lay. Who art thou? then said he.

I am thine handmaid Ruth, replied she,  
Over thine handmaid therefore spread thy skirt,

I pray, because thou a near kinsman art.

Blessed be thou, said he, because thou hast  
Made manifest more kindness at the last,

Than at the first, in that thou did'st, my daughter,  
 No young men, whether poor or rich, go after.  
 And now, my daughter, be not thou afraid,  
 I will do to thee all that thou hast said:  
 For all the city of my people knows,  
 Thou art a woman truly virtuous;  
 And now though I am kin and undoubtedly,  
 Yet there is one that's nearer kin than I.  
 Tarry this night, and when 'tis morning light,  
 If he will like a kinsman, do thee right,  
 We'll let him, but if not, I myself will,  
 As the Lord lives; till morning lie thou still.  
 And till the morning at his feet she lay,  
 And then arose about the break of day;  
 And he gave her a charge, not to declare  
 That there had any womankind been there.  
 He also said, bring here thy veil, and hold  
 To me; she did, and thereinto he told  
 Six measures full of barley, and did lay  
 It on her, and she hasted thence away.  
 And when unto her mother-in-law she came,  
 Art thou, said she, my daughter come again?  
 Then what the man had done she told, and said,  
 He these six measures full of barley laid  
 Upon me, for said he, This I bestow,  
 Lest to thy mother thou should'st empty go.  
 Then, said she, sit still daughter, till thou see  
 What the event of this intrigue will be;  
 For till the man this day hath made an end,  
 No satisfaction will on him attend.

*Chapter 4.*

And Boaz went up to the city gate,  
 And after a short space, while there he sate,  
 The kinsman of whom he had spoke, came by,  
 To whom he said, Ho, such a one, draw nigh,  
 And sit down here. He came and sat him down.

Then he took ten men, elders of the town,  
 And caused them to sit down. Then to the man  
 That was of kin, thus he his speech began,  
 Naomi, said he, who not long since sojourn'd  
 Among the Moabites, is now return'd;  
 And doth intend to sell a piece of ground,  
 The which Elimelech our brother own'd.  
 And now to give thee notice, I thought fit,  
 That if thou pleasest, thou may'st purchase it.  
 In presence of these men assembled here.  
 Then if thou wilt redeem it, now declare  
 Thy mind, but if thou wilt not, then let me,  
 For thou art next of kin, and I next thee.  
 Then said the kinsman, I will it redeem.  
 Boaz reply'd, if good to thee it seem,  
 To buy it of the hand of Naomi,  
 Thou also art obliged the same to buy  
 Of Ruth the Moabitess, wife o' th' dead;  
 On his inheritance to raise up seed.  
 The kinsman said, I cannot do this thing  
 Myself, lest I an inconvenience bring  
 Upon mine own inheritance, what's mine  
 By right, therefore I now to thee resign.  
 Now this in Israel did a custom stand,  
 Concerning changing and redeeming land;  
 To put all controversy to an end,  
 A man pluck'd off his shoe, and gave his friend;  
 And this in Israel was an evidence,  
 When e'er they changed an inheritance.  
 Then said the kinsman unto Boaz, do  
 Thou take my right. And off he pluck'd his shoe.  
 Then Boaz to the elders thus did say  
 And to the people, all of you this day  
 Appear for me as witnesses, that I  
 Have bought all of the land of Naomi,  
 That was Elimelech's or did belong  
 Either to Mahlon or to Chilion:

And Ruth the Moabite, who some time  
 Was Mahlon's wife, I've purchas'd to be mine,  
 Still to preserve alive the dead man's name  
 On his inheritance, lest that the same  
 Should in the gate where he inhabited,  
 Or 'mongst his brethren be extinguished:  
 Behold, this day, my witnesses you are.  
 Then all the people that were present there,  
 And elders said, We are thy witnesses:  
 May God this woman thou hast taken bless,  
 That she, like Rachel, and like Leah be,  
 Which two did build up Israel's family:  
 And thou in Ephratah exalt thy name,  
 And through the town of Bethl'hem spread thy fame;  
 And may the seed which God shall give to thee  
 Of this young woman, full as prosperous be,  
 As was the house of Pharez heretofore,  
 (Pharez, whom Tamar unto Judah bore.)  
 So he took Ruth, and as his wife he knew her,  
 And God was pleased, when he went in to her  
 To grant the blessing of conception,  
 And she accordingly bare him a son.  
 Then said the woman, Blessed be the Lord!  
 Bless thou him Naomi, who doth afford  
 To thee this day a kinsman, which shall be  
 Famous in Israel; and shall be to thee  
 As the restorer of thy life again,  
 And in thy drooping age shall thee sustain:  
 For that thy daughter-in-law, who loves thee well  
 And in thy sight doth seven sons excel,  
 Hath born this child. Then Naomi took the boy  
 To nurse; and did him in her bosom lay.  
 Her neighbours too, gave him a name, for why,  
 This son, say they, is born to Naomi:  
 They called him Obed, from whose loins did spring  
 Jesse, the sire of David, Israel's king.

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**THE FREE CONSCIENCE.**

In the song, "Faith of Our Fathers," the second verse says;

"Our fathers chained in prisons dark,  
Were still in heart and conscience free:  
How sweet would be their children's fate,  
If they, like them, could die for thee!  
Faith of our fathers! Holy faith!  
We will be true to thee till death!"

To have the heart and conscience free and uphold the most holy faith of our fathers in these last and perilous times should be the sincere desire of our hearts. In Acts 24:16, Paul says, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Do these affluent times seem to negotiate with our consciences and the convictions of our fathers? "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Should the spirit of simplicity, modesty, and economy become old fashioned when we have money to go and do and buy?

The people of America (*and Australia seems to be that way also; The Editor*) have a love affair with their vehicles. Auto manufacturers, of necessity, must be dedicated to obtaining the latest and greatest in technology, design, comfort, performance, and cosmetic appearance in order to have the cutting edge on the market. Furthermore, the craze for pleasure seeking—vacationing, hobbies, sports, and traveling ("lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God")—dictates that advertising depict this kind of lifestyle. The images of people having fun, happy families on vacation, retired couples traveling, and individuals pursuing sports and entertainment are printed wherever one looks. Slowly, slowly this subtly plants the seed of desire in people's hearts and minds to begin thinking about pursuing such a lifestyle. With the power of affluence in this country, these things can become a reality, not just a dream.

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses gives the children of Israel the commandments of the Lord which they were to keep in the land flowing with milk and honey. Verse 3 says, "Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God

of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey." "And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which He sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (vv. 10-12).

The world we live in is Egypt, and the things of this world are the house of bondage. God wants a people to show forth the life of Jesus in these spiritually perilous times. When the "salt of the earth" begins to remove the "ancient landmarks" of our consciences, which our fathers have set, then wherewith shall the earth be salted? Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." Likewise, the disciples of Jesus must live lifestyles that are meek and lowly. We must not be found guilty of forming a league with Pride, because the Lord, who brought us forth out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, is a jealous God. "Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth" (vv. 14-15).

We are surrounded by false gods and idols. There are gods of sports, gods of fun, gods of fashion, gods of wealth, and many, many others. The first conference of the church established that Christians were to abstain from meat offered to idols. (Acts 15:20, 29) When we buy clothes that the gods of fashion advocate, we enter their temple and eat meat offered to them. Are we buying clothes, or are we buying fashion?

Likewise, a restaurant that uses televised sports to attract customers is a temple to the god of sports. Are we eating meat offered to this idol? Amusement parks and places that offer entertainment will not feed our souls with the "bread of life." Instead, they will fill our hearts and souls with the "husks which the swine did eat," as in the parable of the prodigal son. More things could be mentioned.

"Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is

drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live of Me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John 6:53-58).

Jesus is the spiritual diet of meat and drink that keeps us alive and fulfilled in our Christian lives. We are to consume His way of life upon us, "For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

Are we searing our consciences by eating meat offered to these idols? Our consciences are that part within us that decides as to the moral quality of our thoughts, words, and actions. The conscience gives awareness of the good or evil of one's conduct or motives. A conscience can be formed, or trained, to recognize the moral rectitude or depravity of one's course; it works independently of our will. A good conscience is one that provokes no feeling of reproach against oneself and does not accuse oneself of wrong (because he or she is walking uprightly). It is a free conscience. If its values have been taught by the Holy Ghost, it is a safe guide.

Following the Holy Spirit with a willing heart to do His bidding must be our first and foremost ambition in life. History teaches that in times of affluence and ease the church tends to drift away from the full gospel of Christ. We are living in those perilous times right now. We must be on guard at all times to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints." The clothes we put on our children and that we as young fathers and mothers wear, what we put in our houses, the image we portray with our vehicles and homes are all fruit of where our souls are feeding. It is in these "small" things where the little foxes spoil the vines. Are our consciences being compromised and the ancient landmarks moved farther out to give us more room to take on the abominations of the people around us?

With love for Jesus Christ, let us take away the altars of the strange gods and the high places, and break down the images and cut down the groves. And Zion shall rejoice and flourish in the unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us earnestly contend for the faith.

*Jason Nichols, CA.*

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## **THE SENTENCE OF DEATH.**

God created man with a strong need for religion. He intended to fill that need but left it open to one's own choice of gods. If the God of heaven does not hold His rightful place, there is always an unfulfilled corner in the human heart. Perhaps it is the resulting emptiness and misunderstood frustration that make men extremely zealous for their personal religion. The followers of some religions have even resorted to murder to promote their faith.

Scrolling back through the pages of history, we find countless examples of faithful believers laying down their lives at the hands of zealous practitioners of other faiths. Stephen, making an appeal to the angry Jews, reminded them, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52). From that day on, the history of Christianity is blotched by the blood of the faithful.

We marvel at the courage and faith of the saints who have endured such unreasonable hatred. Although a few recanted under the pressure of cruel persecution, untold numbers went willingly, even eagerly, to their suffering and death. Instead of extinguishing their faith, the terrors of the enemies inflamed the sacrificial love of the saints.

In the security and liberty of our modern world, such stories are so remote they hardly seem real. It is hard for us to comprehend that even today some are facing death to take a stand for the faith of Jesus Christ. Missionaries are encountering those who face a very real possibility of making the ultimate sacrifice if they take up the cross and seal their faith with water baptism.

How would you and I feel if we were faced with such a decision? Suppose we were faced with a literal enemy who would ask us to renounce our faith or die. Surely we would set our face like a flint and accept the consequences. Knowing our eternal destiny was at stake, and the issue being black and white, few of us would turn our back on the Lord.

We do, in fact, have a relentless enemy. He is no less murderous than he has ever been. He is still out "to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10). No one can enter the faith with less than a commitment to lay down

his life for Him who died to save us. Jesus said it this way: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." (Luke 9:23-24). Jesus' followers will always be in mortal combat. Our Master knew that Satan's hatred is implacable. He may change his tactics, but his soul-destroying energy never abates. Whether he uses audacious measures to intimidate and overwhelm or if he employs a long term plan of deception doesn't seem to matter so much to him. The end is always to alienate us from God.

All who live in unbelief, whether by totally denying the Lord or in compromising with the world, will always feel threatened by the faithfulness of the saints. The faithfulness of true believers judges all sin and makes sinners accountable to the truth. Being judged will cause either repentance or resistance. To a greater or lesser degree, all those who take a conscientious stand for the right will be resisted. This is why Paul wrote, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Jesus stated, "... I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19).

Now as we walk through the world, there is incessant clamoring from the roadsides, offering subtle compromises to complete faith and fear of God. It is easy to ignore the fact that we are being tempted to let self revive, starting us on a road that will gradually alienate us from God. Satan's scheme is to cause us to drift in a way that will not cause alarm.

One of his methods is the temptation to try to find a middle way. Can we be true to the Lord, for example, without drawing such a clear line against sin? Under the guise of being understanding and patient (which are wonderful virtues in their place), we can spare ourselves the pain of faithfully standing by the cross of truth. Or we may quiet the voice of conviction by comparing situation to situation, concluding that, in this case, we are excused from action.

We can expect to have many tests that will cut to the heart. Will we lay down our life, or will we not? Paul said, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Cor. 1:9). Many are the issues where we are tempted to stop short of a complete sellout. How much of the "good life" can we partake of, for instance, without incurring the guilt of loving the world? Can we partake of the world's offer of security in wealth and insurance without los-

ing our faith? Can we pursue beauty and decoration without falling into pride and worldliness? Et cetera, et cetera.

When we were converted, we probably didn't think about all the implications of our decision, we only knew we had completely surrendered to the Lord, and now we loved Him. We had no reserves in our commitment. The life of simplicity and devotion, instead of being a cross, was most attractive to us. Our deep conviction was to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. That love and simplicity is the soul of Christian living.

Faithful soldiers of the cross have clear vision, because they carry the sentence of death in their body (see 2 Cor. 4:10-11). Whether that death comes in a physical way or by laying down their will, reputation, fears, social standing, security, or comfort, they are undeterred, because they can freely say like the apostle, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

In the end time, when the love of many becomes cold and the great falling away occurs, it will become more difficult to find those who have more than a mental and theological assent to the death of self. Yet the grace of God will always be sufficient for every one of us who, by faith and love, risks all to follow Him.

*Used by permission from the "Messenger of Truth".*

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### **Self-Discipline.**

The only time church discipline is necessary is when self-discipline fails. Therefore, we should teach and embrace self-discipline more.

The Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 9:27, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." The first part of this sentence means that he kept his body under control. The second part means that he made his body obey him. If we do the same, we will be able to refuse everything that is not good or wholesome, and we will be able to do everything that is good and wholesome.

A body is not all there is to a human being. More importantly, we are a spirit and we also have a soul. Both the soul and spirit are non-material;

you can't touch them with your finger. However, I understand that the soul has more to do with our personality while the spirit has more to do with our God-consciousness. Our bodies return to dust but our spirit and soul live on. Our bodies are just a temporary dwelling place for our spirit and soul.

Our bodies should not dominate our spirit and soul; rather, our spirit and soul should dominate our bodies. Therefore, if we say, "My body feels like doing this so I'm going to do it," we are operating or functioning on the wrong basis. The determining factor is what is right or wrong, edifying or not edifying, according to God's Word. Our bodies must be our servants, not our masters. Self-discipline is to have our bodies under the control of our spirit, and, in the case of children of God, our spirits under the control of God's Word and the Holy Spirit, which work together.

Scripture which requires self-discipline to fulfil is found in I John 2:15. "Love not the world." Here the word "world" does not mean the beautiful things of nature which we all love, but those things which make for a carnal life instead of a spiritual life. Even the most spiritually minded child of God will have carnal inclinations so long as he is in the body, but it is imperative that we each have enough self-discipline to keep those inclinations from taking over and dominating us, body, soul and spirit.

Self-discipline is necessary, not only to keep us from going the wrong way and doing the wrong things, but it is necessary for us to go the right way and to do the right things. As much as possible, we should do those things which are good for our spiritual well-being as well as avoid those things which are bad for our spiritual well-being. As much as possible, we should eat those things which are good for our bodies and avoid those things which are not good for our bodies, the temple of the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 6:19, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

*From "The Silver Lining" By Willis Ehnle – Used by permission.*

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## Distinctive Worship Patterns (Part 6)

### Segregated Seating

Moral purity has been the standard for New Testament churches through the ages. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure" (James 3:17). Paul emphasized purity in relating to sisters in congregational life. "Intreat . . . the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity" (1 Timothy 5:1, 2).

In light of these Scriptures, the consistent response of a pure-minded brotherhood is to practice segregated seating for worship services. When we gather as a brotherhood, the individual family unit blends into the broader family of God.

Segregated seating has been a longstanding practice that has served the church well. Until the late 1800s, all services held in Lancaster Mennonite Conference churches had segregated seating. (*and is still the practice in the Mennonite Churches who support the work in Australia. Editor.*)

The first mixed seating in Lancaster Mennonite Conference churches came when funerals began being held in churches. Previously, funerals and weddings were held in the homes. In this setting, the families sat together. After a funeral service the group went to the cemetery for the burial. Later it became customary to have a second service in the church building after the burial. This service made it possible for more to share in the funeral service than could at the home. Families also sat together in this service. However, some Mennonite groups did not make this exception regarding mixed seating in the church buildings.

During the mid 1900s the (Old) Mennonite Church began to struggle with maintaining segregated seating. This was part of the worldward drift that accelerated after World War II.

The introduction of mixed seating into regular worship services began when couples began sitting together in Sunday evening worship services. A lack of spirituality in the youth caused people to reason that if couples could sit together, it might be a remedy to irreverence during worship services. Also young parents began reasoning that they could better handle discipline problems in the family if they could sit together. Both of these arguments were faulty reasoning: irreverence increased, rather than decreased, as a result of these changes.

The March 15, 1956, session of the Lancaster Conference addressed the

problem of mixed seating. It stated that "the single purpose of worship when in the house of God will be hindered by associating courtship with worship." Their concerns were justified. But the Conference did not consistently enforce its Discipline or its statements, so mixed seating continued to increase in many areas of the church.

Mixed seating also undermined good congregational singing. It was not coincidence that congregational singing began to deteriorate as the practice of mixed seating became entrenched in the church.

As we note the effects that mixed seating has had on the church in the past, we are challenged to jealously guard the Scriptural practice of segregated seating.

*Nevin L. Martin, Reprinted by permission from The Eastern Mennonite Testimony (end of this series)*

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### **SNIPPETS.**

Composers/Writers of Hymns used in the Mennonite Church Hymnal

#### **SMITH, Samuel Francis.**

*Born:* October 21, 1808, Boston, Massachusetts.

*Died:* November 16, 1895, Boston, Massachusetts.

*Buried:* Newton Cemetery, Newton, Massachusetts.

Smith attended Harvard University and Andover Theological Seminary. He entered the Baptist ministry in 1832, and the same year became editor of *Baptist Missionary Magazine*. He also contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Americana*. From 1834 to 1842, he pastored at Waterville, Maine, and was Professor of Modern Languages at Waterville College. In 1842, he moved to Newton, Massachusetts, where he stayed until 1854, when he became editor of the publications of the Baptist Missionary Union.

*Hymns:*

1. Founded on Thee.
2. Lord of Our Life, God Whom We Fear.
3. Morning Light Is Breaking, The.
4. Spirit of Holiness, Descend.
5. Today the Saviour Calls.

**THOUGHTS ABOUT CHRISTMAS.**

"They have taken away my lord" *"And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because **they have taken away my Lord**, and I know not where they have laid Him."* (John 20:13)

"*Christmas comes but once a year.*" So goes a line from a secular poem about CHRISTMAS. But, in all of the Christmastime, how often do I ask myself the question, "Where is the Lord Jesus Christ in Christmas today?" Mary Magdalene, when seeking the Lord Jesus Christ's body at the tomb, was asked why she wept. She said, "**BECAUSE THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY LORD, AND I KNOW NOT WHERE THEY HAVE LAID HIM**" (John 20:13). Inwardly I weep also, for in the season known as "Christmas time," even born again, fundamentalist Bible-believing Christians seem to "TAKE AWAY MY LORD." Truthfully and honestly, *I "KNOW NOT WHERE THEY HAVE LAID HIM."*

**THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY LORD --  
WITH SANTA CLAUS.**

With his "bowl-full-of-jelly" stomach, his red costume, his white beard, his "Ho! Ho! Ho's!" his magical and phoney flying reindeer, his false promises to little children who sit upon his knee, his pretended omnipresence, his part in getting moms, dads, and children into the stores to spend their money, his disguise which often hides his own personal wickedness or wayward-ness--old "Saint Nick" has "**TAKEN AWAY MY LORD.**" The men who play the part of Santa Claus are often called "Saint Nicolas," and frequently are far from deserving the right to have innocent, believing, precious little children sit on their laps, confiding to them their inner-most, secret, and fondest wishes and dreams. Santa Claus makes us forget the Saviour! Yes, with Mary of old, I cry out, "**THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY LORD, AND I KNOW NOT WHERE THEY HAVE LAID HIM.**"

**THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY LORD --  
WITH THE CHRISTMAS TREE.**

Some buy tall trees, some short, some real, and others artificial. But, be it green, red, white, or silver, most of us--even born again Christians-- have their Christmas trees. Decorations include expensive lights, bulbs, balls, tinsel, popcorn, stars, sparklers, and so on. But, we say we must have a tree! Somehow, we think a tree is necessary for the "spirit of Christmas," whatever that is. Despite the fire hazards involved, the expense, the shedding on the carpet, and all the rest of the bother involved, we must have a tree-- a Christmas tree? Christmas TREES make us forget the Saviour! I say with Mary of old, "*THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY LORD, AND I KNOW NOT WHERE THEY HAVE LAID HIM.*"

**THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY LORD --  
WITH GIFT-GIVING.**

Depending upon the financial resources available in the families involved, gift-giving is stressed, pushed, and exalted beyond all possible measure. The ones that push the hardest for such gift-giving are the stores who have a vested interest in the profits which accrue most certainly in such booming sales. Before Thanksgiving Day has even come, there often begins the incessant, inescapable bombardment of sensational appeals to encourage people to buy, buy, BUY! Even though people don't really need anything, a present is a must. Even though the family may be deeply in debt, owing many stores in the city, still a present is a must. Even though the recipients may rather choose their own, a present is a must. Even though it may mean going to the bank and borrowing money and paying it back with interest, yet gift-givers must keep up with the Joneses and give, give, GIVE! The pressures are all around to do so. Often this buying and giving does not make this time of year the MERRIEST, but the SADDEST! Your gift had better be the most expensive, the most novel, or the prettiest, or you haven't "made it" in the race for gift-giving excellence. Such gift-giving makes us forget the Saviour! I say with Mary of old, "*THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY LORD, AND I KNOW NOT WHERE THEY HAVE LAID HIM.*"

**THE WORLD NEEDS MY LORD –  
INSTEAD OF SANTA CLAUS.**

Santa Claus, the reindeers and his helpers are cheap substitutes for genuine charity, good will, and ability to give what is best suited for the people involved. The Lord Jesus Christ is genuine. My Lord and Saviour is no jolly red philanthropist saying "Ho! Ho! Ho!" The Son of God is sinless. No one could rightly accuse Him of sinning, or being an evil Person. He has genuine love for all the little children and their moms and dads. He pleads with them:

***"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."*** (Matthew 11:28-30):

so that they might become saved and possess eternal life. This is what people need the most, even though many of them do not realize it. He is a merciful and faithful High Priest and can keep in confidence any secrets that the little children or even older people would want to whisper in His ear in prayer. He is worthy of our trust and worth coming unto Him. He also supplies our needs. As the Wise Men of old, we all should say of Him, *"let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass"* (Luke 2:15). The Lord Jesus Christ truly is better than any Santa Claus, and we sincerely need HIM!

**THE WORLD NEEDS MY LORD'S CROSS --  
INSTEAD OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE.**

Instead of the Christmas tree, which has pagan origins, people need to look to another "TREE," the cruel CROSS on which *"the Prince of Glory died."* There, God the Father showed His love to a whole world which was lost in the depths and degradation of sin. That cross was not decorated with twinkling lights of various colours--yellow, red, green, blue, and white. On that day, God the Father blew out all the fuses in the world. There was nothing but gross darkness. At noon on that day of days when Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross between heaven and earth, bearing the sins of the world in His own sinless body, He had no personal appeal to the human eye, nor was there any *"form or comeliness that we should desire Him"* (Isaiah 53:2). Yet, by looking, in simple child-like faith, to the Saviour Who

suffered there for our sins, we can have redemption and forgiveness from all our guilt. When we depart this life, we can be assured of heaven and ETERNAL LIFE the minute we receive Him (John 1:12). As the Apostle Paul, we, too, should not be "*ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*" (Romans 1:16), but we should sing with the hymn writer, "*In the cross of Christ I glory*" because that blessed cross is much better than any Christmas tree we could possibly have on Christmas!

**THE WORLD NEEDS MY LORD'S GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE – MORE THAN ANY OTHER GIFT.**

In the midst of all our gift-giving, the most important GIFT of all-- "*ETERNAL LIFE through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 6:23)--is often neglected or overlooked! The gifts of cars, computers, CD's, televisions, camcorders, radios, shoes, clothes, toys, games, gadgets, refrigerators, diamond rings, houses, and other things cannot compare with the Lord Jesus Christ's GIFT of eternal life which He provided on His cross. This GIFT of eternal life is available to any person who believes on and receives Christ as Saviour (John 1:12; 3:16). DO YOU HAVE THAT GIFT? If not, why not?

*From a tract by Pastor D.A. Waite, Director, THE BIBLE FOR TODAY, 900 Park Avenue, Collingswood, New Jersey 08108.*

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