

Commentary — From the Margins *A Birthday*

Whose birthday it is, I'm not telling ... it isn't mine. But it is of a person who isn't where the person belongs today. It is of a person who has a work to do, a work about which this person probably isn't today aware, but nevertheless one of the two most important jobs in the course of human history—and this person is missing, is still hiding in this world, hiding in plain sight, ignoring the pricks as the Apostle Paul ignored them until Christ Jesus had to intervene directly in Saul of Tarsus' life.

The question becomes, how long will the above mentioned person ignore the pricks? When will Christ Jesus intervene directly? Will Christ have to take the life of this person's spouse to get the person's attention, to humble the person, or can that life be spared? My prayer is that the life is spared, but it probably won't be. And this person will have nobody to blame.

What does it take to cause a person, any person, to reexamine everything the person has believed? Will anything short of a near-death experience cause a person to reconsider what the person has believed about life and death, about God, about keeping the commandments, about the mantle of Christ's righteousness? Will the conversion of a spouse cause the person to rethink long held beliefs? Will the death of a spouse or of a child cause the person to repent, abandoning the ways of this world and turn to the Lord, who has written/spoken into existence the *simulation* in which the universe exists.

About six decades ago on this date, there was great joy in one particular family as a blue-eyed infant drew breath for the first time in northeastern Indiana, not far from where this infant's father and grandfather and great-grandfather and great, great-grandfather were born. For generations the wanderlust concealed in the family's hearts had been frozen in place, locked in Anabaptist community roots. But a cultural tornado in the early 20th-Century tipped over the family tree: suddenly family members sprouted from new soil in California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, while a remnant remained anchored in Indiana.

The patience of God might well be His defining attribute, for in patience resides goodness.

How long must the world wait before this one person, respected by society, the author of many peer-reviewed articles, important in this world because of accomplishments, turns to God in prayer and asks for forgiveness? How much longer will God wait?

All of Christendom, all of this world marks time as "the veneer of civilization" (a Robert Stone expression) is being peeled back, leaving the savagery of the Adversary on open display in the activities of humankind ... Christendom waits for one person to figuratively step up to the plate. And as in a baseball game when

a manager calls the batter in the on-deck circle back into the dugout and the crowd waits to see who the manager will send out, Christendom waits for one particular person to say, *Who are you, Lord?* (from Acts 8:5)

I wait for this one particular person to humbly repent—

Perhaps I haven't been zealous enough in prayer, asking that the time of visitation be made known. Perhaps the delay isn't the fault of one person, but of all Christendom. Perhaps nothing will happen until Christian bellies are hungry in America, Canada, Russia, in the so-called developed nations of this world; perhaps only then will all of Christendom turn to God and ask not for *things* but for *life*.

The veneer of civilization has already buckled and separated from the laminations of society, leaving the core of culture exposed, its ugliness evident in placards of a raised fist.

Like a wet spring in southern Idaho that causes the cheat grass to grow, grass that dies in summer's heat and provides fuel for unquenchable range fires in August and September, the so-called Arab spring will fuel fires that scorch the earth, fires that consume the pithy and punky core of culture, fires that leave Western civilizations looking more like pork cracklings than viable communities. But will those fires kindled by the pollination of a caliphate erupt into flames this year or next or the year after? Will they be fanned by famine because the great nations of the northern and southern hemispheres are unable to deliver enough grain to oil-rich nations to satisfy real hunger? And there will shortly be genuine hunger in nations that have long trusted Allah to give them victory over the infidels that exchange wheat and munitions for cheap oil.

The modern State of Israel has found that the United States of America, under the present Democratic administration, is a fickle friend at best, mouthing words of support while stabbing Israel in the back. But then, as a Hamas imam has proclaimed, Allah has gathered the Jews together so they can be slaughtered in one place, a claim that apparently doesn't trouble advisors to President Obama. After all, there will be no peace in the Middle East, regardless of whether the State of Israel exists; for there is no shared perception of reality between Islamic fundamentalists—all that is shared is a common hatred for Israel.

There is no shared reality between Christians, or even between Sabbatarian Christians ... the world is divided along ideological lines, with the schisms too treacherous to bridge.

What does a pacifist Anabaptist have in common with a union worker holding up a placard of a raised fist? Both breathe the same air, but that is about all that is shared.

I didn't reach adulthood as a pacifist, nor as a *statist*, nor as a social liberal ... in an altercation when I was 17, I broke a fellow's back and fractured another fellow's skull in about 15 seconds—and I scared myself. I was too big and too strong to let anger or fear control my actions. I had to rein-in my emotions, learn to let things slide, to not take offense, to move toward pacifism. I stayed out of taverns, bars, those places where courage came in a bottle of beer and fights broke out every Friday and Saturday night. I stayed away from anything that

altered consciousness; for it was intellect, not character, that kept me away from another altercation, a situation that I noticed had changed when I examined myself between taking the Passover the second year (1974).

With being drafted into the Body of Christ (1972), an inner change began that was initially hardly perceptible. But two years later, the change was apparent to me: I didn't have the thoughts I had before. I had quit killing people in my mind. The anger that developed after Dad died suddenly when I was eleven was no longer there. Something had happened, and had happened without me doing anything but keep the commandments.

That inner place where I had lived alone for sixteen years no longer existed ... prior to the Second Passover liberation of Israel, Christian conversion comes with receipt of a second breath of life—it is instantaneous—but conversion is to being an infant son of God, comparable in spiritual size and knowledge to a newly born human infant, with circumcision of the heart occurring on what is spiritually equivalent to a human infant eight days old.

Before any son of God is circumcised of heart, the son of God must cleanse the heart through undertaking a journey of faith equivalent in length to the patriarch Abraham's physical journey from Ur of the Chaldeans to the land of Haran, then down to the land of Canaan ... the Christian must mentally journey from spiritual Babylon, the present kingdom of this world, to baptism, representing the death of *the old man* or old nature, then into Judea, where the Christian begins to keep the commandments, especially the Sabbath commandment. The heart of a Christian is not circumcised until after the Christian figuratively crosses the River Jordan through beginning to keep the Sabbath. Hence, it can be said with absolute certainty that no Christian mentally living in the land of Moab (i.e., across the river from the Sabbath) is circumcised of heart. None mentally living in Moab will be saved until the Christian does as Ruth did, and that is follow her mother-in-law across the Jordan and into Sabbath observance.

The one particular person for whom Christendom waits has not yet figuratively crossed the Jordan and entered into Sabbath observance.

I have wondered for some time whether this particular person will enter into Sabbath observance before or after the Second Passover liberation of Israel. In the shadow and type of the office the person will hold, the person crosses into Sabbath observance beforehand, but in a mirror image, the person might well enter afterwards. Either way, the person is about as far from where the person belongs as Saul of Tarsus was when he held the cloaks of those who stoned Stephen ... the work that Christ Jesus has before Him is considerable.

Can thirty years of spiritual growth be condensed into a few months ... that is what needs to be done. For me, the answer was, No. But the particular person for whom Christendom waits has the ability to grow rapidly—and spiritual growth is not time-linked as physical growth is.

All of Christendom will wait until this one person either responds to the pricks, or responds to traumatic events in the person's life.

Waiting is not fun, but can be profitable. Those Sabbatarian Christians who now await the Second Passover liberation of Israel can make use of this surplus of

days by better preparing for what is sure to happen ... I recently corresponded with one Sabbatarian about making hominy, and the fellow didn't have in his house a pot in which he could boil the caustic solution needed to transform corn from being hog food to being human food. Another long time Sabbatarian with whom I have had conversations doesn't have a grain grinder. Others have made no plans at all even though they sincerely believe that we are living at the end of an age and widespread famine is in the near future. Apparently they expect to go to a place of physical safety prepared for them by God (the place of safety is the grave). So maybe there are more individuals who are not where they ought to be at this time than just the one particular person for whom prophecy awaits. Even I can employ the time to become better prepared.

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