

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.

Oh for a heart to praise my God, a heart from sin set free.
 A heart sprinkled with the blood so freely shed for me!

Are you able to make that a cry from your heart too?

Many people think that the end is nigh! And going by scripture it certainly seems that way. Whatever the time period that we have left to make our peace with God in all things, let us remember the admonition from scripture: Today is the day of salvation – are you ready to meet God? And have Him pass judgement on all your actions?

Personally I tremble at the thought of that Day and endeavour to live each day accordingly – days which are filled with both failings and victories. But our God is a forgiving God, we need but turn to Him in true repentance to see, know and experience the fulfilment of the two opening lines of the verse above.

Recently I came across information on the development of Conservative Mennonite Education in America and specifically an organization called Faith Builders Educational Programs based in Guys Mills PA. Their aim is expressed in their motto “Discipling the head, heart and hands.” Their self provided “History” is enclosed as a separate item of interest. Their website is www.fbep.org and it is well worth a visit with its informative insight on Christian education and materials available, including a good selection of books.

In this issue appears an extract of an article by Melvin Lehman, a senior member of the above organization, entitled Western Civilization and the Kingdom of God and it, I believe, is truly a wake-up call for those that profess Christ. It is my earnest prayer that you may reflect upon it and do as the last line of that message exhorts.

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be your strength and encouragement every day! JvL.

MINISTER'S CORNER.

By: Brother James Shultz

PRESERVING THE ANCIENT LANDMARKS

A landmark is a fixed object used to mark a certain property line or a prominent feature of the landscape that serves to identify a particular locality.

From the days of the ancient past until today, different methods have been employed to establish property lines. In years past, trenches were dug, stones were used, or monuments were erected. Today we use fences, hedges, and roads, as well as other means. In most cases, the land has been surveyed, and the surveyors have buried steel rods or pegs to establish a benchmark. Records are kept as to the location of these reference points for future use to reestablish boundaries, settle border disputes, or lay out new property.

God instructed His people of old times to "not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance" (Dent. 19: 14). And in Proverbs 22:28, He says, "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." Through the years, in spite of this command, there have been those who have taken issue with established boundaries. This is true spiritually as well as literally.

It was God's intent that His people be happy and content in the land they had received for an inheritance, for it was "a goodly heritage" (Ps. 16:6). We could look at the gospel as being our heritage and should deeply appreciate the commandments and guidelines set forth in God's Word, which clearly outline the border of our inheritance.

It is not difficult to stay within the bounds of this inheritance when we comprehend its priceless worth. This helps us have a respect unto the reward that is waiting if we are faithful in defending its borders. Also, we need a true love for God, His Word, and His church. When we lose our love for God and His Word, and our vision of the church grows dim, we also lose a certain respect and appreciation for the boundary lines. Sometimes one will even resent them. It is then that one begins to chafe under the "confines" of the gospel and becomes discontent with his inheritance. He will then begin to challenge the

established boundary lines, seeking for himself more liberty and a way which is less confining.

In this state, a struggle ensues. Such a person finds it difficult to maintain the bounds that have been set forth for the true follower of God. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. 5:17). In a natural sense, it is important to keep the landmarks in clear view; for when weeds and briars spring up, it becomes difficult to properly distinguish boundary lines. It is no less true in a spiritual sense. When we begin to allow a carnal spirit to sprout and grow in our lives, we begin to lose sight of the landmarks that once were distinct and deeply respected.

Non-conformity is an age-old landmark. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). We see the enemy trying to encroach upon us in this area today, subtly endeavoring to conceal this landmark. Non-conformity affects us in many areas: in the decoration of our homes, automobiles, material operations, styles and fashions in the cut and dress of hair, clothes we wear, words we speak (jesting and joking), and questionable entertainment, just to name a few. Jesus said, "(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:)" (Matt. 6:32). "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor. 6:17). Are we keeping this landmark in clear view?

Holy matrimony is another doctrine of great importance and is also under siege today. Because of a lack of respect for the sanctity of marriage, we see the sad result of unhappy, and even wrecked, homes. We older ones should teach more clearly the importance of approaching this matter in the fear of God. Too often this matter is approached in a light and carnal manner, setting the stage for a weak and troubled home. It is a great responsibility to take someone by your side to be your wedded companion. In this union, both will share life's joys and sorrows, experience the blessings, weather the storms, and must remain as one until death separates them.

One of the responsibilities that lie heavily at the feet of a young couple is the rearing of children. They are to be taught the way of the

Lord: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Dent. 6:7). The apostle, in writing to the Ephesians, instructs us to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). When we as parents have the proper respect and appreciation for our "inheritance," we will endeavor to acquaint our posterity with the bounds that mark it out. Sometimes there are children who grow up in the home and cannot seem to come through to conversion. Have the lines been sufficiently clear?

Jesus says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). This enters into our daily walk of life. To truly practice the doctrine of self-denial could, at times, really test our commitment to the boundary lines. We must deny ourselves of "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," for these things are "not of the Father, but ... of the world" (1 John 2:16). We must also deny ourselves of evil or impure thoughts, attitudes, and motives. Are we willing to deny ourselves and leave the comforts of home to visit the shut-in, the poor, lonely widow, or discouraged brother or sister? Yes, self seeks to express itself in many ways, but it must be denied. Failure to do so will result in disregard of the landmarks.

These are but a few of the many landmarks that are of great importance in preserving the inheritance. May we be faithful to maintain them and keep them firmly established in our hearts.

The church today should stand as a prominent feature on the landscape, marking the locality of our inheritance. She should truly be that "city that is set on an hill that cannot be hid" (Matt. 5:14). She is that feature to which the Holy Spirit can refer the troubled soul that is seeking the truth. She is that place where the truth is taught, the scriptural doctrines are practiced, and the boundaries that mark the glorious inheritance of the gospel are defended.

Through the years, the church has been assailed by many violent storms. She has been the subject of subtle attempts of the enemy to invade her property. And yet, she has been successful in warding off those attacks. Today she is still facing the onslaught of the enemy.

There are areas that are under attack, and there are weighty issues that must be considered. May we once again turn back to the faithful references—the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to reestablish the landmarks our fathers have set. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (Heb. 10:23).

Lessons From Anabaptist History: Steadfastness in Discipleship

Our Lord Jesus is yet calling, "Follow Me." I think that call has echoed and is echoing to us today through the corridors of time from the time when Christ walked upon this earth and called those to follow Him in a personal way. This call is yet personal today. With that call, there is qualification. Christ is saying to us, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:27)

We are looking at "Lessons From Anabaptist History," particularly "Steadfastness in Discipleship." Christ is yet calling. He is sending forth. The background Scripture that I would invite you to meditate on is that of Christ sending forth His disciples and directing them, found particularly in Matthew 10:16–39. As we review these verses, we can readily identify the Scriptural directives which directed the saints, direct the saints of all time and direct our lives today.

As we consider that era of time (particularly as we draw lessons from Anabaptist history) our opportunity to address this subject and to draw lessons is owing first to the faithfulness of God as He (I could say) fanned the flame of truth. We are looking at an era of time when we often say the fire of truth was burning rather low. God fanned that flame and stirred within a faithful few (a remnant) drawing and calling, for them to steadfastly follow their Lord.

How does this reach us today? Why do we address these topics?

Every saint (every Christian) is part of what we could call the "scarlet thread," — the scarlet line. Sometimes we refer to that in relation to the Old Testament saints looking forward to Christ, those who lived and died in faith. Christ came through part of that line of the faithful remnant of saints. My thought is that we each today can be part of that scarlet thread, that line of the faithful remnant which reaches from Calvary till now and will reach

the end of time. I say every believer (every Christian) can be part of that scarlet line. Further, this legacy is recorded for us to learn from and to live by. This legacy is referred to as the account. It is history lived and manifested by those who steadfastly followed their Lord. We are privileged to share in as recipients today because of a faithful few who wholeheartedly answered the call of Christ.

That call has qualification. Jesus says further in Luke 9:23, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

The call to discipleship encompasses all of our life. There is not one portion of our life as disciples which we can say now, “This does not fall under the call of the Lord Jesus.” No, rather it is a call that encompasses all of our life.

Steadfastness in discipleship.

I would briefly define my title as, “the firmness of belief and the adherence to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles.” Turn with me to the Gospel of John 8. We want to draw lessons from Anabaptist history. The Scriptures were the basis to call each and every disciple to steadfastness. We want to hear that call. We want to affirm that call in our own hearts as we seek to draw lessons from history. In John 8, we have the words of Jesus coming to us concerning discipleship. The context — we would say quite a few were professing a belief in Jesus. Jesus brought each one to the firm manifestation of discipleship. Notice what He says, “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31, 32) We note the call to steadfastness, “If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed.” Continue — steadfastness in discipleship.

Again, we have the thought of firmness, holding on to, adherence. There are many Scriptures and I will not turn to them all. In our own heart, the call of the Scriptures is to faithfulness, adherence, holding on, holding fast, striving, and to seeking. We are looking this afternoon at our opportunity to have eternal security. Yes, it is conditional upon our firm belief and our adherence to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles. It is our opportunity to have eternal security as we are faithful in discipleship — steadfast.

We want to draw lessons. I have chosen to focus largely upon the early period of time of Anabaptist history. We are looking at an era of the 15, 16, 1700’s, but it would be my desire as we identify lessons from that era that

we can challenge our hearts today. Our experience is not identical to that era, in relation to the circumstances surrounding our lives as disciples today. I think we need to confess that we have been granted some extra comforts in our day, from our heavenly Father and the opportunities that we have as disciples of the Lord Jesus today.

We are, however, drawing these lessons from an era of time when the opportunities surrounding the lives of the saints, was not like what we enjoy today. There are further lessons that we can glean, and perhaps we will touch on this. We can see the circumstances, particularly as we identify the testing and trial of faith that came to those who endeavoured to be steadfast in discipleship when those times of persecution lessened. Then, we can draw lessons further how the tests came to them when the circumstances became more congenial, as we say sometimes.

Was it more congenial to steadfastness in discipleship? This is certainly a challenge to us.

1) *The first lesson I would like to glean particularly as we focus on the early era of the Anabaptist history is that the Reformation was a result of those who desired to be steadfast in discipleship.*

We are thinking of the time, as I already identified, when the flame of truth (the manifestation of God's will upon earth) the fire of truth was burning rather low. God kindled that flame in hearts to stir within them to yet rise to the call of Scriptures. Thus, the Reformation I am referring to is the time when there were those who had experienced that stirring and call and responded to it. We need to qualify this first lesson because as we read, we can understand that while there was in the hearts of some a stirring and a beginning to follow their Lord, yet they failed to go all the way. They failed to be faithful in discipleship in answering that call. However, we can say the Reformation was a result, and we can say it in our time is a result of that work in our hearts and a desire to be steadfast.

2) *Another lesson we can glean is that history clearly reveals that not every reformer (referring to those who sought to take a stand for truth) came to, or called others to true discipleship.*

We can cite a few examples.

Those of us who have had opportunity to study Anabaptist history can recognize names of individuals who began to answer that call but failed to go all the way. Zwingli and Martin Luther are only a beginning of a few names that we could give. History reveals that they failed to come to, as well as to call others to true discipleship.

3) *Our third lesson we can glean is that true discipleship runs counter to the popular religious belief of the day.*

How true it is for us today. As we focus on that era and see how they felt within, and the call of the Scriptures, and sought to answer that call immediately, it brought them to realize that they needed to break with the popular religious belief of their day. In particular we can identify the Roman Catholic state church. They needed to break with it because true discipleship, the call of the Scriptures, was calling them to rise to an expression of discipleship which those of the popular churches of the day failed to answer. How true this is today for us. True discipleship runs counter to the popular religious (we would say) Christendom today.

Using a quote I found in preparation for this assignment,

“Anabaptism was a more earnest effort than the other Protestant groups to break with religious and ecclesiastical tradition, in order to render absolute obedience to the text of Scripture.”

That further helps us to understand the call that came to break. Yes, there was not a lack of religion or lack of, what this writer identified as ecclesiastical tradition — identifying the church as directing one’s religious exercise.

True discipleship runs counter to popular religious belief. Further, this same writer says, “They had sound principles of interpretation as well as determination.” This is identifying the faithful few, the Anabaptists those who answered faithfully the call to discipleship. He says, “They had sound principles of interpretation as well as determination to make the Bible alone the norm of their faith and practice. They held to Biblical doctrines of God, man, sin, salvation.”

We say they are very basic doctrines, and many today will say, “Well, we believe those doctrines as well.” However, it did not stop there with the believing.

We are thinking of steadfastness in discipleship. Discipleship is taking up the cross and bearing it in obedience to the Scriptures.

Yes, there is the firm belief in the doctrines of God, man, sin and salvation, but further they believed in the high calling and place of the Church. They called others to follow them together as brethren, to enter into commitment, faithfulness, expression of discipleship, that again called them to make a clear break with the popular religious belief of their day.

Thus, we can say that Anabaptism was a result of a few who followed God and allowed God to work into their hearts through the reading of His Word as well as an earnest determination to follow God in everything.

In everything — notice not only in part of our life, but in all of life. Again, one writer worded it this way, “There was no choice,” (I would add the word “other,”) “There was no other choice. God had to be obeyed at the

cost of liberty of life and for this step,” (we could say for this choice) “they were willing to part with possessions, friends, family, and even life itself.” This is steadfastness in discipleship. For this choice, to answer the call, to take up the cross and follow their Lord, they were willing to part with possessions, friends, family and even life itself.

4) *Further, we can glean the lesson that they did not allow themselves to be terrified by fire, water, sword, or executioner.*

No human being and nothing on earth could take anything from their hearts. They preferred to die the bitterest death, rather than to forsake the truth that they had come to know and love. What is the lesson we are learning or gleaning? What is it that we would allow? Is there anything that we would allow to terrify us or to draw us away? We are thinking of steadfastness in discipleship. They did not allow themselves to be terrified by fire, water, sword or executioner.

5) *Another lesson we can glean is that from the shedding of this innocent blood (I would call it) identifying those who were faithful and steadfast in discipleship, there was a light and a testimony for those around.*

Those who viewed, knew, watched, and witnessed. From this shedding of innocent blood there arose a fruit. Many were moved as they viewed the lives of those who followed their Lord faithfully and endured to the end in faithfulness. Many more were moved to serious thought. We are thinking of lessons that we can glean as we consider steadfastness of discipleship. The challenge and the call comes to us; is there such a message going forth from our lives? No, we may not be called to shed our blood or to give our life as many were called to in the era of time we are focussing on. We are called today to follow in faithfulness. This light can reach, and will reach yet, to others. They were moved, yes, to serious thought as they viewed and witnessed this innocent blood being shed. They were moved to order their life, thinking, and striving in preparation for that future as identified already — the Scripture from John 14 — to prepare for that place that is prepared for the saints of all times. They were steadfast in discipleship.

I would like to yet further this afternoon identify seven (what I could call) tokens, or signs of steadfastness in discipleship.

I have chosen these from the era of the early time of Anabaptism. I would like to use these to challenge us further to our own steadfastness in discipleship. The first I would identify, I already introduced in my former thoughts.

1) *First is the need for firm stand upon the Scriptures in face of false accusations and misinterpretations whereby they, or (we could say we) may be tempted to recant.*

Again this focuses on those who would come in upon the faithful disciples and quote Scriptures, or bring in thoughts which seek to draw or call us away from following the way of true discipleship. Many would seek to call us away or call us to recant. How is it with us today? Are we willing to stand firmly on the Scriptures in face of those who today would question, mock, or scorn our stand? Remember, it will not be popular to follow Christ. We are called to stand firmly.

2) *Secondly, I would cite particularly the response of the faithful disciples in the time of Anabaptist history and down through time as well.*

They firmly stood in relation to non-resistance, in giving themselves over to their persecutors, yielding themselves into the hands of those whom they knew likely would be the ones who would lead them to their death and their passing from time. This is one area of broadening the thought of the firm stand upon the Scriptures, in the area of non-resistance. For the message I think we will broaden into other areas. The call for us is to stand firmly upon the truth of Scriptures in the area of non-resistance. Now is the time to build conviction and practice ourselves and our hearts daily in non-resistance. The call is to “Resist not evil.” (Matthew 5:39) We are to give no resistance to evil. The challenge was already brought how that comes to us even as we drive the highways.

3) *Thirdly, another token or sign of steadfastness, are the words of exhortation to fellow Christians as those faithful ones were led to their place of execution or suffering.*

They gave words of encouragement and exhortation to fellow believers, to yet encourage and strengthen their hearts. This call comes to each of us. Are we giving those words to strengthen one another’s arms in the Lord and to encourage one another? Further, they gave words of exhortation to those around them who were not faithful — to someone who had once stood where they stood but had been drawn away, as well as many who had never answered the call. The faithful few earnestly called to their spectators, as well as even to their executioners. They called them to repentance and amendment of life. It was an expression of steadfastness.

4) *Fourthly, they gave clear expressions of humble worship.*

Again, this broadens the thought of their knowledge of the Scripture, and knowing what Jesus had told them. Jesus teaches us, “The disciple is not above his master.” (Matthew 10:24; Luke 6:40) As we answer the call to discipleship we think of the expressions of humble worship, that of quoting Scripture, the earnest prayer, and the exuberant praise to lift our hearts. We understand the place which singing fills in our hearts to strengthen and direct our thoughts. Singing helps to channel and curb the thoughts that

would be tempting us to recant or to “draw back unto perdition.” As the Scripture is calling, we are not among those, “who draw back,” but among those who “believe to the saving of the soul.” (Hebrews 10:39) Thus, it is an expression of humble worship.

Are we filled with the Spirit and our hearts filled with the Word? Have we hid the Word in our hearts? Are our lives bathed with prayer and do we give expression of praise?

5) *Fifthly, another token I believe is that of writing of letters.*

I would like to challenge us, and I believe this is an area where many are entering, and can enter, and should enter into. We have records of quite a number of letters written by those who were steadfast and faithful in following their Lord. These letters, I believe, stimulated, first of all, a personal faith. When we put something into writing, there is thought that goes into that. As those faithful disciples wrote those letters they had large portions of Scripture and they were hand written. These letters stimulated their personal faith. It reached and spoke to them, and called them also to faithfulness. (N.B. Perhaps this is one area that we here in Australia can put into personal practise and apply to encourage each other to remain steadfast even in the face of lack of fellowship. The Editor)

6) *Sixthly, I would cite as a token of faithfulness, the uplifted hands.*

If you would read those accounts, they were no longer able to speak because of the limitations that man had put upon their earthen vessel. Yet, those who could would raise their hands. I would challenge us as the Scriptures do in 1 Timothy 2:8, where it calls us to lift “up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” Think how those areas identify steadfastness in discipleship. Lifting up of the hands identifies entreaty. Lifting up of the hands can identify thankfulness. Lifting up of the hands can identify dependence. The call is to steadfastness. Are we lifting up our hands?

7) *Seventhly, I would identify what I would call the “glow of glory,” that surrounded the faithful ones.*

It was the testimony of the presence of God as they came to the end and close of their earthly life. It was a glow of glory which others could see, and behold. It was none other than the presence of God — the Spirit of God with them as God promised yes, to Israel through Moses, “My presence shall go with thee.” (Exodus 33:14) It was that same presence which strengthened our Saviour as He faced the cross there in the Garden. The Scripture says, “And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.” (Luke 22:43) Will we be among the faithful today who are steadfastly adhering to the Scriptures and following the Lord Jesus

Christ? The promise is, “He that endureth to the end shall be saved.” (Matthew 10:22)

From a message by James R. Petre, Sunday, February 13, 2005

New England Valley Mennonite Church, Bible Instruction Meeting.

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SNIPPETS.

Composers/Writers of Hymns used in the Mennonite Church Hymnal [CH]
And The Christian Hymnary [TCH]

Frances Ridley Havergal

Born: December 14, 1836, Astley, Worcestershire, England.

Died: June 3, 1879, Caswall Bay, near Swansea, Wales.

Buried: Astley, Worcestershire, England, the city of her birth.

On her tombstone was the Scripture verse she claimed as her own:

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. *1 John 1:7*

Daughter of hymnist *William Havergal*, Frances was a bright but short lived candle in English hymnody. She was baptized by hymnist *John Cawood*. She was reading by age four, and began writing verse at age seven. She learned Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and memorized the Psalms, the book of Isaiah, and most of the New Testament. Her works include:

Ministry of Song, 1870

Under the Surface, 1874

Kept for the Master's Use, 1879 (published posthumously)

Life Chords, 1880 (published posthumously)

Hymns: all in the Church Hymnal.

1. Golden Harps Are Sounding
2. I Know I Love Thee Better, Lord.
3. I Could Not Do Without Thee
4. I Gave My Life for Thee
5. Like a River Glorious
6. Lord, Speak to Me

7. O Saviour, Precious Saviour
8. Standing at the Portal
9. Take My Life and Let It Be
10. Thou Art Coming, O My Saviour
11. Who Is on the Lord's Side?

“I Gave My Life For Thee” was Frances Havergal’s first hymn. She wrote it after seeing Sternberg’s painting *Ecce Homo* in Düsseldorf, Germany. A caption on the painting read, “This have I done for thee; what has thou done for Me?” Here is what Miss V. G. Havergal wrote about this hymn:

In F. R. H’s Manuscript copy, she gives this title, “I did this for thee; what hast thou done for Me?” the motto placed under a picture of our Saviour in the study of a German divine (cleric). On January 10, 1858, she had come in weary, and sitting down she read the motto, and the lines of her hymn flashed upon her. She wrote them in pencil on a scrap of paper. Reading them over she thought them so poor that she tossed them on the fire, but they fell out untouched. Showing them some months later to her father, he encouraged her to preserve them, and wrote the tune *Baca* especially for them. The hymn was printed on a leaflet, 1859, and in *Good Words*, Feb.1860. Published also in *The Ministry of Song*, 1869. Though F. R. H. consented to the alterations in *Church Hymns*, she thought the original more strictly carried out the idea of the motto, “I gave My life for thee, What hast thou done for Me?”

Frances Havergal herself said about this hymn:

“I was so overwhelmed on Sunday at hearing three of my hymns touchingly sung in Perry Church, that I never before realized the high privilege of writing for the “great congregation,” especially when they sang, “I gave My life for thee” to my father’s tune *Baca*.”

Balanced Christian Living (Part 2)

By: Bro. Lamar Garman, Denver PA.

Emotion Without Emotionalism.

"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Philippians 4:5).

God enables the Christian to exhibit emotional stability and balance in the stressful and trying moments of life. A strong faith and a firm belief in God's overruling providence are essentials for this to be a reality in our lives.

God in His wisdom has created us with various emotions. Human emotions are often categorized in eight basic areas. These emotions, which can often exist at various levels of intensity are, joy, sadness, anger, fear, acceptance, disgust, surprise, and interest or curiosity. These basic emotions combine to form all other emotions much as a few basic colors produce all other colors.

Many emotions carry with them impulses to action. It is at this point that we need to be very careful lest our emotions overwhelm and control us rather than we control them. A caution when one is emotionally stirred is "Be ye angry, and sin not" (Ephesians 4:26).

Emotionalism is an overemphasis on emotion. When emotions are not properly controlled, we are yielding to emotionalism or an over-reaction to the current situation. This can be harmful to ourselves and others.

In the home, blessings abound when emotionalism is avoided; and love, respect, and Christian courtesy are continually practiced. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Colossians 3:18, 19).

In the church, controlled emotions are invaluable for good interpersonal relationships. Fervent love for each other and the use of the Matthew 18 principle to overcome slights, real or imagined, indicates the absence of emotionalism. "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves" (1 Peter 4:8).

In worship, time and again our emotions are touched when we think of our unworthiness and God's goodness and mercy to us in providing for our redemption through Christ. However, God requires more of us

than mere emotional reaction. Jesus promoted worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). A commitment to Scriptural obedience is paramount for effective worship. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). To avoid emotionalism in worship, we do well to remember the orderliness of God. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

May we humbly ask the Lord to help us express our emotions in a sanctified way and to avoid the pitfall of emotionalism. "But the God of all grace, who bath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (I Peter 5:1(1)).

Reprinted by permission from: "The Eastern Mennonite Testimony"

Three Stages Of Perfection.

By: The Editor.

1. Perfect Relationship

We are perfect because of our eternal union with the infinitely perfect Christ. When we become His children, we are declared "not guilty," and thus righteous, because of what Christ, God's beloved Son, has done for us. This perfection is absolute and unchangeable, and it is this perfect relationship that guarantees that we will one day be "completely perfect" See Colossians 2:8-10; Hebrews 10:8-14.

2. Perfect Progress

We can grow and mature spiritually as we continue to trust Christ, learn more about Him draw closer to Him, and obey Him. Our progress is changeable (in contrast to our relationship, above) because it depends on our daily walk-at times in life we mature more than at other times. But we are growing toward perfection if we "press on" (Philippians3:12). These good deeds do not perfect us; rather, as God perfects us, we do good deeds for Him. See Philippians 3:1-15.

3. *Completely Perfect*

When Christ returns to take us into His eternal kingdom, we will be glorified and made completely perfect. See Philippians 3:20-21.

All phases of perfection are grounded in faith in Christ and what He has done, not what we can do for Him. We cannot perfect ourselves; only God can work in and through us to "carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

Colossians 2:8-10

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. [9] For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. [10] And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power:

In the natural or the physical world I'm sure that each one of us would like everything to be perfect, and I am sure that as we go about our daily tasks we try to get everything just right. To get everything just right we need the correct ingredients or materials, we need to prepare or work with the materials so that we can reach completion and be in the right environment as we work.

I would like to suggest that we could look at this as three stages of perfection.

- 1] The ingredients -
- 2] Preparation.
- 3] Completion.

In our spiritual life, our relationship to and with God, it should be our desire to seek perfection. I am encouraged by the scripture verses from Colossians that this can be so. Chapter 2 verses 9 to 10 speak here of being complete in Him, that is Jesus Christ. The word complete used here in the Greek also means to "come to perfection",

John 17:20-22 *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; [21] That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. [22] And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one"*

In this scripture, we see Jesus Himself praying for us that we would be one with Him as He is with the Father, and Paul in his letter to the Colossians emphasises this point of Jesus as being one with the Father in verse nine by saying: “... *for in Him dwells all the fullness of the godhead.*” This is the completeness and perfection that Paul says in Colossians we can have. You will notice that in the prayer of Jesus it specifically says that He prays for those “*which shall believe on Me through their word,*” that is the teachings of the Apostles as handed down through scriptures, it seems logical therefore, that all those who believe on Jesus Christ can have that completion or perfection in Him.

Earlier, I mentioned three stages of perfection in the natural or physical world. But now, I would like you to consider three stages of perfection in our spiritual lives, perfection in Christ Jesus.

First.....perfect relationship – crucifying the flesh.

Second.....progress to perfect completion – death of and to self.

Third.....perfect completion – resurrection to the new life.

Before we can do anything we need to make preparations, and this first step of establishing a perfect relationship with God in our Christian walk is by following the instructions in scriptures, that is, the believing on Jesus Christ, acknowledging our sinful nature and repenting from same,

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. and

1 John 4:15

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

What wonderful promises are contained in these two scripture verses - forgiveness of our sins, cleansing of our unrighteousness, and best of all God dwelling in us and we in God, this is the fulfilment of the verse we read in Colossians 2-10, that we are complete in Him. If this is not perfection then I do not know what is. There are a number of other references in the New Testament, that indicate that the word ‘confess’ used is in the context of making a declaration in the presence of witnesses, we see this being done in baptism, an outward and public witness of our inner conversion from sinner to a child of God.

As I look back over my life it seems to me that putting together these three ingredients, if I may call them that, of belief, repentance and baptism is sometimes the easiest part of becoming a follower of Christ. It is the next stage on the road to perfection that really requires all the hard work. The apostle Paul, compared the Christian life to a race, which we need to complete to win the prize of everlasting life and achieve perfection. If any of you have ever observed those that compete in marathon foot races you can see the effort it requires to finish, let alone to come first - in the Christian race we can all finish with the prize. (see previous issue)

I would now like to look at the second stage, progressing to perfection.

This second stage, unlike the first step, takes the rest of our lives here on earth, it is a time of preparation or progressing towards attaining complete perfection, even though in the spiritual sense, the perfection of Christ already resides in us but has not yet completely manifested itself outwardly.

This progression to perfection is a time of growth in and during our spiritual life and walk with God as we continue to trust Christ, learn to know Him and more about Him, draw closer to Him and most importantly, learn to obey His directions. This time of progress is in contrast to the first step to perfection when we made a commitment to put ourselves under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Any one can make a commitment but the test of that commitment is whether we keep it or not. Many people, I am sure commit themselves to Lord, by saying that they believe, saying they have repented and confessing His Lordship, but sadly, that is where they stop. The journey becomes too hard or too difficult, it may mean giving up relationships, a way of life or any of those things, attitudes and concepts that are not in accordance with Him, to whom the commitment is made – even in our own lives, if we are honest, we may find an unwillingness to submit to Christ’s rule in some areas. And that is part of this progressing to perfection – the giving up of self. Some people seem to think that doing good deeds is the way to perfection, but that is not so.

Philippians 2:13 *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”*

God works in the converted person by His word and Spirit. His Spirit is a helper. It does not destroy our free will, for we may resist it [[\(1 Thessalonians 5:19\)](#) Quench not the Spirit.] God shows His

will by His word and Spirit and work in us. We ought to heed it. We can work in harmony with the divine will, or we may reject to our damnation.

From this scripture it appears to me that as God, through the Holy Spirit is working to perfect us, He will show us what we need to do to please Him instead of ourselves and achieve complete and final perfection.. I believe that includes the so-called good works, in other words, we allow God to direct our actions, rather than us directing our own, and thus perform the works –good deeds – that He desires from us.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast. [10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

The good deeds do not perfect us, rather as God perfects us we do good deeds for Him.

We could spend a lot of time on this topic of growing in perfection, it takes each of us our whole lifetime once we are born again. To endeavour to cover a topic like this in a short space of time is not possible.

My own personal experience is that since being born again, some 20 plus years ago, it is only in the past year or two that I am even partially coming to grips with what it means to grow in perfection – there is so much in my life that needs bending to the will of God. I am thankful and praise Him daily that we have the scriptures to guide and direct us and one portion of scripture that I believe to be brief and to the point in directing our way to perfection is chapter 5 of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In there we can see in a compact statement how we as Christians ought to live. This particular portion of scripture is directed to Christians in all walks of life, single and married. Perhaps this is the time to read that chapter and allow the Lord to show you personally how it applies to you – ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the Word of God to you in a new and fresh way before you read on.

In conclusion, let us now briefly look at Philippians 3: 15 – 21 and the third and final stage of perfection.

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto

you. [16] Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. [17] Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. [18] (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: [19] Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) [20] For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: [21] Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

Here we see the apostle Paul encouraging us to continue in God's ways so that we may attain to perfection, which is portrayed in verse 21 – the third and final step on our journey to perfection in Christ Jesus.

All phases of perfection are grounded in faith in Christ and what He has done, not what we can do for him. We cannot perfect ourselves. God can work in and through us as we allow Him to so we can be ready for the day we are called home by Christ Jesus as exemplified in Philippians 3:20-21.

I would like to leave you, all of us, with a word picture from an Isaac Watts hymn that encourages me to strive for that final and eternal reward of complete perfection in Christ Jesus both in spirit and in body.

Oh for a sight, a blissful sight, of our Almighty Father's throne.
 There sits the Saviour crowned with light,
 Clothed in a body like our own.
 Adoring Saints around Him stand
 and thrones and powers
 before Him fall,
 God shines gracious through the man
 and sheds sweet glories on them all.

May the Lord bless you as you sincerely seek to follow all His ways in spirit and in truth. JvL.

My Goal Is God Himself

My goal is God Himself, not joy, nor peace,
Nor even blessing, but Himself, my God;
'Tis His to lead me there - not mine, but His—
At any cost, dear Lord, by any road.

So faith bounds forward to its goal in God,
And love can trust her Lord to lead her there;
Upheld by Him, my soul is following hard
Till God hath full fulfilled my deepest prayer.

No matter if the way be sometimes dark,
No matter though the cost be oft-times great,
He knoweth how I best shall reach the mark;
The way that leads to Him must needs be strait.

One thing I know, I cannot say Him nay;
One thing I do, I press towards my Lord;
My God, my glory here, from day to day,
And in the glory there my great Reward.

—F. Brook

The Conflict Between Theoretical and Practical Nonresistance

From an Editorial By: Jesse Neuenschwander.

Several years ago in our interview with *Selective Service*, (a US Government body that oversees those that have religious or other conscientious objections to military service) one official to whom non-resistance seemed to be somewhat a new thought asked this

forthright question: “If people have beliefs that are so noble that it forbids them to harm their enemies at the point of conflict, would they not also in their everyday life be somewhat distinguishable from the regular run of society?” Our answer was: Yes. To be conscientious only in relation to war is less than genuine non-resistance.

In studying history, it is very obvious that where people had a quality of spiritual life that enabled them to be non-resistant toward evil men they also had other corresponding and supporting beliefs. This observation is especially noticeable in the religious and political upheaval surrounding the Reformation. For example, the Anabaptists embraced the principle of church and state separation and the free church, and applied these principles in all areas of life, even at the cost of their lives.

In our day men who are not necessarily religious acknowledge the value of a life that is guided by such noble principles. To love one’s enemy, do good to them who hate us, and respond kindly to them who would harm us is readily seen as something that is beyond the natural man’s ability.

The emphasis on peace and the peace movement that so many are championing is not a true representation of Biblical non-resistance. One of the glaring errors of the peace activists is their insistence on their “rights.” While the law does protect all citizens to some degree, we may not use the law to press for our “rights” even for such a noble cause. When we insist on our “rights” we have already denied one of the fundamental principles of this doctrine. There is a vast difference between Paul’s question in Acts 22:25, “Is it lawful for you?” and the present day peace activist’s legal stance. To humbly ask for consideration is Biblical, but to insist on our “rights” by legal means is not.

One speaker recently implied that when the Mennonite Church formed a written discipline that forbade their members to go into the military, then non-resistance made less impression and had less influence. This is not really so. For one thing, we do not decide the conditions under which this doctrine will be expressed or if it has world recognition. For another, the Mennonite Church always had a firm stand against military involvement whether written or unwritten.

In the past those church groups which maintained a practical attitude toward church discipline were the groups that could count on their young men to not become involved in war activities. There is no reason to feel that it will be any different in the future.

Nonresistance in theory, as the peace activists often claim, is one thing. Nonresistance in practice, as the Bible teaches and we believe it, is something else. Surrendering rights for the sake of Bible teaching seems quite foolish to the modern day pacifist, but to the Bible-believing person it appears quite realistic.

We want to continue to be non-resistant at any cost. One of the ways to be faithful in times of testing is to be faithful to these truths when the world focus is not upon us.

May we humbly follow Jesus' example (1 Peter 2:21–23) and be following Him in the time of peace and conflict.

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WESTERN CIVILIZATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

By: Melvin Lehman

I feel very certain that Western Civilization is doomed. The warnings are all around us and really quite evident. The handwriting is on the wall. According to the Guttmacher Institute, America will allow approximately 1.4 million legal abortions this year alone. Over the past thirty-three years since Roe v. Wade, we have aborted over 40 million babies in the United States. This is nothing short of a holocaust.

In my opinion as a student of history, the Canaanites of old fell from grace and were subsequently expelled from the land of Canaan because they murdered their own little ones in the worship of their gods. The Central-American Indians apparently made the same mistake as well, and they too were brought down from their lofty place and humbled before the nations of the world.

Recently, I read an article in Time Magazine about the movie “Brokeback Mountain,” which from what I can tell not only exonerates a homosexual lifestyle but also promotes it. The magazine article itself clearly had an agenda—any moral opposition to such lifestyles should be ridiculed for being out of touch with reality.

We must understand this situation. You see, it is one thing for a society to take its drugs in secret because the law forbids drug abuse. It is quite another when the body that governs a group of people makes such action legal, and on top of it, even buys the drugs for the addict. I speak metaphorically, but the metaphor applies to the issues I have cited. The implications are incredible. I am astounded and frightened by this paradigm shift in Western Civilization. We must understand that the legalizing of sinful practice—even murder—is posited as a solution to the problem of a promiscuous society by intelligent, educated people. This is precisely the case with abortion. This is where we are.

The article in Time represents a similar shift in popular culture. Not many years ago, general culture frowned upon and ostracized homosexual behavior. The laws of the land discouraged such practices. Perhaps such an orientation was ostracized too much. I acknowledge this and the subsequent dishonor to people. Nevertheless, I must insist that a major milepost on the slippery slope of destruction has been passed when the laws of the land overtly encourage such behaviors and absolutely refuse to consider the possible involvement of a gross moral violation. To top it off, popular writers in popular magazines glorify and sanction such perversion. I remind you that there was once a society of people that gave way to such moral perversity and the Lord brought judgment via fire and brimstone.

And so I repeat: I believe Western Civilization is doomed. The decline of Western Civilization will follow a path. I doubt that an apocalyptic day will come in which everything goes up in smoke and the survivors will awake to bury the dead and rebuild our cities. I expect a slower but relentless decline in economic stability, productivity, creativity, law and order, quality of education, and beyond. The decline will affect every critical area of civilized life.

Authentic Christianity will come under attack; this is certain. Why? Radical Islamic practice and reaction is not going to disappear even if Osama bin Laden and his henchmen all die today. Demographics (population patterns) alone tell the tale. While Western Civilization is murdering their babies at a horrific rate and refusing to rear families of strength and character, the Moslems are having large families. And they are rearing these families in such a way that their sons and daughters are willing to blow themselves up in suicide attacks for the cause of the Islamic nation. The Western framework of selfishness and protectionism and atheism will never produce such a person—at least not in significant numbers, that I promise you. In short, there will be continual conflict between Islam and the West. It will not go away in spite of the moderate voices of Islam that seek to quiet our fears.

Now, here is the critical point. Eventually, mainstream evangelical Christianity will be accused of having a mindset that parallels the radical Islamic mindset. Unfortunately, the accusations will have some points where they stick. It gets closer home. No matter how hard we try to distance ourselves from this scenario, we as an Anabaptist people will surely be caught in the web of this conflict. Islam will understand us to be the enemy because we are Bible-believing Christians. Mainstream Western fundamental Christianity will be very angry with us because we will not take up arms against the Islamic encirclement.

It could turn ugly.

And let me say additionally that no society has indefinitely tolerated a group of people who maintain that there are absolute standards by which they may be judged in every aspect of their lives. Eventually they come to hate those who hold this position.

Simply stated, I expect in the decades ahead—if the Lord tarries—to see the Church of Jesus Christ censured, ridiculed, pressured, and even persecuted from three sources: Islam, government, and tragically, a Christianity that has accepted the Constantinian heresy. By this I mean the marriage of church and state. This will affect us at every level of our lives.

What are the implications for us and how does this intersect with strategic planning at Faith Builders?

- Our strategy must be bold, because nothing is accomplished by fear. It must be bold because faith is bold.
- Our strategy must be courageous, because the path forward will not be easy. Rather, it will be increasingly difficult.
- Our strategy must be realistic, because life demands realism or debilitating disappointment.
- Our strategy must be good news, because the ultimate reality is the goodness of God. This must be communicated to the nations.

The day of chaos in civilization is the day of opportunity for the child of God. It is not the day for fear, cowardice, and inaction. None of us should run and hide. It is the day for courage and strength. It is the day for bold initiative in the fear of God. I have been encouraged by the forward movement I have felt from many of you during these days of strategic planning. Here is my perspective on what I heard from you.

Last year you spoke and I heard about the lack of connectedness within the organization. We have taken a few faltering steps to address that problem. We can do more, and we must. One means of communication that we are still developing is our Internet websites: the internal student and staff portal we call “Celebr8” and our public website at www.fbep.org. Please recall with me my point: our strategy must be bold! The Internet is shot through with decadence; there is no denying it. We have chosen ways to filter much of this decadence and shall continue to do so. But it is also a great highway of communication with an international posture. I support using the Internet as a tool to accomplish a good purpose in the hands of God’s people. However, I do have a few words of caution and perhaps even rebuke.

These exotic means of communication—such as blogs, Xanga, Skype, personal pages—are a window through which unbelievers may gaze upon our household and way of life. This may be positive or negative. I call us to a high level of discretion. I do not mean to be stodgy or Victorian. I mean to call us to responsible use of such technology as followers and imitators of Jesus Christ—bold but dis-

creet. We must not forget that the most significant connections normally occur along the way as we work together, play together, and worship together.

For a number of years now we have heard a call for help. The call is coming from our fellow teachers in the field. Their voice has changed a bit over the years. It used to be the shrieks of one about to drown. It is now a longing voice; it is the voice that cries out for the tools to do a very important job well. That job is to train the children of our communities for the challenges they will face in their generation...and who knows what they will face? We want to answer that call by offering what we can. We cannot do everything. We know that. But I believe we can play a pivotal role in building healthy educational climates in every Mennonite community and beyond.

Finally, I turn your attention to the Scriptures. Isaiah 40 says, “‘Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,’ saith your God. ...O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” So, my fellow-laborers, while I am persuaded that the future of western civilization is dismal, I am more convinced that the message we offer in the Christian school to our children, the loving care we offer the aged in our Personal Care Home, the Judeo/Christian framework we teach MAP and TAP students, a clean and pleasant facility—yes, even good food—is indeed good news.

Thus I pray that as the memory of God recedes and western civilization declines, we will lift our voices and shout salvation from the rooftops.

From an address given by Melvin Lehman at Faith Builders Educational Facility, Guys Mills PA in March 2006. Used by permission.

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