

Commentary — From the Margins

“Nobody Taught Us That”

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.” They said to him, “Where will you have us prepare it?” ... And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 22:7–9, 13–16)

Spring 2004, at the home of Church of the Brethren Pastor Robert Detwiler in Salemville, Pennsylvania, I met Mr. Crist King, then in his late nineties—Mr. King was the son and grandson and great-grandson of German Seventh Day Baptist pastors. A lifelong member of the German Seventh Day Baptist Church, he was the printer who kept the original Ephrata Colony printing press operating until it was donated to a local college. And in the course of the after-dinner conversation, I laid before Crist King the reason why Christians are to keep the Passover sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed, the dark portion of the 14th of Abib. Crist listened, knew the Scriptures I referenced, and said, “That makes sense, but nobody taught us that.”

No harsher indictment of the Salemville German Seventh Day Baptist Pastor Paul Manuel could have been made. Pastor Manuel knows the German Seventh Day Baptist practice of taking the sacraments on the Friday before Easter is contrary to Scripture, but he does not teach those disciples who look to him for knowledge what he believes or practices in his own life. In a chance comment to his Salemville congregation he mentioned that he did not eat pork. Two women who heard the comment asked him about it. He gave them the scriptural reasons for not eating pork, and both women (one of them Pastor Detwiler’s wife, who, though her husband preaches to a Sunday congregation, had become convinced of the Sabbath) went home and immediately put all unclean meats out of their houses. But Paul Manuel is a hypocrite; for he does not teach what he knows. He keeps the Passover albeit on the 15th of Abib. He does not eat unclean meats. Yet he lives in the Loysburg United Church of Christ’s parsonage, preaches to that congregation on Sunday, then preaches to the German Seventh Day Baptist congregation on the Sabbath, teaching neither congregation even the milk of Scripture. He teaches neither his United Church of Christ congregation to keep

the Sabbath nor his German Seventh Day Baptist congregation to keep the high Sabbaths, nor to take the Passover on the night that Jesus was betrayed.

So what does he teach? What does he do to justify living in the Loysburg parsonage?

He teaches disciples how to sing praises to God, and to sing very well. But is that enough to be called a pastor?

Perhaps the error is in assuming that pastors are also teachers.

It takes differing gifts of the Spirit to hold and comfort in times of sorrow than it does to teach revealed truth. The Apostle Paul wrote, “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administering, and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?” Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts” (1 Co 12:27–31).

What Paul Manuel is not is a teacher ... if he were a teacher, then his Loysburg congregation would have long ago ceased its transgression of the laws of God and would have turned to Sabbath observance.

Most who pastor congregations have been gifted with the ability to help and to administer to disciples. They are not all apostles, prophets, or teachers. Rather, they deliver what they have received, what they have been taught. They are like Crist King’s father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. If they have not been taught a truth, they have not been given the spiritual ability to discern the *truth* and then to pass it along to other disciples. They might be very good at comforting the bereaved, but they are very bad at recovering what was lost that led God to deliver spiritually circumcised Israel into the hand of the spiritual king of Babylon for twelve centuries.

The Apostle Paul placed the gifts of the Spirit in a hierarchal relationship with apparently being one sent forth [apostle] at the top of the hierarchy.

Peter was one sent forth to feed the lambs, to shepherd the sheep, and to feed the sheep—he fulfills all three commissions in his two epistles. But he was also the one initially sent to the Gentiles to take the good news of Christ to them. So Peter was apostle and teacher. Paul was one sent forth to lay the foundation of the spiritual house of God in heavenly Jerusalem, which he does in his epistles. He was truly “the Apostle,” how early Christian writers tended to identify him; whereas John was one sent to teach and to correct, then to lay the foundation for “knowing the Lord,” and to disclose the revelation of Christ Jesus. John was prophet, and teacher, not (as far as is known) one to raise up congregations for the Lord. He accompanied Peter to Samaria before disappearing from the narrative of the early church until near the close of the 1st-Century.

The first disciples were witnesses that testified about who Jesus of Nazareth was to all who would listen. Collectively, they form one of two witnesses that testify to endtime disciples and to the third part of humankind that will be born of Spirit when the kingdom of this world is given to the Son of Man—the other witness will be the παράκλητος, the spirit of truth sent by the Father (John 15:26–27). The first disciples’ testimony in the form of the New Testament canon is their witness ... a thing is established on the testimony of two or three

witnesses, and this includes that Jesus came as His only Son and became while here the firstborn Son of the Father.

What's seen is that not all of the first disciples had the same gifts of the Spirit, so endtime disciples should not expect pastors to be both administrators and teachers, or grief counselors and prophets. It is, perhaps, enough for a pastor to be gifted as an effective grief counselor.

But what if a pastor will not teach the things of God as he (or she) understands them? Should this pastor continue in his (or her) position, for most disciples within a fellowship look to the pastor to teach them the principles of Christian living as well as the oracles of God? Should a hypocrite not be fired and sent packing?

Matthew records:

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matt 26:17–19, 26–28)

By what covenant are sins forgiven if not by the one ratified and annually renewed by Christ Jesus' blood being poured out for many? Are sins forgiven by Jesus being the only Son of *Theos*, or the firstborn Son of *Theon*? Are the sins of Adolph Hitler forgiven because Jesus of Nazareth lived, died, and was resurrected from death after three days and three nights? Are the sins of those who have done evil forgiven because Jesus was given authority to execute judgment as the Son of Man? How about the sins of those who are resurrected to condemnation (John 5:29)? How about the sins of those who have taught disciples to be lawless while these teachers of Israel did great works in Jesus' name (Matt 7:21-23)? The angel told the prophet Daniel that "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:2). Moses told Israel, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse." (Deut 30:19). Jesus told His disciples, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:20) ... the scribes and the Pharisees were hypocrites: they had the law, but they would not keep it by faith. Rather, they strove to keep it by the works of their hands (Rom 9:31–32) and they stumbled over Christ, the Passover Lamb of God, a lamb appropriate to the size of the household of God, a lamb that would be slain once for all time, with the remembrance of His sacrifice to be the annual renewal of the Passover covenant by which sins are forgiven.

No good works by a person will cause the person's sins to be forgiven. Cain's offering—the fruit of the ground—will not cause sins to be forgiven. And

unleavened bread and wine are the fruit of the ground on every night of the year except the night when Jesus was betrayed, the dark portion of the 14th of Abib.

It does a “Christian” no good to take the sacraments of bread and wine quarterly or weekly or even annually unless these sacraments are taken when the Passover lamb was eaten in Egypt.

The Lord said to Cain when his offering was rejected, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it” (Gen 4:6–7).

A person without sin will be accepted by God, for this person needs no sacrifice to cover his or her lawlessness for the person is not lawless nor does the person have a record of debt with its legal demands standing against the person ... but who is such a person, for all have sinned (Rom 3:9–12; 1 John 1:8, 10); all have been consigned to disobedience so that God could have mercy on all (Rom 11:32)?

If we confess our sins, Jesus is faithful to forgive them (1 John 1:9), but how does a person confess his or her sins? Will Jesus forgive a person who confesses his sins, then almost immediately goes out and slays family members who might become political opponents as the Roman Emperor Constantine did? What fruit did Constantine’s repentance bring forth: blood and intrigue, murder? Yes, murder. Constantine was a murderer after he presided over the Council at Nicea. His conversion to Christianity was a conversion of convenience. He needed a united empire, and through the cross, he obtained one.

If a person confesses his or her sins while holding intentions to sin, the person is a hypocrite and will in no way enter the kingdom of heaven. If a person knows to keep the Sabbath but teaches his congregation at Loysburg to assemble before God on the 8th-day, is not this person spiritually as Constantine was? Is not this person condemned by his knowledge of what the law demands? Christ’s death at Calvary covers the demands of the law, but His promise is that, when the person’s judgment is revealed, He will deny the person who knows to do right but has not striven to walk uprightly before God and man.

During the spring of 2004, I baptized a young woman just before Passover—and Carolyn and I invited the young woman and her husband, plus Pastor Detwiler (“Bobby D” to his close acquaintances) and his wife to *Night to be Much Observed*, the festive meal celebrating liberation from sin, the meal eaten on the dark portion of the 15th of Abib, the night when rabbinical Judaism first observes its Seder service, the night following when Christ’s disciples eat the Passover. During the course of the meal, Passover observance was discussed—and as I had with Crist King a few weeks earlier, I laid out the Scriptures that show why the sacraments are to be taken on the 14th of Abib. “Bobby D” agreed that the sacraments represented the Passover Lamb of God, but then added, “It isn’t our tradition to keep the Passover.”

No truer words could have been spoken. Disciples in the Church of the Brethren do not keep the Passover because it is not their tradition: they have not been taught to keep the Passover. Disciples in the German Seventh Day Baptist congregation at Salemville do not keep the Passover because they have not been taught to do so. Yet Christ kept the Passover because it was His tradition.

Disciples are to walk as Christ walked (1 John 2:6). The Apostle Paul said to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Co 11:1; Phil 3:17).

The young women I had only a week before baptized and her husband were aghast when “Bobby D” said the reason that he and the Church of the Brethren did not keep the Passover was *tradition*.

Paul Manuel and “Bobby D” and a host of other pastors know to teach disciples to keep the Passover, but they don’t do so because that is not the tradition of the fellowship ... Christ will not be crucified again on a cross of tradition! Rather, he will deny those who teach disciples to willfully transgress the laws of God, placing tradition ahead of God, making tradition their idol of choice.

I like “Bobby D,” but he knows to do better spiritually than he does.

Most Springs in western Pennsylvania, farmers plow under fields filled with blooming wildflowers, all pretty, but none the desired crop that will be planted in the field. And when Christ returns, He, too, will plow under a crop of wildflowers that would not live by every word that came from the mouth of God.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Corinth, “But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized” (1 Co 11:17–19) ... recognized by whom? If there must be factions, schisms, divisions, denominations so that genuine disciples are recognized, then who does the recognizing? Certainly genuine disciples will not be recognized as “genuine” by another, competing faction or denomination. So the recognition is by Christ and the angels.

Denominations must exist so that Christ will recognize who is genuine—can this be correct? The “coming together” that Paul references is to eat the Lord’s Supper (1 Co 11:20); so the recognition of who is genuine occurs at Passover. And Paul added, “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the *Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed* took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me” (vv. 23–24 emphasis added) ... when are disciples to eat the Lord’s Supper? On the night that He was betrayed, correct? So if a disciple eats the sacraments or the Lord’s Supper on any other night, then the disciple can be recognized as not genuine, is this not also correct? It is, isn’t it? Thus, Paul Manuel, and unfortunately, “Bobby D,” teach disciples how not to be genuine, for by the tradition of their congregations—traditions that they have not rooted out even though they know to—they lead their congregation in taking the Lord’s Supper, the Passover, on a night other than on the night Jesus was betrayed, the dark portion of the 14th of Abib.

Bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ Jesus, the Passover Lamb of God, on only one night a year, the 14th of Abib. On every other night or day, they are the fruit of the ground, Cain’s offering. So if a disciple will not take the sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed as a remembrance of Him, the disciple excludes him or herself from the covenant by which the sins of many are forgiven. The disciple excludes him or herself from Grace. The disciple is not

genuine, but is of the synagogue of Satan and is as a wildflower in the fields God will harvest when Christ returns.

And rabbinical Judaism's use of the calculated calendar does not establish for Christians when the 14th of Abib occurs although the disciple who uses Judaism's calculations to determine when Passover is does better than all of the synagogue of Satan ... establishing the calendar is a subject apart from taking the Passover on the night that Jesus was betrayed. As such it is a subject reserved for other writings. Taking the Passover cannot be put off, for if a person has love for those disciples whose simple faith is to serve God and who have been so poorly taught that they do not know to keep the Passover [i.e., to take the sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed], the person has to confront all hypocrites and false teachers, erring pastors and lying bastards who claim their father is God but who are really the ministers of Satan.

For those disciples who have no fellowship with which to take the Passover sacraments because of the falsity of the fellowship's pastor, *The Philadelphia Church* includes the following paragraph in its homepage message:

Physical Israelites became physical bondservants in Egypt. Likewise, spiritual Israelites became bondservants to sin (i.e., lawlessness – 1 John 3:4) in spiritual Babylon. *The Philadelphia Church* teaches that spiritual Israel will be liberated from spiritual bondage just as physical Israel was liberated from physical bondage, that at a second Passover all spiritual and physical firstborns not covered by the blood of the Lamb of God will be slain as the firstborns of humans and beasts were slain in Egypt. Therefore, in love for its spiritual brethren, the association has open Passover services. The association encourages all disciples, regardless of denominational affiliation, to take the Passover as Jesus established the example and as Paul instructed the saints in Corinth.

Plus, the disciple can always take the sacraments at home in a room prepared ahead of time as Jesus set the example: the disciple need not go to the temple or to his or her church building to keep the Passover.

When the harvest of firstfruits is gathered to God, it will not be enough to be a pretty wildflower. It will not be enough to be well liked by this world. It will not be enough to be a Pastor Manuel, privately keeping the Passover but publicly teaching to congregations of differing beliefs what traditions each congregation wants to hear. Hypocrites do not make it into the kingdom of heaven.

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