

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST
God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19
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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.

In the August issue a very short article was included asking: **What is Biblical Christianity?**

Did you ponder on that short article and endeavour to answer it in relation to yourself? Or did you look at it and use it as a measuring stick for others? This month the whole article from which that excerpt was taken is included. As you read it prayerfully, ask the Lord to give you the discernment to see it in context to your personal walk with our precious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, whose name we profess as being that of the one whose disciples we desire to be in all things and after whom we name ourselves.

In the article **"The Christian Home – A Treasure of Great Price"** there is an admonition that; "We won't have Christian homes if we only work at it in our "spare time." I believe that applies with equal, if not greater weight, and subsequent consequences to our living as a Biblical Christian.

Another area that should concern us is **The Sacredness of Human Life**. When mention is made of human life being sacred our thoughts usually turn to the appalling affront to God and His holiness by the hundreds of thousands that are, for the want of a better word, slaughtered every year in the name of convenience, or as it is euphemistically called, the woman's right to choice in giving birth to one who, like us all, is made in His image.

There is however more to this sacredness of human life than just the cold blooded killing of the unborn or others. A short article on this subject pointing out other areas that we should be concerned about is presented in this issue to help us to recognize that even in our daily activities this question of the sacredness of human life should be seriously considered. May none of us ever be responsible for the death of another human being through our neglect, any willful action or perhaps even carelessness.

The three articles mentioned briefly above are all part and parcel of our professing to be followers of Jesus Christ as Biblical Christians.

A wife when she marries a husband gives up her will to him; so does every Christian when he is married to Christ; he gives up his will and all that he has to Him. We are called to be the bride of Christ- let us then live it and be ready in all things for the Lamb's wedding. (Revelation 19:7)

Joseph van Loon

MINISTER'S CORNER.*Bro. Merlin Moyer.***As Ye Have Seen Him Go**

As the disciples steadfastly watched Jesus ascending to heaven, they may well have been asking themselves many questions. Why did Jesus need to leave? Was Jesus going to reappear soon? What would life be like without His bodily presence?

The two heavenly messengers who came to the disciples drew their attention to the meaning of Jesus' departure, giving them a new perspective for life. The disciples' saddened minds recalled precious promises Christ had made, bringing them comfort. But why did Jesus need to leave earth and return to glory?

The Gospel of John records direct teaching Jesus gave to His disciples on this subject. "But now I go my way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. . . . I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:5-7, 12-13).

Jesus ascended to send the Holy Spirit to indwell each believer simultaneously and guide them into all truth. Instead of Jesus dwelling with us, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. We sometimes wish Jesus were living on the earth now so we could speak to Him personally and receive direct answers to life's perplexities. However, when Jesus was here in person, He was at only one place at a time, and He met a limited number of people in a limited part of the earth. In contrast, the Holy Spirit indwells and empowers all true believers in all parts of the earth at all times.

Jesus ascended to sit at the Father's right hand. He is sitting there, not to rest after having provided salvation for all men, but to serve as an advocate. When sinners turn to God in repentance, Jesus is at the Father's right hand to ask Him to forgive them on the merit of His shed blood. When we as believers implore God's grace to meet a trial or temptation, Jesus knows just what we need because He has been through it already. He is our Intercessor to implore God to supply the strength to withstand. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

Jesus is also present at God's right hand for us when we have failed. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). When we stumble, He is faithful to intercede for us and to prompt us concerning our failure. How wonderful to realize that, when we have failed and are truly sorry, we have One who is in heaven to present our case to God and ask Him to forgive us!

Jesus' ascension is also living proof to us that the way to exaltation is through humility. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:5-9).

Jesus taught His disciples humility all through His earthly life. In Christ's ascension, God placed His benediction on this teaching by exalting Jesus. We too need to serve in humility today so that we may some day share with Him in His exaltation.

Jesus ascended to prepare a place for those who are prepared to meet Him. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-2). What a joy to us as His bride to know that our Bridegroom is preparing a place where we will be in His very presence after the marriage! Even more than an earthly bride, we long to be with Him and live in this wonderful place that He is preparing.

Jesus' ascension was accompanied by the promise of His return. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (John 14:3). That promise is for us today. Saints ever since the ascension have looked for our Lord's return. At His return we too will be taken from this sinful earth to be with God on high.

The heavenly messengers told the disciples that "in like manner as ye have seen Him go," He will return again. The Bible tells us that a cloud received Him out of their sight and also that He will return in the clouds. It was Jesus' faithful followers who saw Him leave, and it will be the faithful that will rejoice at His second coming. "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).

WHAT IS A BIBLICAL CHRISTIAN?

By Albert N Martin.

1. According to the Bible, a Christian is a person who has faced realistically the problem of his own personal sin.

One of the many things which distinguishes the Christian faith from the other religions of the world is that Christianity is essentially and fundamentally a sinner's religion. When the angel announced to Joseph the approaching birth of Jesus Christ, he did so in these words, "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:15, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." The Lord Jesus Christ Himself says in Luke 5:31-32: "And Jesus answering said unto them: "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

A Christian is one who has faced realistically the problem of his own personal sin.

When we turn to the Scriptures, we find that each one of us has a two-fold personal problem in relation to sin. On the one hand, we have the problem of a bad record and, on the other hand, the problem of a bad heart. If we start in Genesis 3 and begin with the tragic account of man's rebellion against God and his fall into sin, then trace the biblical doctrine of sin all the way through to the Book of the Revelation, we see that it is not oversimplification to say that everything that the Bible teaches about the doctrine of sin can be reduced to these two fundamental categories—the problem of a bad record and the problem of a bad heart.

What do I mean by "the problem of a bad record"? I am using that terminology to describe what the Scriptures set before us as the doctrine of human guilt because of sin. The Scriptures tell us plainly that we obtained a bad record long before we had any personal existence upon the earth: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

When did the "all" sin? We all sinned in Adam. He was appointed by God to represent all of the human race. When he sinned, we sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression. That is why the apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ

shall all be made alive." Man was created without sin in the Garden of Eden; but from the moment Adam sinned, we too were charged with guilt. We fell in him in his first transgression and we are part of a race that is under condemnation.

Furthermore, the Scriptures teach that after we are born, additional guilt accrues to us for our own personal transgressions. The Word of God teaches that, "There is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20); and every single sin incurs additional guilt. Our record in heaven is a marred record. Almighty God measures the totality of our human experience by a standard which is absolutely inflexible. This standard touches not only our external deeds but also our thoughts and the very motions of our hearts—so much so, that the Lord Jesus said that the stirring of unjust anger is the very essence of murder, and the look with intention to lust is adultery (Matthew 5:22-28).

God is keeping a detailed record. That record is among "the books" which will be opened in the day of judgment (Revelation 20:12). In those books are recorded every thought, every motive, every intention, every deed, and every dimension of human experience that is contrary to the standard of God's holy law, either failing to measure up to its standard or transgressing it. We have the problem of a bad record—a record according to which we are guilty. We have real guilt for real sin committed against the true and the living God. This is why the Scriptures tell us that the entire human race stands guilty before Almighty God (Romans 3:19).

Has the problem of your own bad record ever become a burning, pressing, personal concern? Have you faced the truth that Almighty God judged you guilty when your father Adam sinned, and holds you guilty for every single word you have spoken contrary to perfect holiness, justice, purity and righteousness? He knows every object you have touched and taken contrary to the sanctity of property. He knows every word spoken contrary to perfect, absolute truth. Has this ever broken in upon you, so that you have awakened to the fact that Almighty God has every right to summon you into His presence and to require you to give an account of every single deed contrary to His law which has brought guilt upon your soul?

But this problem of a bad record is not our only problem. We have an additional problem—the problem of a bad heart. The Bible teaches that the problem of our sin arises not only from what we have done, but from what

we are. When Adam sinned, he not only became guilty before God, he also became defiled and polluted in his nature.

This defilement is described in Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jesus describes it in Mark 7:21: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts....." and then He names all the various sins that can be seen in any newspaper on any given day—murder, adultery, blasphemy, pride. Jesus said that these things rise out of an artesian well of pollution, the human heart. Notice carefully that He did not say, "For from without, by the pressure of society and its negative influences, come forth murder and adultery and pride and theft." That is what our so-called sociological experts tell us. Some say it is "the condition of society" that produces crime and rebellion; Jesus says it is the condition of the human heart.

Each of us by nature has a heart that the Scriptures describe as "desperately wicked," a fountain of all forms of iniquity. Romans 8:7 asserts, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." Paul does not say that the carnal mind, that is, the mind that has never been regenerated by God, has some enmity; he calls it enmity itself: "The carnal mind is enmity against God." The disposition of every human heart by nature can be pictured as a clenched fist raised against the living God. This is the inward problem of a bad heart—a heart that loves sin, a heart that is the fountain of sin, a heart that is enmity against God.

Has the problem of your bad heart ever become a pressing personal concern to you? I am not asking in theory whether you believe in human sinfulness. You might agree that there are such things as a sinful nature and a sinful heart. My question is, have your bad record and your bad heart ever become matters of deep, inward, pressing concern to you? Have you known anything of real, personal, inward consciousness of the awfulness of your guilt in the presence of a holy God? Have you seen the horribleness of a heart that is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked"?

A biblical Christian is a person who has in all seriousness taken to heart his own personal problem of sin. The degree to which we may feel the awful weight of sin differs from one person to another. The length of time over which a person is brought to the consciousness of his bad record and his bad heart differs. There are many variables, but Jesus Christ as the Great Physician never brought His healing virtue to anyone who did not

know himself to be a sinner. He said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance"(Matthew 9:13). Are you a biblical Christian—one who has taken seriously your own problem of sin?

2. A biblical Christian is one who has seriously considered the one divine remedy for sin.

In the Bible we are told again and again that Almighty God has taken the initiative in doing something for man, the sinner. The verses some of us learned in our youth emphasize God's initiative in providing a remedy for sinful man: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"; "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"; "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us" (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10; Ephesians 2:4).

A unique feature of the Christian faith is that it is not a religious self-help scheme where you patch yourself up with the aid of God. Just as surely as it is a unique tenet of the Christian faith that Christ is the only Saviour for sinners, so it is also a unique tenet of the Christian faith that all of our true help comes down from above and meets us where we are. We cannot pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps; God in mercy breaks in upon the human situation and does something which we could never do for ourselves.

When we turn to the Scriptures, we find that God's divine remedy has at least three simple but profoundly wonderful focal points:

(a) First of all, God's remedy for sin is bound up in a Person. Anyone who begins to take seriously the divine remedy for human sin will notice in the Scriptures that the remedy is not in a set of ideas, as though it were just another philosophy, nor is it found in an institution, but it is bound up in a Person: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"; "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (John 3:16; Matthew 1:21). Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

The divine remedy for sin is bound up in a Person, and that Person is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ—the eternal Word who became man, uniting a true human nature to His divine nature. Here is God's provision for man with his bad record and his bad heart: a Saviour who is both

God and man, the two natures joined in the one Person for ever. If your personal problem of sin is ever to be remedied in a biblical way, it will be remedied only as you have personal dealings with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the unique strand of the Christian faith: the sinner in all his need, united to the Saviour in all the fullness of His grace; the sinner in his naked need, and the Saviour in His almighty power, brought directly together in the Gospel. That reality is the glory, God's Good News to sinners!

b) Secondly, God's remedy for sin is centered in the cross upon which Jesus Christ died. When we turn to the Scriptures we find that the divine remedy in a unique way is centered in the cross of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist uses the Old Testament image of the sacrificial lamb when he points to Jesus and says, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Jesus Himself said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

True preaching of the Gospel is so much centered in the cross that Paul says it is the word or message of the cross. The preaching of the cross is "foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). When Paul came to Corinth—a centre of intellectualism and pagan Greek philosophy—he did not follow their prescribed patterns of rhetoric but said that he "determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

The cross is not to be thought of as an abstract idea or a religious symbol; the meaning of the cross is what God declares it to mean. The cross was the place where God, by imputation, heaped the sins of His people upon his Son. On that cross there was substitutionary curse-bearing. In the language of the apostle Paul, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13), and "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The cross is not a nebulous, indefinable symbol of self-giving love; on the contrary, the cross is the monumental display of how God can be just and still pardon guilty sinners. At the cross, God, having imputed the sins of His people to Christ, pronounces judgment upon His Son as the representative of His people. There on the cross God pours out the vials of His

wrath unmixed with mercy until His Son cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22: 1; Matthew 27:46).

At Calvary, God is demonstrating in the visible world what is happening in the invisible, spiritual world. He shrouds the heavens in total darkness to let all mankind know that He is plunging His Son into the outer darkness of the hell which your sins and my sins deserve. Jesus hangs on the cross in the posture of a guilty criminal; for Him society has but one verdict: "Away with Him"—"Crucify Him"—"Hand Him over to death"—and God does not intervene. In the theatre of what men can see, God is demonstrating what He is doing in the realm where we cannot see. He is treating His Son as a criminal. He is causing Jesus to feel in the depths of His own soul all of the fury of the wrath that should be vented upon us.

(c) Thirdly, God's remedy for sin is adequate for all men, and it is offered to all men without discrimination. Before we have any felt consciousness of our sin, it is very easy to think that God can forgive sinners. But when you and I begin to have any idea at all of what sin is, our thoughts are changed. We see ourselves as little worms of the dust, creatures whose very life and breath are held in the hands of the God in whom "we live move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

We begin to take seriously that we have dared to defy the God who consigned angels to everlasting darkness when they rebelled against Him. We confess that this holy God sees the effusions of our foul, corrupt human hearts. Then we say, "O God, how can you be anything other than just? If You give me what my sins deserve, there is nothing for me but wrath and judgment! How can You forgive me and still be just? How can You be a righteous God and do anything other than consign me to everlasting punishment with those angels that rebelled?"

When we begin to feel the reality of our sin, forgiveness becomes the most stubborn problem with which our mind has ever wrestled. It is then that we need to know that in a Person, and that Person crucified, God has provided a remedy adequate for all men and offered to all men without discrimination.

If any conditions were placed on the availability of Christ we would say, "Surely I don't meet the conditions; surely I don't qualify." The wonder of God's provision is that it comes in these unfettered terms: "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"

(Isaiah 55:1); "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37).

See the beauty of the free offer of mercy in Jesus Christ! We do not need God to step out of heaven and tell us that we, by name, are warranted to come; we have the unfettered offer of mercy in the words of His own Son, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

3. A biblical Christian is one who has wholeheartedly complied with the terms for obtaining God's provision for sin.

The divine terms are two: repent and believe. Of Jesus' earliest ministry it is recorded, "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15). After His resurrection Jesus told His disciples that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). The apostle Paul testified "to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

What are the divine terms for obtaining the divine provision? We must repent, and we must believe. Although it is necessary to discuss these as separate concepts, we must not think that repentance is ever divorced from faith or that faith is ever divorced from repentance. True faith is permeated with repentance, and true repentance is permeated with faith. They interpenetrate one another in such a way that, whenever there's a true appropriation of the divine provision, you will find a believing penitent and a penitent believer.

What is repentance? (*The essential elements of repentance may be stated in four words: Conviction, contrition, confession, restitution.* Words in italics added by the Editor.)

"Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension (that is, laying hold) of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour ever after, to new obedience."

Repentance is the Prodigal Son coming to his senses in the far country. Rather than remain at home under his father's rule, he had asked to receive his inheritance early and left home for a far country, where he squandered

it. Reduced to misery through his sins, he came to himself and said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants...' (Luke 15:17-19).

When the Prodigal Son recognized his sin he did not sit there and think about it, write poetry about it, or send telegrams home to Dad. The Scripture says, "And he arose and came to his father" (vs. 20). He left those companions who were his friends in sin; he abhorred everything that belonged to that life-style and turned his back on it. What was it that drew him home? It was the confidence that there was a gracious father with a large heart and with a righteous rule for his happy, loving home. He did not write saying, "Dad, things are getting rough down here; my conscience is giving me fits at night. Won't you send me some money to help me out, or come and pay me a visit and make me feel good?" Not at all! He did not need just to feel good; he needed to become good. So he left the far country. It is a beautiful stroke in our Lord's picture when He says, "But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (vs. 20). The Prodigal did not come strutting up to his father, talking about making a decision to come home.

There is a notion today that people can walk up an aisle, pray a little prayer, and do God a favour by making their decision. This has nothing to do with true conversion. True repentance involves recognizing that I have sinned against the God of heaven, who is great and gracious, holy and loving, and that I am not worthy to be called His son. Yet when I am prepared to leave my sin, turn my back upon it and come back meekly, wondering if indeed there can be mercy for me, then—wonder of wonders!—the Father meets me, and throws His arms of reconciling love and mercy about me. I say, not in a sentimental way but in all truth, that He smothers repenting sinners in forgiving and redemptive love.

But the father did not throw his arms around the Prodigal when he was still in the hog pens and in the arms of harlots. Do I speak to some whose hearts are wedded to the world and who love the world's ways? Perhaps in your personal life, or in relationship to your parents, or in your social life where you take so lightly the sanctity of the body, you show what you

really are. Maybe some of you are involved in fornication, or in heavy petting, or in looking at the kind of stuff on television and in the movies that feeds your lust, and yet you name the name of Christ. You live in the hog pens and then go to a house of God on Sunday. Shame on you! Leave your hog pens and your haunts of sin. Leave your patterns and practices of fleshly and carnal indulgence. Repentance is being sorry enough to quit your sin. You will never know the forgiving mercy of God while you are still wedded to your sins.

Repentance is the soul's divorce from sin, but it will always be joined to faith. What is faith? Faith is the casting of the soul upon Christ as He is offered in the Gospel. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). Faith is likened to drinking of Christ, for in my soul-thirst I drink of Him. Faith is likened to looking to Christ, and following Christ, and fleeing to Christ. The Bible uses many analogies and the sum of all of them is this: in the nakedness of my need I cast myself upon the Saviour, trusting Him to be to me all that He has promised to be to needy sinners.

Faith brings nothing to Christ but an empty hand, by which it takes Christ and all that is in Him. What is in Christ? Full pardon for all my sins! His perfect obedience is put to my account. His death is counted as mine. The gift of the Spirit is in Him. Adoption, sanctification and ultimately glorification are all in Him; and faith, by taking Christ, receives all that is in Him. "You are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God-and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

What is a biblical Christian? A biblical Christian is a person who has wholeheartedly complied with the divine terms for obtaining the divine provision for sin. Those terms are repentance and faith. I like to think of them as the hinge on which the door of salvation turns. The hinge has two plates, one that is screwed to the door and the other that is screwed to the jamb. They are held together by a pin, and on that hinge the door turns. Christ is that door, but none enters through Him who does not repent and believe.

There is no true hinge made up only of repentance. Repentance that is not joined to faith is a legalistic repentance. It terminates on yourself and on your sin. Likewise, there is no true hinge made up only of faith. Professed faith that is not joined to repentance is a spurious faith, for true faith is faith in Christ to save me not in but from my sin. Repentance and faith

are inseparable, and "unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). The unbelieving are named among those who "shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

4. A biblical Christian is a person who manifests in his life that his claims to repentance and faith are real.

Paul preached that men should repent and turn to God and do works consistent with repentance (Acts 26:20). God intends that there should be such works: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Paul says in Galatians 5 that faith works by love. Wherever there is true faith in Christ, genuine love to Christ will be implanted. And where there is love to Christ there will be obedience to Christ. "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me ... He who does not love Me does not keep My words" (John 14:21-24). We are saved by trusting Christ, not by loving and obeying Christ, but a trust that does not produce love and obedience is not true saving faith.

True faith works by love, and that which love works is not the ability to sit out on a beautiful starlit night and write poetry about how exciting it is to be a Christian. True faith works by causing you to go back into your home and to obey your father and your mother, or to love your husband or wife and children as the Bible tells you to do, or to go back to your school or to your job to take a stand for truth and righteousness against all the pressure of your peers.

True faith makes you willing to be counted as a fool and crazy—willing to be considered outdated—because you believe that there are eternal, unchangeable moral and ethical standards. You are willing to believe in chastity and the sanctity of human life and to take your stand against premarital sex and the murdering of babies in mothers' wombs. For Jesus said, "Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

What is a biblical Christian? It is not merely one who says, "Oh, yes, I know I am a sinner, with a bad record and a bad heart. I know that God's provision for sinners is in Christ and in His cross, and that it is adequately and freely offered to all. I know it comes to all who repent and believe." That is not enough.

Do you repent and believe? And if you profess to repent and believe, can you make that profession stick—not by a life of perfection, but by a life of purposeful obedience to Jesus Christ?

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven," Jesus said, "but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). In Hebrews 5:9 we read, "He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." 1 John 2:4 says, "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Can you make your claim to be a Christian stick from the Bible? Does your life manifest the fruits of repentance and faith? Do you possess a life of attachment to Christ, obedience to Christ, and confession of Christ? Is your behavior marked by adherence to the ways of Christ? Not perfectly—no! Every day you must pray, "Forgive me my trespasses as I forgive those who trespass against me." But at the same time you can also say, "For me to live is Christ" or, in the words of the hymn:

“Jesus I my cross have taken”
 “All to leave and follow Thee.”

A true Christian follows Jesus. How many of us are true, biblical Christians? I leave you to answer in the deep chambers of your own mind and heart.

But remember, answer with an answer that you will be prepared to live with for eternity. Be content with no answer but one that will find you comfortable in death, and safe in the Day of Judgment.

From Eternal Life Ministries.

SNIPPETS.

Composers/Writers of Hymns used in the Mennonite Church Hymnal

HEBER Reginald.

Born: April 21, 1783, Malpas, Cheshire, England.

Died: April 3, 1826, Trichinopoly (Tiruchirappalli), Tamil Nadu, India, of a cerebral haemorrhage while bathing.

Buried: St. John's Church, Trichinopoly, Tamil Nadu, India (north side of the altar).

Heber attended Brasenose College, Oxford, where he won a number of awards in English and Latin. He received a fellowship to All Souls College, and later became Rector at Hodnet, Shropshire, England. In 1823, he became, somewhat reluctantly, Bishop of Calcutta, India. Most of his hymns were not published until after his death; 57 of them appeared in *Hymns Written and Adapted to the Weekly Church Service of the Year* (London: J. Murray, 1827).

Hymns:

1. Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning.
2. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.
3. Zion's Glad Morning.
4. The Son of God Goes Forth to War.
5. From Greenland's Icy Mountains.

The Sacredness of Human Life.

The sacredness of human life merits attention because our convictions on this subject affect practical issues we face today. It also merits consideration because we tend to forget and because there is ever a rising generation that needs to be taught Biblical values. Also, the sacredness of human life is under direct attack in society, and we ever need to keep our convictions Scriptural on this subject.

Genesis 1 tells how God created all forms of life, including human life. When He created plant and animal life, He did so by the word of His mouth. But when He created human life, "the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). That God breathed life into man's nostrils reveals that human life differs from other forms of life.

The reasoning that all forms of life are equal fails to reckon with the truths of Creation found in the Word of God. Only human life is created in the image of God's likeness. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Other forms of life are explicitly directed to be under the dominion of man and are given for the sustenance of man. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat" (Genesis 1:28, 29). Plants and animals can be used for food and other purposes.

Man is the crowning workmanship of God in the Creation. Because human life was created in the image and likeness of God, human life is sacred. Life is also serious because man will give account to his Creator. Man must give account to God for the life God has given. When life is explained otherwise, accountability to the Divine Author is dismissed and man acts as his own god. Since God indeed gives life, He has the right to tell men how they shall live and to determine when they will die.

A Bible-based understanding of the sacredness of human life touches many areas. What are some pertinent issues of our day that focus on the sacredness of human life?

Safety concerns.

The issue of safety is a very practical indicator of our regard for human life. Any farm or business requires conscientiousness about safety measures in the use of equipment and machinery. Guards should not be removed. Young children should not be around dangerous equipment, nor should children be assigned responsibilities before they are mature enough to deal with emergencies that may arise.

While agencies concerned with children's welfare at times seem extreme in their actions, we should acknowledge that young children should not be left alone at home and that adult supervision is important for the responsibilities that we do give to children.

Driving.

Highway casualties and injuries sustained in the use of vehicles demand that we give serious thought to the way we drive. Safe vehicle use begins on our own property. Too often injuries to small children could have been avoided with some caution. A vehicle is capable of serious injury and can cause death. The speed that we drive on the highway makes a vehicle potentially a devastating projectile. Drowsiness and inattentiveness make driving dangerous. Driving without adequate brakes or lighting is risky and needs to be avoided. Speeding is wrong, and seriously mars our Christian witness.

Medical questions.

Modern medicine was developed on the premise that life is worth saving and preserving. The result of that premise has blessed the world. The advances in medicine are the result of true science discovering and applying principles that God has established.

Because of these medical advances, however, saving and preserving life include dimensions today that were not an issue as recently as fifty years ago. We must not be reckless about deciding when life can be terminated. But perhaps we can consider what would happen if we allow life and death to follow their natural courses without intervention. Is that not one way of leaving the matter in the hands of the Lord? Because God is the one who creates life, suicides and so-called mercy killings take matters belonging in the hands of God and erroneously place them in the hands of men. Taking the life of the unborn also directly violates this principle. While human reasoning may devise many objections, God has honored the life cycle, and man treads on ground that belongs to God when he intrudes on the question of whether or not there should be life.

Death.

The sacredness of human life affects how people view death and how they treat the bodies of the deceased. Mass murders and mass burials are the result of little regard for human life. Cremation bypasses the Christian tradition of paying respect to the deceased and the dignity of a Christian burial. Respect for the body and its burial provide an excellent opportunity

to give testimony to the sacredness of human life and to express a hope in the resurrection and of life beyond the grave.

God's people should live in a way that recognizes the sacredness of human life and gives testimony to a society that is undermining its worth.

Lloyd Mast, Hollywood, MD. Reprinted by permission from The Eastern Mennonite Testimony.

SCRIPTURAL POEMS:

By: John Bunyan, 1628-1688. Licensed According to Order.

Printed for J. Blare, at the Looking Glass, on London Bridge, 1701.

The Book of Ruth.

Chapter 1.

In ancient times, e'er Israel knew the way
Of kingly power, when judges bore the sway:
A certain man of Bethlehem Juda fled,
By reason of a famine that o'erspread
The land, into the land of Moab, where
He and his wife, and sons, sojourners were.
His name Elimelech, his eldest son
Was called Mahlon, t'other Chilion,
His wife was Naomi, Ephrathites they were:
They went to Moab and continued there:
Where of her husband Naomi was bereft,
And only she and her two sons were left:
Who took them wives of Moab in their youth.
The name of one was Orpah, t'other Ruth:
And there they died ere twice five years were gone;
And Naomi was wholly left alone.
Then she arose, and her step-daughters with her,
To leave the land of Moab altogether:
For she had heard the Lord had visited

Her native country, with increase of bread,
 Wherefore the land of Moab she forsook,
 And to her native place her course she took,
 Her daughters with her: whom she did desire,
 That to their mother's house they would retire.
 The Lord, said she, be kind to you again,
 As you to me, and to the dead have been.
 God grant you each may be with husbands blest,
 And in the enjoyment of them both find rest,
 Then she embraced them, and there withal,
 Down from their cheeks, the tears began to fall.
 They wept aloud, and said, Most surely we
 Unto thy people will return with thee.
 But Naomi replied, Wherefore will ye,
 My daughters, thus resolve to go with me?
 Are there yet any more sons in my womb,
 That may your husbands be in time to come?
 Return again, my daughters, go your way,
 For I'm too old to marry: should I say
 I've hope? Should I this night conceive a son?
 Would either of you stay till he is grown?
 Would you so long without an husband live?
 Nay, nay, my daughters, for it doth me grieve
 Exceedingly, even for your sakes, that I
 Do under this so great affliction lie.
 And here they wept again. And Orpah kiss'd
 Her mother, But Ruth would be not dismiss'd
 But clave unto her: unto whom she spake
 And said, Behold, thy sister is gone back,
 With her own gods, and people to abide,
 Go thou along with her. But Ruth replied,
 Intreat me not to leave thee, or return:
 For where thou goest, I'll go, where thou sojourn,
 I'll sojourn also. And what people's thine,
 And who thy God, the same shall both be mine.
 Where thou shalt die, there will I die likewise,
 And I'll be buried where thy body lies.

The Lord do so to me, and more, if I
 Do leave thee, or forsake thee till I die.
 And when she saw the purpose of her heart,
 She left off to desire her to depart.
 So they two travelled along together
 To Bethlehem, and when they were come thither,
 Behold! the people were surprised, and cried,
 What, is this Naomi? But she replied,
 Oh! call me Mara, and not Naomi;
 For I have been afflicted bitterly.
 I went out from you full, but now I come,
 As it hath pleased God, quite empty home:
 Why then call ye me Naomi? Since I
 Have been afflicted so exceedingly.
 So Naomi return'd, and Ruth together,
 Who had come from the land of Moab with her:
 And unto Bethlem Judah did they come,
 Just as the Barley Harvest was begun.

Chapter 2.

There was a man of kin to Naomi,
 One that was of her husband's family,
 His name was Boaz, and his wealth was great.
 And Ruth, the Moabitess, did intreat
 Her Mother's leave, that she might go, and gather
 Some ears of corn, where she should most find favour:
 Go, daughter, go, said she. She went and came
 Near to the reapers, to glean after them:
 And lo, it was her hap to light among
 The reapers, which to Boaz did belong.
 Behold, now Boaz came from Bethlehem
 Unto his reapers, and saluted them,
 And they bless'd him again: and he enquired
 Of him that was set over them he hired,
 From whence the damsel was, and was inform'd

She was the Moabitess that return'd
 With Naomi: and she did ask, said he,
 That here amongst the reapers she might be,
 And that she might have liberty to glean
 Among the sheaves. And she all day hath been,
 Ev'n from the morning until now, with us,
 That she hath stay'd a little in the house.
 Then Boaz said to Ruth, observe, my daughter,
 That thou go not from hence, or follow after
 The reapers of another field, but where
 My maidens are, see that thou tarry there:
 Observe what field they reap, and go thou there,
 Have I not charged the young men to forbear
 To touch thee? And when thou dost thirst, approach
 And drink of what the youths have set abroad.
 Then she fell on her face, and to the ground
 She bow'd herself, and said, Why have I found
 Such favour in thine eyes; that thou, to me
 Who am a stranger, should so courteous be?
 And Boaz said, it hath been fully shewn
 To me, what to thy mother-in-law thou'st done,
 Since of thine husband thou hast been bereft:
 How thou thy father and thy mother left,
 And thine own native land; to come unto
 A land which thou before didst never know:
 The Lord, the God of Israel, the defence
 Whom now thou'st chosen, be thy recompence.
 Then said she, let me in thy sight, my lord,
 Find favour in that thou dost thus afford
 Me comfort, and since thou so kind to me
 Dost speak, though I thereof unworthy be.
 And Boaz said, at meal time come thou near,
 Eat of the bread, and dip i' th' vinegar.
 And by the reapers she sat down to meat,
 He gave her parched corn, and she did eat,
 And was suffic'd; and left, and rose to glean:
 And Boaz gave command to the young men,

Let her come in among the sheaves, said he,
 To glean, and let her not reproached be.
 Let fall some handfuls also purposely,
 And let her take them without injury.
 So she till even glean'd, and then beat out
 Her barley, being an ephah or thereabout.
 She took it up, and to the city went,
 And to her mother-in-law did it present:
 And what she had reserv'd to her she gave,
 When she had took what she design'd to have.
 Then unto her, her mother-in-law did say,
 In what field hast thou been to glean to-day?
 And where hast thou been working? Blest be he,
 That thus hath taken cognizance of thee.
 She told with whom, and furthermore did say,
 The man's name's Boaz, where I wrought to-day.
 And Naomi replied, may he be blest,
 Even of the Lord, whose kindness manifest
 Unto the living and the dead hath been:
 The man's our kinsman, yea, the next of kin.
 And Ruth, the Moabite, said, he gave
 Me likewise a commandment not to leave,
 Or to depart from following his young men,
 Until they had brought all his harvest in.
 And Naomi said unto Ruth, my daughter,
 'Tis good that thou observe to follow after
 His maidens, that they meet thee not elsewhere.
 So she to Boaz's maidens still kept near,
 Till barley and wheat harvest both, she saw
 Were done, and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.

To be concluded next month.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME **A TREASURE OF GREAT PRICE.**

For this writing we pray the Lord's permission to use words He spoke regarding the kingdom to illustrate that a Christian home is truly a treasure: "Again, the [Christian home] is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matt. 13:44).

Jesus went on to reinforce this teaching with a parallel parable. He said, "Again, the [Christian home] is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (vv. 45-46).

The main points are the same in both parables and are apparent, which we here will apply to the Christian home. First, Christ tells of a treasure hidden from the undiscerning eye but revealed to the diligent seeker. Secondly, when the eye sees the treasure, that one's sense of values tells him or her it is worth everything. Finally, based on that evaluation, action takes place to secure the blessing. Take note of the sense of action in the verbs, "hideth, goeth, selleth, and buyeth."

Considering the entities that affect the Christian in his progress to his eternal home, nothing exerts as great an influence for courage or discouragement on him as the home. Both his or her parental home and one's own home as husband, wife, and children bear heavily in this matter. That does not minimize the importance and prominence of the church in a Christian's life. It only points out what experience shows time and again: when the home is sound and happy on the foundation of Christ, most other negative influences and oppositions can be surmounted.

On the other hand, where the home is weak and not spiritual, any amount of encouragement faces an uphill pull. As is said, the home can be either a bit of heaven on earth, or it can be the most miserable place there is.

Every home has a "door." Each couple coming to the marriage altar brings their hearts' doors there. Those two hearts' doors unite and swing together to form the door of their home. Surely, Christ knows that door and is no stranger there. He lives there with them, making their home a Christian home. Such a home is a mighty fortress of refuge, helping further the Christian's walk toward heaven. Sad to say, there are homes where "there's

a Stranger at the door" seeking to enter.

This treasure is hidden today like never before. In society, strong forces are attacking the institution of the home, wanting to say that it's on the way out. The validity and purpose of the home is fading in the world. It is safe to say, though, that true Christians will always be known by their bedrock belief that the home is God's institution. They hold that it is not optional. They will bleed and die for it.

But without doubt, the greatest "hiding" of the treasure of the home is due to the unwholesomely busy, materialistic, and socially inundated life-style permeating the atmosphere today. Many testify that it seems like the treadmill of life has speeded up. The haze of these factors is so thick that many are not seeing the treasure clearly. We are affected by eye-dulling smog that minimizes old-fashioned ways and values. Are we seeing clearly the treasure hid in this field?

It takes time to be holy. Likewise, it takes time to have a Christian home. We won't have Christian homes if we only work at it in our "spare time." We must see the home for what it is--determining to a large extent whether we and our children and grandchildren will make it to heaven. Furthermore, the Christian home is so much a part of the walls of the church that we cannot trifle with the weaknesses in our homes that are evident. If we lose the Christian home, we will surely lose the candlestick that designates God's people (Rev. 2:5). Again, perhaps one of the greatest enemies of the Christian home is the overtaxing busyness, the constant running hither and yon of family members. Too often this is rendering the home a mere house where people sleep.

When the man's eyes in Jesus' parable were opened," he saw the potential. He perceived a treasure that was worth everything. He sold everything he had and bought the field. In that sense, he redeemed the field because of the value of the treasure. Husbands and wives, fathers and mothers must have the same sense of value relating to their home. They must see it as absolutely worth everything. They will sell out completely for its sake. In doing so, they will redeem the field that is utterly choked with the weeds and thorns of busyness and materialistic values and will make something useful of it. That's redemption—redeeming the time (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5).

The soul of the Christian home is the loving relationship in Christ Jesus that exists between husband and wife and/or father and mother. Here is the very essence of a happy Christian home. There is much truth in the saying,

"When Mommy's happy, everybody's happy." But Mother's happiness is bound up in the state of her relationship with her husband. Likewise, Dad's burden of responsibility is made lighter by the sense of appreciation and love he feels from Mother.

To ensure the vitality of the home's soul will require a selling out of the old self—man. In some ways, this falls more heavily on the husband and father. He has been appointed by the Lord to be the head of the home, which means he has the greater responsibility and also accountability. So contrary to the old nature, the way to effective leadership is by humility and submission to Christ. Dying to self is required to lead. Most wives and mothers and children will listen when they discern that one's spirit is pure and genuinely selfless.

Children are like pearls in the Christian home. Each is unique and priceless. They are a living soul brought into being by the all-knowing God with a plan. Seeing each one as a "pearl of great price" behooves Christian fathers and mothers to go again and again and sell all they have. Thus they "buy" the best opportunity for that child's salvation.

Children must be taught and trained to respect the home. This includes the spirit part of the home as well as the house in which the family lives. An example: Father and Mother's bedroom should be regarded as being a little special, with children showing due respect. Running and shouting inside the house and such rowdy behavior that actually damages the house should not be allowed. It doesn't teach the value of the home. When a family goes visiting to another home, children should know that each home is a sacred place. They are not to go uninhibitedly into every room but sit quietly until permission is asked of the host to go here or there.

One of the most specific of the Ten Commandments is affirmed in the New Testament. Paul quotes it, with an additional comment: "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise ;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:2). This is for children of all age groups but has another dimension for believing youth. It is very unsettling when a youth will claim he or she is faring well spiritually, but one knows he is not abiding in this clear commandment of the Lord.

The pervasive haze of independence and unprecedented level of activities, going here and there, is obscuring the eye of many a youth. Christian youth must also "see" the treasure hid in the field and know that the conse-

quences will be tragic and eternal if the clear word of the Lord is disregarded. Believing youth, take a good look at the "field" and see the treasure hidden there. Sell out and redeem that field and begin to lay the foundation for that most important of institutions, the Christian home. Hide it in your heart today.

It is likely that every pastor has heard the lamentable cry of a youth, "I would like to be a better Christian, but the way things are in the home ... " May God "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). How much does one value his salvation? The value of the home is the same.

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Distinctive Worship Patterns (Part 5)

Order and Reverence

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). The New Testament reveals that God expects order in all things relating to worship. Paul taught that church leaders are responsible for the prevailing atmosphere in worship services. He gave the Corinthian church directions concerning what is proper and what is not, stating, 'And the rest will I set in order when I come' (1 Corinthians 11:34).

God's work in Creation and the rules and regulations He prescribed for proper Old Testament worship reveal His orderliness. Reverence is the response of a person who desires to please the orderly God of heaven and earth.

A prescribed pattern for worship helps to maintain order and reverence in worship services. Each worshiper knows what is accepted and expected. However, when an appreciation for a prescribed pattern of worship is lost, experimentation and variety are sure to follow. When no one knows what will take place next in a worship service, reverence soon disappears.

Our Anabaptist forebears followed these Biblical directives concerning orderly worship, obeying them just as they sought to obey all Scriptural commands. Their worship services were not formalistic and liturgical like

the worship of the state churches. However, they were orderly, dignified, and reverent.

Our worship services too must exemplify orderliness, dignity, and reverence. Sensing the responsibility, accountability, and fleeting opportunity to give God's message of salvation to a dying people should produce in the preacher of the Gospel a reverential fear of God. Joking or seeking to amuse people from the pulpit is very inappropriate and does not build spirituality and Biblical obedience. Our Anabaptist forefathers would have been deeply grieved by such light methods of preaching.

A proper reverence for God needs to be expressed as we enter into worship. Actions such as chewing gum and unnecessary whispering are distractions to those who are endeavoring to worship. Also, we need to be careful when kneeling for prayer that we drop quietly and reverently to our knees. We should quietly remove and replace our songbooks to avoid undue noise. Also, leaving the auditorium during worship should be kept to a minimum. These precautions may seem insignificant, but carelessness in these areas will militate against a proper atmosphere of reverence.

A God-honoring worship service begins with each member, along with those for whom he is responsible, quietly finding seats and spending time in meditation until the service begins. Participating enthusiastically in singing and entering wholeheartedly into worship helps to prepare our hearts for the message God has for us.

May we be diligent in maintaining these principles so that the rising generations might enjoy the blessings that we experience because of order and reverence in our services.

Nevin L. Martin. Reprinted by permission from The Eastern Mennonite Testimony.

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