



The Amish Voice

MAP ♦ 575 US Highway 250 ♦ Greenwich, OH 44837 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ September 2024

The Secret of the Strength

— by Peter Hoover

CHAPTER 13

On to Communion

South of the baths at Ragatz and the Swiss village of Maienfeld, south of the snow-crowned peaks of Falkniß and Scesaplana where the setting sun lights up the snowfields of the Glarner and Rhaetian Alps lies the deep valley of the Domleschg. It lies in the part of Switzerland that is neither German nor French but Romansh.

Romansh is the language of the Grisons (great grey mountains) of Switzerland. It is a Latin dialect, similar to Spanish or Romanian. It came to the Grisons with immigrants from Roman Italy who settled there a thousand years before Georg Cajacob was born in the Domleschg village of Bonaduz.

Speaking Romansh, Georg found Latin easier to learn than German. But by 1513, when he was twenty-one years old, he finished his studies at the University of Leipzig in Germany and became a priest.¹

He returned to the Grisons and served

for two years at Trins, across the river from Bonaduz, where the Domleschg meets the canyon of the upper Rhein.

Georg said the *missa fidelium*. He baptized babies. He listened to confessions and absolved people from their sins. But he well knew that both he and the people whom he served lived in sin, and he did not feel forgiven. He was a tall, lively young man with a dark complexion. People called him “Strong Georg.” But he was weak. He lived under the power of sin and had no strength to



Much of what happened in European cities escaped Switzerland's rural families, living in rugged isolation as on this farm above Bonaduz in the Grisons. As they had welcomed Waldensian messengers throughout many generations, they welcomed Anabaptist teachings in the 16th Century.

¹ Several writers speak of Georg Cajacob (of the house of Jacob) as “an exmonk from Chur.” Huldrych Zwingli seems to have thought he was one, but there is no historical evidence that he ever spent time in a monastery.

overcome it. He sinned time after time until he left the priesthood after two years and got married.

Getting married did not free Georg from sin. He still felt weak in temptation and longed to know Jesus, so he traveled north with his young wife to look for help in the Protestant city of Zürich.

The Protestants disappointed Georg. He could see they did not follow Jesus. But the Spirit of God moved his heart when he met Felix Manz, Conrad Grebel, and other seekers at Felix Manz's house on the winter evening of January 21, 1525. Georg asked Conrad to baptize him. Then Georg baptized the others, and they remembered Jesus by breaking bread and drinking wine together.

Not long after this, the Protestant authorities caught Georg Cajacob (by now nicknamed *Blaurock*)² and imprisoned him in the *Hexenturm* (witches' tower) prison at Zurich. He escaped several times, but they caught him again and called him to

² Before he was well-known in Zurich, Georg attended a meeting and commented on what was said. One of those who attended the meeting asked who spoke, and someone answered: “The man in the blue coat.” After that the people called him *Blaurock* (“blue coat”).

answer before Huldrych Zwingli at the city court.

Zwingli called Georg a “great, foolish dreamer,” too ignorant to read German correctly. He accused Georg and his companions of “mocking the church,” of trying to “build a church within the church,” and of overthrowing “divine and human authority.” Especially offensive to Zwingli and the Protestant court was the way Georg baptized people and held communion services in ordinary houses, in secret, and without permission. To this, Georg replied:

Christ the Lord sent his disciples out to teach all people and gave them the power to grant remission of sins and, as an outward sign of forgiveness, to baptize them. When I taught this, too, some turned in tears to me and asked me to baptize them. This I could not refuse. I baptized them according to their wish and called upon the name of Christ for them.

I further taught them love and unity and to have all things in common, as the apostles commanded us. I taught them that they should always remember the death of Christ and His poured-out blood. I showed them the practice of Christ in the nighttime meal. We broke bread and drank wine together so that they might remember that they are redeemed by one body of Christ and made clean by one blood and that through this, they were brothers and sisters one of another in Christ the Lord.³

A Nighttime Meal

On Feb. 5, 1525, Hans Ockenfuoss testified before the Protestant court at Zürich: “Two weeks ago, I was in

³ From a letter Georg wrote to the city council of Zurich in the spring of 1525.

Zollikon in Jakob Hottinger's house. Conrad Grebel and some other men were there. They spoke of baptism and the nighttime meal. After that, Conrad took a loaf of bread and divided it among us. He ate from it too and said that from now on, we want to lead a Christian life.”

Leonhard Schiemer wrote from the prison at Rattenberg on the Inn:

Those who have become one body and one loaf of bread in Christ - those who are minded alike (*gleichgesinnt*) - should keep the nighttime meal in remembrance of his death. Through this, everyone should be admonished to become like Christ in obedience to the Father.⁴

Hans Betz wrote from the dungeon of the castle at Passau in Bavaria:

Mark the counsel of God: Christ has set the pattern for a nighttime meal of bread and wine for His church community - the community that keeps itself from sin. If she eats the nighttime meal in remembrance of Him, death will not overtake her.⁵

Huddled Around Jesus

When I began to read what the first Anabaptists wrote, two expressions stood out to me. One was the mention of Jesus as our *Hauptmann* (captain or “head man”). The other was the term *kleiner Hauf*, which was used for the followers of Jesus. *Kleiner Hauf* literally means a little heap or a huddle. At first, I had a hard time picturing Jesus' followers like this. But when I began to see the place of Jesus in the Anabaptist movement, it became clear to me. Jesus is the captain, and His followers huddle around Him. “Look to the cap-

⁴ *Eine Erklärung der 12 Artikel des christlichen Glaubens*, ca. 1526.

⁵ *Ausbund*, 92:15

tain... Leap to your captain's side,” wrote an *Ausbund* writer.⁶ Those who follow Christ do this continually to get their directions from Him.

The first Christians huddled around Jesus by breaking bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him whenever they got together. The first Anabaptists, out of love and necessity, did the same. In the first published statement⁷ of the movement, they wrote:

Every time we meet as brothers, we should eat the nighttime meal together to proclaim the death of the Lord in this way. In doing this, we help one another remember how Christ gave Himself up and how His blood was poured out for us. In the same way, we need to be willing, for Christ's sake, to give up our bodies and our lives for the brothers.⁸

The first Anabaptists could not have pictured a formal worship service without the breaking of bread. Christian worship without the Eucharist (the Greek word for thanksgiving, used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:16) was unknown before the sixteenth century. Michael Sattler wrote:

Do not forget the meetings, but put forth effort to have them regularly. Pray together for all the saints, and break the bread together - so much the oftener (*desto fleissiger*) as you see the Lord's day approaching.⁹

When several Anabaptists were asked before the Dutch court in 1534 what they did in their meet-

⁶ *Ausbund*, 78:1

⁷ This statement, prepared by the Anabaptists of Switzerland, possibly in 1526, was circulating before the *Brüderliche Vereinigung* of Schleitheim made its appearance. It corresponds closely to the first confession of the south German and Austrian Anabaptists, written by Leonhard Schiemer.

⁸ From *Christlicher Ordnung...damitt die lieb und einikeit erhalten wird*, Bern, ca. 1526.

⁹ From *An die Gemeinde Gottes zu Horb... 1527*

ings, they replied: "In our meetings, we read and discuss the Gospel, after which one of us breaks the bread and distributes it to all, knowing that the bread is not able to save us, but it is only taken in memory of the suffering of our Lord."¹⁰

Both in the south (Switzerland, southern Germany, and Austria) and in the north (along the lower Rhein and in the Netherlands), the Anabaptists met for the nighttime meal at least once a week. "Small fellowships of Anabaptists sprang up like mushrooms everywhere," reads one report. "They moved from house to house for meetings in order to remain inconspicuous, where they read and studied the Scriptures and celebrated the nighttime meal."¹¹

Conrad Grebel stated in one of his letters, "The nighttime meal shall be practiced often and used much."¹²

A Wedding Feast

In southern Germany, the Anabaptists spoke of baptism as the sign of a believer's engagement (Verlobung) to Jesus and of the nighttime meal as the marriage feast in which the bread and the wine were the rings.

In the Netherlands, Menno Simons wrote:

Oh, delightful assembly and Christian marriage feast! Feast commanded and ordained by the Lord Himself. Bodily pleasure and bodily appetite do not belong here. But glorious and holy mysteries are set before and desired by true believers in bread and wine!

Oh, delightful Christian assembly!

No senseless songs, but peace and unity among the brothers. Words of grace. Glorious benefits. Favor, love, service, tears, prayers, cross, and death are set forth with delightful thanksgiving and holy joy!

Oh, delightful Christian feast! The unrepentant are not invited. Harlots, rogues, adulterers, robbers, liars, tyrants, and those who shed blood must stay outside. But true Christians come. Born of God, walking with Christ, they come to love and believe. They are members of His body, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone.

Oh, delightful assembly and Christian marriage feast! No gluttonous eating and drinking. No vanity of pipes and drums. But hungry souls are filled with bread from heaven, the divine Word. They drink the wine of the Holy Ghost and sing and play in peace before the Lord.¹³

A Parable

The *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (Didache) written in the first century after Jesus said:

As this broken bread, once dispersed over the hills, was brought together and became one loaf, so may your church be brought together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

This parable, known to the first Anabaptists, appears many times in their songs and writings. An Ausbund writer wrote:

This is how Christ taught His disciples to keep the Passover in His flesh: He broke for them the bread and gave thanks. He gave them the cup, and they drank...With the bread, He showed that whoever has His Spirit belongs to Him and

becomes one flesh with Him, a member of His body and of His church community for which He died. Like one bread is made from many grains, and one wine is made from many grapes, all true Christians become one bread and one wine in Christ the Lord. He sustains us and gives us true love in Gemeinschaft with him.¹⁴

Menno Simons wrote:

Just as natural bread is made of many grains ground in the mill, kneaded with water, and baked over the fire, so is the Lord's Gemeinschaft. True believers are broken in their hearts with the mill of God's Word. Then, they are baptized with the water of the Holy Ghost and formed by the fire of pure love into one body.¹⁵

Dirk Philips wrote:

Indeed, it is a marvelous and blessed union where all Christians are one bread and one body in Christ Jesus. They are one bread ... baked by the fire of love. They are baptized by one Spirit into one body and must, like a natural body, be one heart and one soul. They serve one another, help one another, and comfort one another, just like the members of a natural body.¹⁶

Before they beheaded him at Schwatz in Austria in 1528, Hans Schlaffer wrote:

The body of Christ on the earth is the Gemeinschaft of those who believe on Him. Whoever eats the bread of the nighttime meal expresses with that his desire to live in Gemeinschaft with this body and to be a part of it in all things - to stick with the Gemeinschaft through joy

¹⁰ From a report of the Court of Holland to the Regent Maria of Hungary, then reigning at Brussels, dated February 17, 1534.

¹¹ From C. A. Cornelius, *Historische Arbeiten vornehmlich zur Reformationsgeschichte*, (Leipzig, 1899).

¹² Letter to Thomas Müntzer, September 5, 1524.

¹³ *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers...1539.*

¹⁴ *Ausbund*, 55:21-23

¹⁵ *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers...1539*

¹⁶ *op. cit.*

and sorrow, riches and poverty, honor and shame, mourning and rejoicing, death, and life. He expresses his desire to give everything he has, both body and life, for his brothers even as Christ gave Himself for us.¹⁷

Inner and Outer Gemeinschaft

The first Anabaptists believed that the nighttime meal, like baptism, is an outer witness (Mitzeugnis) of inner Gemeinschaft with Christ. They believed the inner Gemeinschaft without the outer witness of bread and wine is incomplete. Jaques d'Auchy, killed at Leeuwarden in 1559, called those who spiritualized the meaning of the nighttime meal "heretics" and "destroyers of the breaking of bread." But the Anabaptists believed just as strongly that the outer witness without an inner sense of Gemeinschaft was incomplete, useless, and actually harmful.

"What does it help to eat of the holy meal if we do not enjoy the fruits it stands for, death to self, love, and unity?" asked Menno Simons. "Outer communion profits nothing if we do not live in inner Gemeinschaft with the Lord and His body."¹⁸

In another article, Menno wrote:

Be they emperor or king, rich or learned, all who with a proud heart seat themselves at the Lord's table eat and drink to their own damnation. All who boast of the Lord's name but reject His commands and blameless example eat and drink to their own damnation. All who love houses and lands, possessions, friends, children, the world, favor, ease, and honor in this life more

than they love Christ eat and drink to their own damnation.

He who would sit with the disciples and guests of Christ at the Lord's table must be sound in the faith and blameless in conduct and life. Be he rich or poor, high or low, emperor, king, prince, earl, knight, or nobleman, none is excepted from this rule. The pious cannot partake of the nighttime meal with those who err in doctrine and whose lives are carnal. Such people are not in Christ. They must be kept outside until they repent, and so become one in Spirit with Christ and his body.¹⁹

Without penitence, neither water, bread, nor wine avail in Christ, even if they were administered by the apostles themselves. That which avails before God is a new creature, a converted, changed, and broken heart, a true fear and love of God, love for neighbors, and a subdued, humble, sober, and peaceful life according to Jesus' example. Where there is such a new being, there is indeed the true baptism and the true meal. To be baptized externally and to partake of the nighttime meal merely in letter and appearance but not inwardly before God is to mimic God's work. It is hypocrisy and deceit.²⁰

Without Superstition

The Anabaptists valued the nighttime meal so highly that they celebrated it together even if it cost their lives. But they rejected the superstitions that had grown up around the *missa fidelium* during the Dark Ages.

Amsterdam, the center of Anabaptist activity in the north, was only one of the many pilgrimage sites in the Ger-

man countries of Europe. Thousands of pilgrims came to Amsterdam every year to visit its *heilige stede* (holy place) erected on the site of a miracle they said took place in 1345. A sick man there had received the host (the consecrated wafer of the mass). He vomited it up. His wife tried to burn it, but the flames would not consume it. Catholic leaders declared this a miracle and set loose a flood of pilgrims that greatly increased the prosperity and fame of Amsterdam throughout the following centuries.

Dutch and German priests told stories of the host miraculously saving Christians from the Muslims and curing the blind, the sick and the crippled. A lamb could be saved from a wolf by the host. One priest put the host on the tongue of a sick cow and cured her. Many were the stories of how the host had turned into a child or bled when it was broken. People believed that one did not grow older while eating the host.

When the Anabaptists, in the middle of this, began to teach that the bread and wine stayed bread and wine, that Christ was to be found in spiritual Gemeinschaft but not in the elements of the nighttime meal, they brought Europe down upon them in wrath. An influential priest of Amsterdam compared the Anabaptists to the plagues of Egypt and called the people to pray at the *heilige stede* for a miracle to drive away these "devilish pigs and frogs."

Posters and pamphlets were used in the crusade against the Anabaptists. One picture showed the woman picking the vomited host out of the flames with a ring of angels kneeling around her in worship of it. It came with a text lamenting the fact that people were "losing respect for apostolic tradition, the ceremonies of the

¹⁷ *Ein einfältig Gebet...* 1528

¹⁸ *Een lieffelijcke vermaninghe ofte onderwijsinghe wt Gods woort...* ca. 1558

¹⁹ *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers...* 1539

²⁰ *Een Klare beantwoordinge, over een Schrift Gellii Fabri...* 1554.

church, and the pronouncements of its holy fathers.”

The Anabaptists replied calmly. Menno Simons wrote:

We are not commanded in the Scriptures to argue about the tangible elements of the nighttime meal, for of what substance the bread and wine consist may be felt, seen, and tasted. We should strive rather to confirm ourselves to what the elements stand for.²¹

Conrad Grebel wrote:

The mass is not to be reformed but abolished. The nighttime meal is to be restored as the apostles practiced it. Only the words of Christ are to be used, and they are not to be treated as having any magical meaning. In order to avoid a superstitious devotion and a falling away from the spiritual, everything out of the ordinary must stop. No special bread, no special cup, no priestly clothes and customs, and no special singing is to accompany the nighttime meal. It is a meal of Gemeinschaft and should not be taken alone, nor by dying persons....All the details of the nighttime meal shall remind the believer of the body and blood of Christ and of the witness on the

cross so that he shall be willing to live and suffer for the sake of Christ and the brothers, the head, and the members of the body.²²

Communion with Jesus

After they beat him and drove him out of Zurich on the day they drowned Felix Manz, Georg Cajacob traveled through the mountains of Switzerland and Austria, teaching, baptizing, and breaking bread in the name of Christ. He returned to the Grisons and spoke to his own people, calling them to get up and follow the real Christ to find forgiveness for their sins. Many believed, and great numbers gathered secretly to hear him speak - until the Austrian authorities caught him near Klausen (now the city of Chiusa in Italy) on August 14, 1529. There, they tortured him at the Guffidaun castle, condemned him under a barrage of accusations, and burned him at the stake on September 6, 1529.

Before his death, Georg wrote:

Prepare us for the nighttime meal, oh God, through Christ, Your beloved Son! Clothe us with Your Spirit. Free us from death and suffering! When we shall eat at last of

that nighttime meal, who shall wait upon us? The one who knows our hearts and redeems us from our sins!

Blessed are those invited to the Lord's nighttime meal! Blessed are those who stay with Christ through all tribulation. He suffered. He hung on the cross, and those who follow Him must suffer now. Oh Lord, give us pure love! Give us love to walk our way with joy! When our time comes to go, may we not, like the foolish virgins, find that the door to the feast has been closed.

They cried, "Lord! Lord!" But their oil had run out while they were sleeping.

Blessed is the one who watches with the wise virgins. He will inherit eternal possessions, and his eyes will see the clarity of God. The king will break out with a trumpet blast! The elect will join his parade! Therefore, Zion, holy community of Christ, look at what you have received! Hold it and keep yourself pure. Then you shall inherit the crown!²³

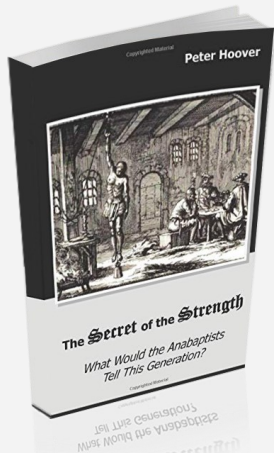
In Jesus' communion, the first Anabaptists followed Him . . .

Continued in Next Issue

²¹ *Dat Fundament des Christelycken leers...1539*

²² *op. cit.*

²³ *Ausbund*, 5:22-33



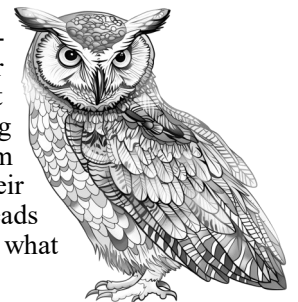
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Did You Know?

An owl has eye tubes instead of eyeballs? Because of this, owls cannot rotate their eyes to look in different directions. They must turn their heads towards what they want to see! It sure is a good thing that God also equipped them with fourteen vertebrae in their necks so they can turn their heads completely to the back to see what is behind them!!



The previous article showed how a new wave of Amish immigrants caused the Amish church to grow rapidly and how a more conservative and progressive-minded wing arose within the church.

Years of Division – 1850-1878

For most Americans, values like commitment to self-determination and individual freedom of choice had become almost like articles of faith. This contradicted the traditional Amish values of plainness and self-surrender for the good of the community. But if this posture placed one at odds with larger society, not all Amish agreed on what that meant for their church. Indeed, for some, the promise and prospect of American culture were attractive, and adaptation to it was welcome. They viewed change not as an exercise in wholesale assimilation but as a necessary means of remaining relevant. After 1850 especially, the tension between the push for change and the pull of tradition became acute. Increasingly, that tension resulted in conflicts that threatened to split local congregations and divide entire fellowships.

The third quarter of the nineteenth century was a time of remarkable disagreement, dissension, and schism among the Amish. While the church was still nominally united in 1850, 25 years later, controversies had produced permanent divisions. The events of those years marked subsequent Amish history, and the results, which are still visible today, underscore the lasting impact of these divisions. While these years are critical for understanding Amish history, the debate and discussion that marked them can be challenging to describe. Part of that difficulty lies in the fact that no single Amish division occurred during these years. Though there were key moments of conflict, the formation of competing parties worked its

way out at different times in different places. One historian has suggested that “sorting out” would be a better way to describe the alignment of churches into change-minded and tradition-minded camps. If by 1860, for example, the Amish in northern Indiana had broken into progressive-leaning and more tradition-guided factions, the Ontario Amish did not split until the 1880s, and the church in Iowa divided only in the 1890s.

The interpretation of *Ordnung* often caused conflict. For some Amish, church order was something to tamper with carefully and cautiously. For others, *Ordnung* was a more dynamic principle that guided change and certainly did not prohibit innovations. Different views of order and change necessarily led to a division in the Amish church. With a common *Ordnung* as the church’s only organizational glue, disagreement on the purpose and use of *Ordnung* naturally led to fracture.

Dienerversammlungen

Two conservative-leaning bishops proposed that the church address the knotty questions by assembling a comprehensive gathering of Amish leaders – a *Dienerversammlung* (minister’s meeting) – that would address problems irritating particular communities, as well as point the direction to unity in belief and practice among North American Amish. Yet while Amish conservatives initially floated the idea, it fell to a somewhat progressive Amish deacon – eastern Lancaster County’s John Stoltzfus – to call the first minister’s conference. Stoltzfus received several letters from different parts of the country that supported him in his longing for a conference. These letters implied that such a continent-wide ministers’ meeting should become an annual event, and for 17 years, it nearly was.

The first of these comprehensive ministers’ meetings convened in June 1862 in Wayne County, Ohio, with 72 leaders in attendance. More than half were from Ohio, but participants also came from five other states. According to deacon Stoltzfus, scores of lay members—more than 4000 in 1862—also attended the sessions but did not vote or participate in discussions.

Initially, the ministers’ conferences favored the change-minded Amish agenda. The first year’s moderator, bishop Johnathan Yoder from McLean County, Illinois, and assistant moderator, bishop John Esh of Juniata County, Pennsylvania, were well-known Amish progressives. Not only did leaders affiliated with the progressive camp attend in greater numbers (about 50 of the 72 registrants could be considered change-minded), but conservative Holmes County bishop Levi Miller charged that not all the tradition-minded church districts had been informed of the meeting on purpose, and thus had been left out. Miller’s charge was only partly true; conservative David Beiler and other Lancaster County bishops and ministers, for instance, stayed away from the meeting on purpose. Although Beiler had initially suggested the ministers’ meeting, he soon sensed that it might become a vehicle for bringing more change into the church rather than creating a unified front against it.

The proceedings of the *Dienerversammlungen* were informal. Sessions opened with sermons, which were the highlight for many participants who otherwise had little opportunity to hear preachers from other states. Issues or problems brought to the conference received floor discussion and debate. Special committees took up important questions and formulated written responses, which they presented to the larger group. The first two annual meet-

ings used an informal consensus method to approve or reject committee findings, but by 1864, the ministers' meeting employed a system of majority votes. One limitation of the conference's power was its inability to enforce decisions. Because the Amish retained local congregational authority, churches that disagreed with a particular ministers' meeting decision could simply ignore it.

The first two meetings were somewhat successful in settling local issues. For example, it forbade using worldly musical instruments, joining state militias, holding membership in secret societies such as the Masonic Lodge, or posing for photographs. However, despite the hard line that the annual meetings took with these expressions of popular culture, many conservatives were disappointed in the tone and outcome of conference discussions and committee reports. Regarding social shunning, which had long been practiced in Amish churches, some ministers' meeting resolutions and committee reports seemed to waffle. The conferences also refused to forbid political participation. Moreover, the suggested way to bring peace in most disagreements was to ask conservatives to be more tolerant. Thus, in the end, the tension between the two wings of the Amish church was building, not lessening.

A Breach in 1865

Before the 1865 meeting, 34 conservative-minded Amish leaders met and drew up a document that served as a type of manifesto of the tradition-minded Amish position. They took a firm stand against all they believed to be "destructive to our salvation and contrary to God's Word." They warned that popular attitudes and widely accepted social customs that tempted the church, in truth, "served to express pomp and pride." Worse still, they "lead away from God."

There was no doubting the statement's purpose; it defined the terms under which the tradition-minded Amish were willing to work. "All those who affirm such with us and demonstrate with words and deeds," the authors announced, "we are willing to recognize as brothers and sisters and resume fellowship with them." Though blunt and specific, the document ended with grace and invitation. Spiritual renewal – not a list of prescribed practices – was what conservatives intended their call for separation from sin to inspire.

With their position in hand, nearly all 34 signatories headed to the 1865 annual meeting in Wayne County. The conference registered the highest attendance of any, with 89 leaders present. About 40 percent of those assembled were tradition-minded Amish, the most significant representation they would ever achieve.

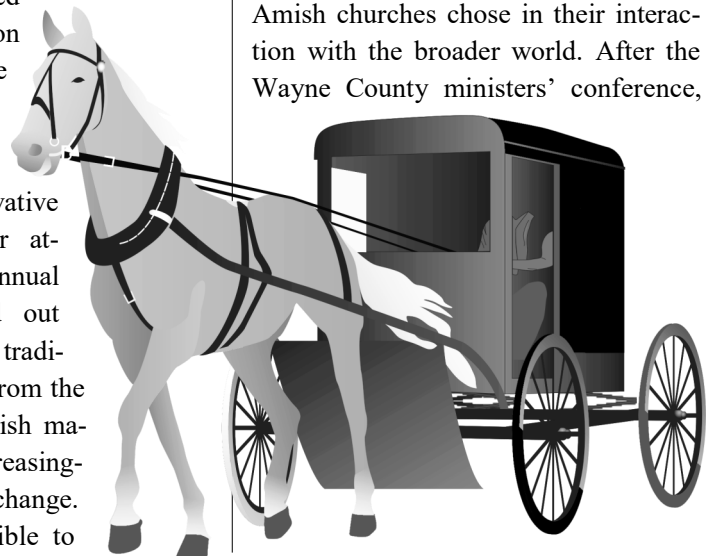
Curiously, the printed minutes of the 1865 meeting are the sketchiest of any of the conferences' proceedings, so it is difficult to reconstruct the exact order of events. The ministers' meeting took up the conservatives' paper near the end of its business session and did little with it. While no formal response from the Holmes County conferees to the tone and agenda of that year's larger gathering survives, it appears they were bitterly disappointed with the reception they received at the national meeting.

After 1865, only a handful of conservative Amish leaders ever attended another annual conference. Ignored out of their church, the traditionalists withdrew from the activities of the Amish majority, who were increasingly comfortable with change. (While it is impossible to

say how many Amish sided with the conservatives, they eventually numbered about one-third of all districts.)

The effect the annual meetings had on the local situation was different per community and district. For example, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, most of the members sided with the conservatives, whereas in Central Illinois, nearly the opposite situation transpired. In other communities, there were about equal numbers of tradition-minded and change-minded Amish who slowly sorted out in the different districts.

Because the conservatives had defined their concerns in terms of a traditional understanding of the *Ordnung* (the "old order"), others eventually labeled them Old Order Amish. Meanwhile, many in the change-minded group had been constructing closer relations with neighboring Mennonites, many of whom had an affinity for the relatively tolerant and open Amish progressives. As a result, the Amish majority coming out of the *Dienerversammlungen* embraced the designation "Amish Mennonite" (not to be mistaken for the later group "Beachy Amish Mennonites"). While these labels were not immediately or universally recognized, after the 1865 ministers' meeting, the terms "Old Order Amish" and "Amish Mennonite" accurately pointed to two paths Amish churches chose in their interaction with the broader world. After the Wayne County ministers' conference,



the change-minded group (Amish Mennonite) and the conservatives (Old Order Amish) went separate ways.

After the tradition-minded Amish hardly attended the *Dienerversammlungen* anymore, the Amish Mennonites struggled with how much change they would allow. These eventually led to two more splits: the Egly Amish, who had a more evangelical approach to conversion (demanding a personal conversion experience before baptism), and the Stuckey Amish, who had a very lenient,

in the eyes of the Amish Mennonites' too patient, view on excommunication and shunning.

The last *Dienerversammlung* was held in 1878 in Woodford County, Illinois. Although the meetings did not close on a formal note, no one convened another such gathering after 1878. Perhaps the meetings ended because they no longer served a purpose. After all, the conferences were initially supposed to settle local disturbances and unify the church. But instead of unifying the Amish

church, the *Dienerversammlungen* had tragically supported separating ways among the Amish. In the decades that followed, the gap between the groups only widened as the Old Order Amish continued to maintain a life and faith whose implications made them easily recognizable while their progressive Amish Mennonite cousins moved toward the American mainstream.

To be continued in the November issue.

Primary source: *A History of the Amish*, by Steven M. Nolt

The Simplicity that is in Christ

—by John Weaver

One of the greatest dangers facing Christianity today is the same as it was 2,000 years ago. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth that he feared their minds were being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

I see where people in the Bible asked the important question, “*What must I do to be saved?*” I have yet to see a complicated answer. Today, it is the same as it was then: “...*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...*” (Acts 16:31, 32).

Sadly, just as the Pharisees added to their ever-growing list of rules to burden people with, many church leaders do the same today. Even more tragic is when the rules become more important than what is ultimately important. BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

If a person believes with all their heart, God will direct their path. We must consistently point people to the simple message of the gospel. Believe on the Lord Jesus. If this important first step is taken, many other steps will follow.

Tell a new convert that the path of a believer means a love relationship with Jesus. Tell them their most significant and crucial requirement or expectation is to love the Lord

with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. And right next to that is to love people in the same way.

Jesus said that many would say on that day, “*Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*” (Mt 7:22) Jesus said his answer would be the most horrible words anyone could ever hear. “...*I NEVER KNEW YOU: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Mt 7:23).

These are people who, no doubt, did what they claimed. They preached, were active in all kinds of good church activities, and even cast out demons in the name of Jesus. Yet they had missed the first step. They had no relationship with Jesus. They followed something or maybe someone, but it wasn't first and foremost Jesus.

I greatly fear that many people are also active in doing good things today. There are many good things done to receive favor from God. (There is certainly nothing wrong with doing good things.) But the good works must be in response to the relationship that is already established, not to establish the relationship. There is a big difference.

The most unlearned, illiterate person can often grasp the simplicity that is in Christ before the highly educated person will. Jesus came to save His people from their sins. A love relationship with Jesus means an empowered life. The proverb says it well:

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Prov 3:5-6).

MARCH 12-15, 2025

Mark your calendar and plan to join us as we soak in the encouragement of 20 people, each

relating their personal story of stepping out of the boat and following hard after their Savior, regardless of the cost.

SAVE
THE DATE



“Why can’t you get over it?”

It’s one of the most hurtful statements you and I can utter to a person who has experienced abuse.



Photo by Praswin Prakashan on Unsplash

Other ways of saying the same thing seem a little more spiritual:

“You just need to forgive.”

“That happened long ago, and you need to stop letting it bother you.”

“Just stop believing the lies.”

“When will you choose to be a victor instead of a victim?”

Or “But I thought you already worked through that.”

If there’s one thing I wish people would understand about sexual abuse, it would be this:

Sexual abuse is physically, spiritually, and emotionally damaging. It affects every aspect of a person’s life – without exception. It is a traumatic event that literally alters one’s brain.

I am very blessed to have a husband who has never made me feel like I should “get over it.” I could not ask for a more supportive church and family. **Without a doubt, I would not be as far in my healing journey if it weren’t for my husband, church, and family.** I am not writing this because I feel unsupported in my journey. I am writing this for the many victims in the

Anabaptist culture and beyond who do not have a strong support system.

I wish that we, as Anabaptists, understood abuse and trauma better. We tend to force or pressure people to be “normal,” which only further victimizes them. We push them to forgive before they are ready and expect them never to utter anything about it again.

It’s crazy. It’s like expecting a person with a traumatic brain injury to get out of the hospital bed and walk or telling someone with a broken bone that the pain is all in their head.

Do you want someone to “get over it?” Do you want them to heal? Do you want them to be “okay?”

It’s really pretty simple. Be Jesus to them. Show them what unconditional love looks like. Unconditional love is never forceful or pushy. It doesn’t demand forgiveness, though **forgiveness is important.** Instead, unconditional love loves at all times and in every circumstance. Jesus is the ultimate example of Unconditional Love – because He is love.

Jesus understands abuse much better than you and I do. He understands the effects, and He cares. We could learn a few things from Him. I wish we’d do better at giving grace to abuse victims. Jesus does – why don’t we?

Helping the wounded takes time, sacrifice, and getting dirty. Too often we are like the priest and Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan. We walk around the bleeding, broken person lying in the ditch.

Sometimes, the reason we don’t stop to help

is *not because we do not care* but rather *because we do not know how.*

There are many abuse victims in our churches who are dying because no one stops to help them. They don’t feel safe, protected, or cared for. And then we wonder why they left the church or suddenly did not want anything to do with God.

If you know someone who has been abused, **you have an fantastic opportunity** to show them what true love is. Validate their pain and their feelings. Be a good listener. Do some research on abuse to help you better understand them. Care about them and love them well.

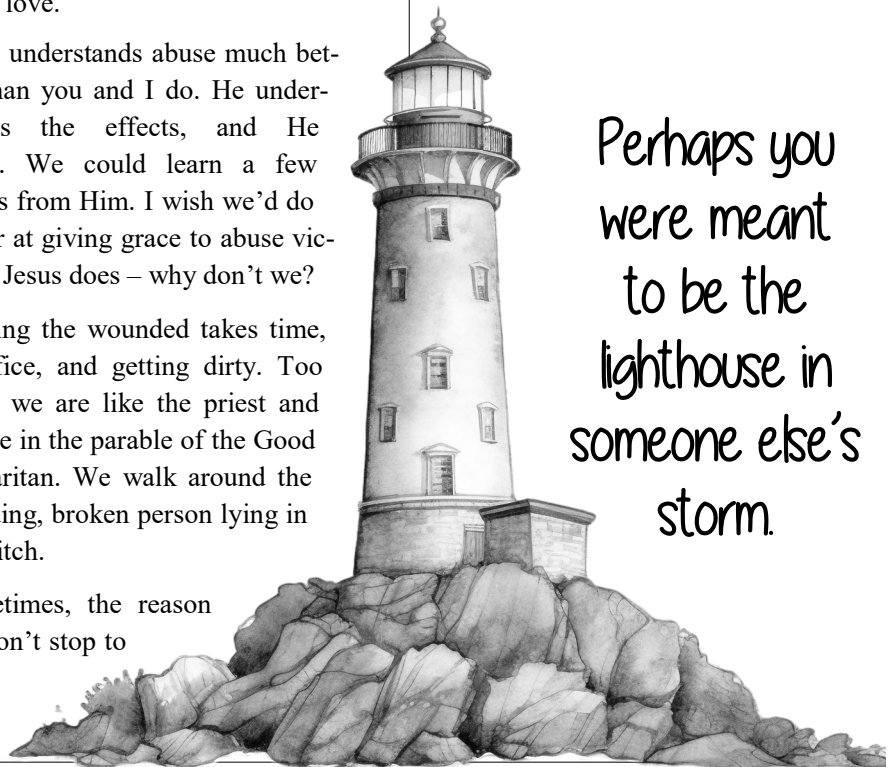
Don’t compare their journey with someone else’s. And most of all, **don’t try to fix them.** You can’t.

But Jesus can. So show them Jesus.

One of my survivor friends summed it up like this:

“Sometimes all we need is a Jesus with skin on.”

Perhaps you were meant to be the lighthouse in someone else’s storm.



The following article was taken from
The Topical Sermon Notebook, End Times
 by Dr. Alan Carr, Lenoir, NC.
www.sermonnotebook.org

Revelation 20:11–15

Intro: Some time ago, a young foreign student flunked out at the University of Michigan. In shame, he decided to disappear. For the next four years, he hid in the unused attic of an Ann Arbor church. Taking great pains to conceal himself, he quietly prowled around only at night, living off food and water from the kitchen. He never left the building or spoke to a soul. No one ever suspected he was there. Then, one day, a slight mistake gave him away. Accidentally, the young recluse made some noise, the police were called, and he was finally discovered.

How foolish this young man was to try to hide from his failure. Yet, he is not as foolish as the person who seeks to hide from God! The world is filled with people who live as though they have no sin, as though God does not exist, and as though they will never face God's judgment.

Unfortunately, what they hope will happen will never come to pass. You see, these verses, which we have read this morning, tell us about a time when every lost sinner will face the Lord in judgment. There will be nowhere to hide on that day. No one will hide behind excuses, ignorance, false professions, etc. Everyone will face Jesus Christ as Lord and Judge, and they will all receive a just sentence for their sins.

This morning, I want to examine the facts concerning an event known as The Great White Throne Judgment. Before I begin, I want you to know that

there will not be one single born-again individual who will stand in judgment here. This is a judgment seat for the lost. Let's notice the facts surrounding this judgment as I preach on the thought Nowhere To Hide.

I. There Will Be No Hiding From the Judge On the Throne (v. 11)

A. The Picture In This Throne—Two adjectives are used to describe this throne.

1. **It is called Great**—This word refers to its power. This is the highest court in the universe! When judgment is rendered from this throne, there is no appeal to a higher court, for there is no higher court! This is the place of highest authority and final judgment.

Ill. The closest we can come to understanding this court is our Supreme Court. There is no higher court in the land, and judgments are final. This is the Supreme Court of the Universe.

2. **It is called White**—This speaks of the purity of this court. All human courts are stained by sin, prejudice, and fallibility. This court, on the other hand, is absolutely perfect, and the judgment rendered here is always fair and righteous. The Judge who occupies this bench is infallible. He is not tainted by sin or prejudice but renders judgment in perfect righteousness and fairness.

Ill. Not a single person judged here will cry "unfair." Every sinner judged and sentenced will know they have received perfect and fair judgment.

B. The Person On This Throne—The Bible tells us that this throne is occupied by a person. His identity is not revealed here. However, the Bible

tells us in other places Who is on this throne.

1. **His Name**—The man on this throne is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (**John 5:22–23, 27, 30; Acts 10:40–42; 2 Tim. 4:1**).

The Savior will be the Sentencer in that day!

2. **His Nature**—This is no lowly Nazarene who occupies this throne. This isn't a poor, humble carpenter. This is a resurrected conqueror. This is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. His appearance is described for us by the prophet Daniel (**Dan. 7:9–10**).

Ill. His presence is so terrible and powerful that even the heavens and the earth flee from before Him. Nature has the good sense to bow before this judge! Why is it that sinners have such a difficult time doing the same?

Ill. I want to remind you that we still live in the day of grace. During this time in history, a sinner can come before God and cry out for forgiveness, and the Lord will receive them and save them by His grace. Today is the day of grace. Today is the day of forgiveness. Today is the day of repentance. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day of mercy. There will be none of those things dispensed in that day! Only swift and sure judgment will issue from this great white throne and from the Lord Jesus Christ!

C. The Perception Of This Throne—The Bible tells us here that no place was found for the heavens and the earth to hide from the gaze of the One on the throne. This morning, it must be remembered that this righteous Judge sees all, and He knows all. There is no

sin hidden from Him, and no thought has ever been concealed. There will be no pretending and pretense on that great judgment day but only a sure recounting of every sinful deed and every sinful thought. Nothing will be hidden!

Ill. Some think they are getting away with things now, but the truth is, God knows all about you and what you have been doing and thinking. He knows everything there is to know about you!

Ill (**Psa. 33:13–15; Psa. 44:21; Pro. 5:21; Pro. 15:3; Pro. 21:2; Heb. 4:13**). Friend, you haven't hidden a thing from God! And, you can be sure, one day, those sins will come back to haunt you—(**Num. 32:23; Gal. 6:9**).

Friend, you will not hide from this righteous Judge! He will know all there is to know about you before you appear in His presence. He knows you intimately!)

II. There Will Be No Hiding From the Justice at the Throne (v. 12–13)

A. The Defendants Appearing At The Throne—Here, we are told that those appearing before the throne are the “dead.” This tells us, without question, that there will not be a single born-again believer in the group. Why? The Bible tells us that we who have trusted Jesus as our Saviour have “**passed from death unto life**” (**John 5:24**). We have been given eternal, abundant life through the blood of the Lamb and can never lose that or be dead forever. This can only mean one thing: this mass of humanity will be made up entirely of those who are spiritually dead (**Eph. 2:1**). Note also that this group includes all the spiritually dead! None are left out! The king, the pauper, the general, the foot soldier, the master, the slave, the borrower, and the lender will all stand before God. None will escape, and none will hide, but all will face the

Righteous Judge in judgment that day! Preachers, deacons, church members, popes, priests, nuns, choir members, drunks, whores, drug addicts, pimps, pushers, grandmothers, grandfathers, teenagers, moms, and dads, will all stand together before the throne to face their judgment! There will be no escape, and there will be no exceptions. Every person who died without Jesus Christ will face Him in this Judgment one day! Notice verse **13**. It reminds us that all who died, regardless of where they died, will appear. Even those who are in Hell will be brought out for this judgment. Every lost sinner, from Cain to the last one, will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ! (Will you be in that number?)

B. The Documents Used At The Throne—The Bible tells us that the “books” will be opened. Only one of these books is named, and it is called the “Book of Life.” I don't know all the books that will be used that day, but I am sure of a few that will be opened. Allow me to share them with you for a moment.

1. **The Bible**—Jesus Himself reminded us that we would be judged out of His Word—(**John 12:48**). That's right! This Bible that sinners mock and refuse to heed will be used to render judgment upon their lives that day. It is better to believe it now and go to Heaven than reject it and then face it in judgment and go to Hell!
2. **The Book Of Deeds**—In Heaven, there is a record being kept of the deeds of all men. One day, every lost person will stand before the Lord and hear the record of his life read from the throne. Every deed, both good and evil, will be mentioned. Every sin will be read aloud! Sins of commission, sins of omission, flagrant sins, secret sins, sins of the heart, and sins of the

mind. All will be brought out into the open on that day. Verse 12 makes it clear that the lost will be judged according to their works.

Ill. A man can either choose to stand on his own record and face God in his sins, or he can come to Jesus and have his record expunged. Faith in Christ wipes our record clean. It replaces the record of our sins with the record of His righteousness. When our book is opened, all it says is, “See Calvary and an empty tomb—This man's record is clear!”

3. **The Book Of Life**—This is just Carr Theology, so you can take it for what it is worth, but I am of the opinion that there is a book of life or a book of the living. Every name of every person who would ever be born was in this book (**Rev. 3:5; Rev. 17:8**). However, when a sinner dies without trusting Christ as his Saviour, their name is removed from this book. While your name remains, there is hope for you, but when you die, you are numbered with the eternally dead, and there is no more opportunity for you to be saved.
4. **The Lamb's Book Of Life**—This book contains the names of those who are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. When a sinner repents, their name is written in this book. This is why Jesus told His disciples to rejoice (**Luke 10:20**). This book records who has and who has not accepted Jesus as their Savior. When the Great White Throne Judgment comes about, this book and the Book of Life will match perfectly!

Ill. The horror of standing there that day and hearing your sins recounted. Imagine being forced to admit your sins and the fundamental fact that you are a sinner. Then

imagine Jesus opening the book of life and showing you where your name was removed. Then imagine Him opening the Lamb's book of life and showing you that every slot in that book is filled and that your name does not appear! Fantasy? I don't think so! But, it is a time of such horror that nothing in life can compare with it! You need to be sure you are saved this morning! You need to be sure that your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. If I were you, I wouldn't wait for the invitation. If there were a doubt, I would get to this altar and get it settled right now!

Ill. There may be other books that are used, but you can be sure that these will be opened. What a terrible day that will be for the sinner!

C. The Decision Made At The Throne—The last phrase in verse 13 tells it all. When these books are opened, judgment is rendered based on the evidence found in the books. You can be sure that the evidence is accurate and the record is complete.

Ill. It is worth noting that every person will stand on their own! Regardless of the excuse you use to justify your not coming to Jesus today, on that day, you will stand under judgment by yourself! It won't matter who hurt you, who stood in your way, or whatever. It will come down to you and Jesus. Better that it comes to that in this day when there is still hope for salvation than in that day when there is hope for nothing but judgment! Be saved! Be sure!

III. There Will Be No Hiding From the Judgment From the Throne (v. 14–15)

A. A Fearful Judgment—the sentence rendered from this bench is “**Death!**”. Not just physical death, but the second death, which is eternal separation from

God in the fires of the Lake of Fire (**2 Thes. 1:9–10**). This will be a death where there is no dying! What I mean is that there will be no end to the torment, to the hell, to the awful nature of what the sinner will face. It will be an eternal state of dying apart from the presence of God or anything good! It will be Hell!

Ill. Imagine the horror of hearing Jesus utter the words that will send you away forever into eternal torment! Imagine hearing Him say, “*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*” (**Matt. 25:41**). Imagine living your life the way you wanted, without regard for God or His will, and then having to hear the Lord Who loved you enough to die in your place speak those awful words. There could be nothing so terrible!

Perhaps the only thing that equals that would be for you to be a religious person, a church member, a regular attendee of the Lord's worship services, and have to stand before Him and hear Him pass judgment on your life. This very scene is spoken of in **Matt. 7:21–23**. My friend, don't let this happen to you! Come to Jesus while there is time. Come to Jesus while there is grace. Come to Jesus while there is hope! Come to Jesus!

B. A Final Judgment—There will be no appeals, but all judgments rendered from this bench will be final and binding. This will be the last day any of these sinners ever see. This will be the end of the road for them, for they are forever consigned to the Lake of Fire to suffer torment for eternity!

Ill. Many don't believe this is true. They deny the reality of Hell and claim that it is old-fashioned and out of date. Well, the Bible tells us that Hell is real and that lost sinners do indeed go there to spend eternity. (**Psa. 9:17; Luke 16:19–31**).

C. A Foolish Judgment—It is a foolish judgment that is rendered only because it does not have to happen! Any sinner willing to repent and turn to Jesus alone, by faith, can be eternally saved. The Blood Jesus shed on Calvary is sufficient to the saving of any sinner who calls upon Him (**Rom. 10:13**). The grace of God is sufficient for every sinner who will come, regardless of the depths of their sins (**Rom. 5:20**). The love of God for the Lord is sufficient to receive all who will come by faith (**John 6:37**). Please don't do a foolish thing and die without Jesus! Come to Him while the door is open!

Conc: I think that this is the most horrible scene mentioned in the Bible. I think the concept of people perishing forever is terrible beyond description. However, as horrible as it is, it is true nonetheless!

Therefore, if you have never been saved, you need to come to Jesus. You need to be saved today! If you trust Jesus by faith, He will save you and spare you from this terrible time of judgment that is coming upon all the lost. Won't you come?

To those of us who are saved, this passage reminds us of the terrible need of the world around us. If nothing else, it should move us to come before the Lord and cry out for the souls of our friends, neighbors, and loved ones who need Jesus. It ought to stir our hearts so that we will not rest until we have tried to tell every lost person we know that salvation is available to them if they come to Jesus! Surely, we've not become so hardened that the thought of Hell no longer moves us. Won't you come?

Arnold Lewis worked as a supervisor in a shipyard. His work took him from one ship to another all day long. One day, “an inspector who needed to consult with Arnold about company matters had to search several ships to

find him. And, of course, he was impatient and frustrated.

“‘I’ve been looking all over hell for you,’ he greeted Arnold.

“‘That’s one place you will never find me,’ came the calm reply. ‘I’ll never be in hell because I’ve been saved from hell by the blood of the Lord Jesus.’

“No more was said on the subject, and

the two men settled the business. But at the end of the workday, just before the whistle blew, the inspector again looked for Arnold.

“‘I’ve been thinking all day about what you said this morning,’ he said. ‘I wish that I, too, could know that I am saved from hell.’

“‘You surely can,’ Arnold assured him.

With verses from his pocket New Testament, he explained God’s plan of salvation, and standing on the deck of that unfinished ship, the inspector prayed to receive Christ.”

Friend, that can be your testimony this morning! Wouldn’t you like to be able to say about Hell, “That’s one place you’ll never find me!” You can come to Jesus right now!

END

Pray Them Into Heaven

—by Gerald Hochstetler

My mind often goes back to a weird old guy who was the driver for the Amish construction crew I worked with. He stuttered, kept a Bible in his truck, and often tried to steer the conversation towards Godly things. There was hardly any use discussing the Bible with him! He was strange and believed in the horrible doctrine of predestination! Those were my thoughts back then.

I believed I was doctrinally correct. I was SO RIGHT in my doctrine that I

never felt any need to read the Bible. Why read it if you are right? I’m now 57 and think of this old guy a lot. I often wonder if he went home burdened and prayed for us.

I often feel I am a product of Godly people who prayed. I know my mom prayed. And she still does. I wonder, who will pray now? Who will pray the next generation into heaven?

We often hear that all things are possible when talking about personal

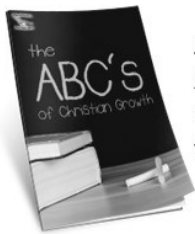
dreams, being all we can be, and things of that nature. I seldom hear of believing and praying others into God’s kingdom. I know people must also respond and do their part. But when I look at myself, I’m not sure how I went from a cocky jerk to seeing the light. I must conclude it was a miracle. And I surely do believe many prayed.

Now it’s my turn. Now it’s OUR turn to pray the next generation into heaven. Will you?

END



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September

Biblical Counseling On Depression and Unpaved Roads

(part 2 of 4)

Pastor John Marino explores secular counseling vs. biblical counseling.

Satan's Successful Snare

Dr. Stanley explains that partial obedience to God isn't obedience at all: it's rebellion. If we want God to use our lives for His mighty purposes, we must listen and obey His voice. Learn how to surrender your will to the Lord and walk according to His will for your life.

God's Grand Finale

Jan Markell welcomes author Jeff Kinley and Pastor Mark Henry for the hour. They focus on Revelation, which is God's grand finale. This future time will find God literally shaking the planet. The chaos will result in the return of Jesus Christ in his Second Coming to put an end to the chaos and establish his Kingdom.

13 Scholars Answer Tough Questions About the Rapture, Tribulation, and the 2nd Coming

(parts 3 & 4 out of 7)

October

Biblical Counseling On Depression and Renewing Your Mind

(part 3 of 4)

Pastor John Marino explores secular counseling vs. biblical counseling.

The Infrastructure of the Antichrist (Part 1)

Jan Markell features Pastor Billy Crone as we watch the infrastructure of the Antichrist being built. The mindset of every global leader is the New World Order. And every one of them targets 2030, but why? Is this tied to the Tribulation outlined in the Bible?

The Infrastructure of the Antichrist (Part 2)

Jan Markell invites Pastor Billy Crone back in a part 2. They consider the prophetic angle of the war in Ukraine, UFOs, the World Economic Forum, and outfits like BlackRock who rules from the shadows.

13 Scholars Answer Tough Questions About the Rapture, Tribulation, and the 2nd Coming

(parts 5 & 6 out of 7)

November

Biblical Counseling: The Cure to Depression

(part 4 of 4)

Pastor John Marino explores secular counseling vs. biblical counseling.

When We Feel Helpless

(Parts 1 and 2)

When you're facing insurmountable obstacles and all appears to be lost, there is only one direction to turn: toward God. Dr. Charles Stanley exhorts us to lean on God and trust Him to intervene in our most difficult trials. It's when you're at the end of your rope that you learn to truly rely on God.

Going Digital or You Cannot Buy or Sell

Jan Markell spends the hour with Alex Newman. They present the idea that a one-world government could be mandated over health issues. Digital health passports will make this possible and they are on the scene now. This is leaping out of the Bible. Antichrist's system is on the horizon.

13 Scholars Answer Tough Questions About the Rapture, Tribulation, and the 2nd Coming

(part 7 out of 7)

This publishing work is registered as a charitable organization in the USA. We welcome your articles, testimonies, and questions. We reserve the right to edit or decline any material and are not responsible for the return of any articles.

The cost to print and distribute *The Amish Voice* is \$.75 a copy and is totally funded by readers from across our great country who appreciate the ministry and care to support it. If the Lord would lay it on your heart to come alongside of us by helping with expenses, it would be a great benefit, as well as highly appreciated. Thank you. —Joe Keim, Executive Director

Feedback and Response

1

To whom it may concern:

I prefer feeding on God's Word in its pure form, as it is from the Bible and as is given through His servants, our ministers. I do not desire reading material that is as muddied water by the feet of those who are not faithful to their covenant. I desire the Pure Water. —N.S.

I appreciate your desire to feed on God's word in its pure form as it is in the Bible. I think that is great advice for everyone! I am rather surprised that you consider the ministers as being included in what you consider "God's word in pure form." Interpreting the Scriptures, understanding the meanings and how it applies to our lives is a very challenging task, and often there are things that we don't understand. Even the disciples who walked with Jesus and learned from Him misunderstood things from the Scriptures. In Acts 15, we see a debate, because some took a meaning one way, and some took the

meaning a different way. In Galatians 2:11-14, we see where Paul corrected Peter because Peter was allowing his culture and traditions to influence his understanding of Scripture. Peter had the best teacher in the world, and had the Bible in its pure form, and it still wasn't enough. He needed to be in a community of others who were also doing their best to understand the teaching of Jesus, and live it out.

One way we can spur each other on in the pursuit of learning and living out the teaching of the Bible, is by allowing ourselves to be challenged by others. Let's say your ministers see something

that I am getting wrong about the Bible. They come to me, and they point out what I am getting wrong, and then they show why it's wrong based on the Bible. That gives me a chance to be corrected, and also gives me a chance to say why I think my understanding is right, based on the Bible. This way, God and the teaching He has given us through Scripture is our authority. We allow ourselves to be challenged by each other in constructive ways, and allow ourselves to be corrected where we are wrong just as the apostles did, all the while keeping God as our final authority in all matters. —Jonas

2

How did I enroll in Plowman's Academy? I sent a note asking how much *The Amish Voice* cost and asked to put us on the mailing list. A few weeks later I received a package containing old volumes of *The Amish Voice* along with Book A (the first book in these studies). A big "thank you" to the one who sent that package. It has filled my days so I had something to study. Please pray that I not only read my Bible more, but am also a doer of the Word. Not satisfied with just what others say, but to see and understand for myself. To meditate daily, so God can speak to me through His Word." —C.K.

Dear C.K., Thank you for your feedback! And you are welcome for the previous issues of *The Amish Voice* and Book A. God is pleased with your desire to search the Scriptures more and

Acts 17:11 testifies to that! The Bible records those that searched the Scriptures daily as "noble," which is a pretty good compliment from God, considering He is the King of Kings

and Lord of Lords! We are praying for you and hope you build your life around what the Bible teaches. The Lord bless you as you continue to pray in alignment with His will. —Alex

3

I would like to receive my free copy of *The Secret of the Strength*. We don't know about a lot of what our ancestors had to go through for us to be where we are today. It really was a test of their faith. I can't wait to read the book. I look forward to reading the Amish Voice each month to see how God is working in people's lives.

Thank you so very much for your kindness. —S.G.

Dear S.G., I am so glad that you are enjoying the articles that we put in *The Amish Voice*. It is our sincere desire to choose material that deepens our understanding of Scripture and gives us a desire to dig deeper and learn more about the treasures found in God's

Word! Yes, I agree that it is also good to read about historical events, such as the ones contained in *The Secret of the Strength*, to gain an appreciation for the persecution our ancestors endured. Reading about the commitment of their faith encourages us to continue to look

carefully at our own hearts to discern if our actions are motivated by a true love for Christ, or if they are simply a learned way of life. May God bless you as you continue to seek to please Him in all that you do! Enjoy your new book! —Michal

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575 US Highway 250 - Greenwich, OH 44837

Contend for the Faith

—by Joe Keim

Jude 1:1-4

*Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that **ARE sanctified** by God the Father, and (are) **preserved** in Jesus Christ, and (are) **called**: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave **all diligence** to write unto you of the **common salvation**, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints. **For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.***

In Galatians chapter 1, men had come in and were teaching a perverted gospel. Paul was clear: if anyone, even an angel, preached any other gospel, he was to be cursed.

Today, I implore you, my fellow believers, to not just passively hold onto the faith that was once delivered to us but to actively and earnestly contend for it. Consider the words of Jude, who calls us to action.

Jude and James were half-brothers of Jesus. James and Jude grew up in the same earthly family that Jesus did. They ate meals together, played together, and worked with their parents. They were family. History tells us that Jesus' half-brothers did not believe in the deity of their brother Jesus, at least not in the beginning. But as time passed, James and Jude did believe, and each wrote a letter that would end up in the New Testament.

Jude begins his letter by writing, "JUDE, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." Jude's letter is short, but it seems apparent that he was concerned for other fellow believers. Therefore, he warns his fellow believers to be on the lookout and to be aware that, unbeknownst to them, certain men had crept in and were turning the grace

of God into something it was not. He warns and reminds these believers and us today to be on the lookout.

We cannot take for granted that all who claim to be Christians are true Christians. Not all are. Jesus said so Himself in Matthew 7.

Some are in the Jesus business for selfish reasons. They have learned how to talk innocent and passionate believers into giving them lots of money. Others love the idea of sitting in a seat of authority—it makes them look good and feel good when their line of followers gets longer and longer.

A true Christian leader is also a servant. A servant washes the feet of other believers and dies for his brothers and sisters. A true Christian leader has no agenda and is not looking for fame and fortune. He earnestly contends for THE FAITH that was once delivered to the saints: THE FAITH that preaches that we ARE sanctified by God. We ARE preserved in Jesus. We ARE called. This is the grace that Jesus and all the apostles preached, lived, and died for.

Be not deceived. Watch and pray. Read Scripture. Know what the Scriptures teach. Know what you believe in these last of the last days.

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