

It's Time



**The only reason I live is by the faith of
the Son of God in me.**

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It's Time 2011
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Introduction

The early Anabaptist movement began at a time known as the Age of Discovery. In the early 1700 and 1800s many of the descendants of this movement sailed to the West and on toward the New World. My direct descendants Michael Zehr and Casper Yoder were bold enough to leave all and follow the adventure.

Upon arriving in the New World life was tough. My Zehr relatives carved out parts of upstate New York in Lewis County. The Yoders moved toward more established communities in Mifflin County PA. This distinction describes the family on both sides. The Yoder desires more stability and something to build upon whereas the Zehr is more likely pioneers, exploring and not afraid of attempting the impossible.

The New World has been good to my descendants. We have seen many moves of the Holy Spirit such as that which accelerates through Herrnhut Germany in 1727 under the leadership of Count Von Zinzendorf, John Wesley in 1736 and the effects of his preaching ministry. Life in America from the 1700s until now has provided a fertile ground for mission growth. God has indeed protected us with open government in this land. It has provided time, resources and people.

For the true Anabaptist there is a longing for the builder that is God. An unusual confliction has taken place in our hearts as we see the prosperity and power emerging from the nation we live in. We see something in our heart that is not of this world yet we look around and see a counterfeit, as it has the same trappings of God yet is not.

Those in their 50s and older have participated in unparalleled financial abundance. Many of this generation and older have experienced opportunities their parents did not. Many of these opportunities were the direct result of a Mater liberal education, or humanity with a degree added.

Mennonites have been given a rich heritage but one where Menno silently becomes the center rather than Jesus Christ. Much of this has been spoken to in *On the Way with Jesus* by Richard Showalter. As Showalter echoes the Mennonite USA structures have engaged in denominational planting not New Testament church planting.

There is a lot of talk these days among Mennonite circles what it means to become Anabaptist in thought and practice. The early reformers were passionate about faithful practice: one that was costly. It is doubtful whether the

Gospel was ever considered mainstream for them or their context.

A true Anabaptist sees the centrality and purpose of Jesus Christ at the intersection of national and global ways of life and thinking. A central cry of the early Anabaptist reformers was the concern for false hope.

The Early Beginnings with Menno

One could hardly envision a visible church more lifeless than the Catholic Church of the late 1400s, at the time of Blaurock and Simons. The Anabaptist movement was a response toward faithfulness to Jesus as Lord. As this movement spread it was hated for its pure heart and right responses. Over time its great leaders were stamped out to rid Europe of this hideous Kingdom of God come to earth. Menno Simons came on the scene and pushed the movement along.

Anyone familiar with the history of the Mennonite people would know about the numerous splits and disagreements along the way. Many of these were from differences in interpretation of Scripture, some of them preferences and some just couldn't get along with one another. Some were because of strong families and others

because of harsh bishops and ministers. So where did this all begin you may ask. Well you do not have to look any farther than the one who the church is named, Menno Simons.

It appears that Menno as a Catholic priest began to question his practice by examining the Scriptures more closely. As the reformers began to receive persecution and eventually would lose their own lives this served an important role in the deepening of conviction he was experiencing at the same time. To him the church was the representative and agent of Christ on earth and was to keep itself pure and holy in life and doctrine; give a faithful witness.

In 1559 there was a letter written from Bishop Menno Simons excommunicating Lambert Kramer and Zelis Jacobs and all the Southern German and Swiss Anabaptists with them. The Anabaptist movement divided into two camps the north and south. The north had a more strict view of excommunication and was later adopted by Jacob Amman.

The reaction against this harsh form of excommunication was not received well in parts of Europe. This edict from Simons opened the door to subject Scriptural interpretation to the brotherhood. The church was not called by God to bring the

Bible to the people some said. Church councils do not have the authority to define or interpret the teachings of Christ. And truth is not found in consensus. These concepts morphed in what is known today as the hermeneutical circle.

As the Dutch Anabaptists shifted their focus on following Jesus to submitting to brotherhood authority the rules multiplied. Confessions of faith were agreed to and handed down. So this lense from the past made its way to the New World. Jacob Amman would bring the harsh excommunications standard with him to the New World in 1725. This would be the official position on the “ban” in early Pennsylvania Amish groups.

It was said of Menno Simons that he changed. His earlier love for Christ gave way to an inordinate affection for the church. Perhaps the most damaging thing he did was right before he died. This edict of excommunication against Kramer, Jacobs and the whole of southern German groups was the seed that has sown discord all down through the generations into the present time. It’s time to repent.

The New World Begins

Along comes Nicolaus Copernicus who lived from 1473-1543, he believed God. He changed the world by changing his

worldview. At the time his worldview believed the Earth was flat. The Earth was the center of the Universe. He was led by truth not error as he tested this theory. His work was embraced by Galileo who tested this theory by inventing the modern telescope. Sure enough Copernicus was right.

At this same time was the beginning of the Age of Discovery. Those who took Copernicus' lead and sailed the seas discovered the truth. Guided by maps that were around for thousands of years they proved Copernicus was right and Aristotle in error on this matter. Aristotle was a powerful philosopher of Greek culture. At the time of Copernicus his error held up for nearly 1800 years.

Plato, Socrates and Aristotle (384-322 BC) are the principle players of Western Philosophy. Their views try to explain and justify life outside of Jesus Christ Creator and Lord of all things. Aristotle envisioned a West without mercy and compassion, just rational thinking. The type Ayn Rand would later espouse more fully in her epic novel *Atlas Shrugged*.

At this same time a group in southern Europe began wrestling with the truth found in the Scriptures, a movement to be born of the Spirit. This movement was based on ordinary people who love Jesus,

who were filled with the Holy Spirit, and did not love their lives more than Jesus. The visible church at this time was a state church and had lost its sense of adventure by replacing the work of the Spirit with works of religion and Mariology.

The Protestant Reformation in the 1500s was at a time when major streams were merging into a time of Discovery. Along came the enlightenment. And with it the emergence of humanistic thought and practice. Sir Francis Bacon lived from 1561-1626 and he has provided the framework for modern day reason by the use of science and proper methodology. He demanded for a planned procedure of investigating things natural.

In 1627 he wrote the *New Atlantis*, Bacon's vision for a New World in North America envisions a land where:

- Greater rights for women
- Abolish slavery
- Eliminate debtor's prison (emergence for a bankruptcy code)
- Separation of church and state
- Freedom of religious and political expression

Bacon was also instrumental in beginning the Royal Society. Later Sir Francis Bacon and John Locke would provide an updated

philosophy at a time known as the Enlightenment. John Locke in 1665 began reading Descartes and in 1671 writes draft essay Concerning Human Understanding

John Locke was an Oxford scholar, medical researcher and physician, political operative, economist and ideologue for a revolutionary movement, as well as being one of the great philosophers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. His monumental *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* aims to determine the limits of human understanding. Earlier writers such as Chillingworth had argued that human understanding was limited. Locke tries to determine what those limits are. We can, he thinks, know with certainty that God exists. We can also know about morality with the same precision we know about mathematics, because we are the creators of moral and political ideas. In regard to natural substances we can know only the appearances and not the underlying realities which produce those appearances. Still, the atomic hypothesis with its attendant distinction between primary and secondary qualities is the most plausible available hypothesis.



Locke's *Two Treatises of Civil Government* was

published after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 brought William of Orange and Mary to the throne, but they were written in the throes of the Whig revolutionary plots against Charles II in the early 1680s. In this work Locke gives us a theory of natural law and natural rights which he uses to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate civil governments, and to argue for the legitimacy of revolt against tyrannical governments.

Locke wrote on a variety of other topics among the most important of these is toleration. Henry VIII had created a Church of England when he broke with Rome. This Church was the official religion of England. Catholics and dissenting Protestants, e.g. Quakers, Unitarians and so forth, were subject to legal prosecution. During much of the Restoration period there was debate, negotiation and maneuvering to include dissenting Protestants within the Church of England. In a "Letter Concerning Toleration" and several defenses of that letter Locke argues for a separation between church and state.

In the later 1600s and early 1700s came the seedbed for the American Revolution. The freedom of the individual had been determined to be the highest form of existence in the Universe. The Great Architect set things in motion and is

unable to intervene in human affairs. So we are left to achieve life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The only problem with this period of time is it was not inspired by the Holy Spirit as we understand Him from the Bible.

Birth of the USA

The Founders of our Nation were heavily inspired by the works and philosophy known as the Classics. The very morals and forms of Western Philosophy were now updated by Bacon and Locke to form a new Constitution for man. The spirit that inspired this document convinced others that reason and individual freedom are necessary to really live. They subscribed to believe that man is to pursue his own interests. There was no need for absolute authority. The individual was sovereign and self-sufficient. They convinced the masses that the world was crumbling under the weight of government regulations, hence the Boston Tea Party and the spark of the Revolution. And the rest is history.

At the foundation of our Nation's history is the bloody westward expansion and use of force to exterminate Native populations. The leaders at that time based their actions on the Doctrine of Christian Discovery. This Doctrine used the rationale of "Christian Discovery", a

belief which holds that the heathen indigenous peoples of the Americas are subordinate to the first Christian discoverer or its successor.

In 1831 the U.S. Supreme Court, under its first Chief Justice John Marshall, a freemason, ruled the Cherokee Nation was not fully sovereign but may be deemed a “domestic dependent nation,” (Cherokee vs. Georgia). This gave the United States government authority to take Indian lands and exterminate peoples as a legitimate response to Christian Discovery. This later becomes known as Manifest Destiny and an open door to the “spirit of Freemasonry” into our lands by bloodshed and broken covenants. This has not been repealed to this day.

In 1844-1900 there arose another philosopher, a German one, Friedrich Nietzsche who took most all of his political philosophy from Aristotle. He coined the word God is dead. His beliefs combined with Karl Barth were the seedbed that led to the rise of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.

In the early 1900s there arose a different type of philosopher, a woman named Ayn Rand born in Russia. She grew up during the Revolution of Russia and saw firsthand the communist way of life. She was deeply influenced by

Nietzsche and other philosophers. She began to write books influenced by these same writers. The same ideas of the Greek age, the Enlightenment were now put in the 20th century in a new form of reasoning called Objectivism. The human pursuit of its own interests is necessary for living. The brightest and most successful minds must be preserved for the good of the society. She saw that reason was superior to faith and was an atheist.

Much of modern day economic and political theory has been built on these philosophers. They are all forms of explaining existence and purpose outside of Jesus Christ. For it is simple that faith is superior to reason. Jesus Christ is the new humanity and all in Adam are dead. Aristotle, Bacon, Locke, Jefferson, Barth, Nietzsche and Rand all are full of error. Copernicus believed in God and this faith did not make sense to those who live by reason. The only reason I live is by the faith of the Son of God in me. Amen!

November 25, 2010
Broadway, Virginia

Credit to other authors: Parts of the Copernicus history taken from article in Smithsonian publication. The John Locke history was taken from several places on internet. Parts of Christian Discovery Doctrine by Steve Newcomb courtesy Ancient American periodical.

It's Time To Overcome

This past year I have been engaged in a battle for vision. What is versus what should be. As born again believers in Jesus we live in the tension of the heavenly and the earthly. The possible by faith and the reality of— it is what it is. What is our perspective these days? Have you stopped to consider: what in the world is the church doing? I have come to see there is something called opposition. Opposition can be many things to many people. It can be blocked goals, disagreement or most likely simply differentiation of goals and ideals. The church needs to name it for what it is; an obstacle to overcome. As I look out to the horizon of 2011 unfolding it will be a year the body of Christ will begin to consider and even experience what it means TO OVERCOME.

During the past few years I have been reunited with a former passion— the world economic markets and the realms of investing. I forgot how much I enjoyed the complexity, unpredictability and excitement of the markets. In training myself to be a trader I hooked up with Hedgeye Risk Management who produces a daily blog on macro economic models and evaluation of market risk. The founder Keith McCullough and his staff

have wonderful analysis and through this I have been hearing a variety of applications.

On a previous Hedgeye page Peter Drucker was quoted as saying, “Every organization must be prepared to abandon everything it does to survive the future”. Keith also inserted that “we must be prepared to abandon our theoretical models and assumptions”. A traditional method of investing has been long term or buy and hope. Hope is not an investment construct says Keith. Hope is dynamically a Christian worldview, one that we can experience in the present as eternal life with Jesus.

Well, these applications have caused me to consider the church. What has happened? We have become, foremost, an organization. As with all organizations they come with power, greed and control. These aspects of interaction within human systems called organizations can bind our clear thinking and action. An assumption of today’s Christian church is that the congregation is an organization and out of this belief that it’s sole purpose is to serve it. Or rather sustain itself toward perpetuity. Or even save it from individuals. Retract into uniformity.

None of these assumptions or the model itself is true. The church is defined only as

“the called out” that proclaims “Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord” in a specific geographical space (*topos*). Each Christian congregation represents part of the body of Christ in a geographical space. For example the body of Christ in Broadway VA consists of all the Christian congregations and believers of Jesus Christ in Broadway. The church in Broadway is the gathered community of believers that proclaims Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. This is what it says in Ephesians 3:10-12, *“to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through Him.”*

As I survey the landscape it could now be time to abandon the current model of doing church. It simply is not working at this hour. It is time to provide an alternative that is more New Testament than 21st century. It is time to prepare the body of Christ to overcome. Jesus says in John 16:33, *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”*. The church to survive this next season will need to adapt to an abide process with a

cell like pattern. John 15 provides the framework for this abide process.

In North America in particular many see a slumbering church. Not an awakened body. One charged with “political energy” not so much with the Holy Spirit pumping through its vitals. Part of the awakening is to discard all things political and become “politically neutral.” Could this be the component of being a contemporary Anabaptist at this hour? The rising of George Blaurock to discard his Catholic nationalistic faith and embrace adult water baptism and a true baptism of real faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord could be compared to a slumbering church in America rising and discarding all things political and turning from embracing a national agenda to a more Kingdom one. It’s time to realize the hands of time are moving toward midnight and the *Cinderella Promise* will eventually run out. As for me I know the slipper will not fit. Jesus is coming for a pure bride not Cinderella dressed in red, white and blue.

In the book of Revelation Jesus visits John the Elder on the island of Patmos. He gives John different characteristics of seven geographically named churches that over time may adopt in succumbing to the world system and culture around it. The characteristics found in these verses are true in every age since the Cross and until

the time of the physical return of Jesus one day soon. At the end of each of the descriptions of the seven churches Jesus says “to him who overcomes” I will do this or do that. Jesus plainly describes a central role of the church is to overcome in the midst of every age. Not change or adapt to the culture but to overcome in spite of all else spinning around them. The faster things move the greater the sense to overcome. The greater the tendency to give up means a greater measure of grace to overcome.

A word you have been hearing the past two years and will hear louder in 2011 is the word debt. Sovereign debt is the extended borrowing costs of a nation of which its economy sustains and eventually repays. A nation’s currency floats relative to its debt, economic prosperity and its future ability to repay and cover its sovereign promises. If you dig deeper you may find yourself asking what is really being said to the world at this hour. I sense it is: *you have a debt you cannot repay. I, Jesus, have paid the debt you can never repay. I am the only way to the Father. I am the way, the truth and the life. You will try to bail yourselves out and provide your own miracle cures. You will continue to mislead the nations and pretend I do not exist. You will dream clever ways to live without Me. Yet I am*

here and am coming again. My church will overcome with or without you.

The world is awash with bankrupt methods of self actualization, self improvement and new age approaches. All these demonstrate how depraved the church has become; a church that no longer overcomes but has succumbed to the principalities and powers of nations. It is time to scratch the old and prepare for the new. It is time to overcome. So what did Jesus say to these seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three.

To the church that gathered in Ephesus Jesus commends they have labored for His name sake but they left their first love. Jesus reminds them that He alone gives authority to His body. The Ephesians have become like the Church of Nicholas they have given their authority to their Nation. They believe their Nation was founded in My name. Jesus says He is repelled by their actions because it is motivated for love of Nation not an exclusive love of Jesus as Savior and Lord. If you overcome this temptation and repent you will eat from the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

To the church that gathered in Smyrna Jesus refers to Himself as the Alpha and Omega the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus reminds them they are financially of

means and yet are called to suffer. This church will be tested. He who overcomes this testing will rise and be given the crown of life.

To the church that gathered in Pergamos Jesus commends them for holding fast to His name and not denying faith in Him alone. Jesus reminds them of peddling the word of God for financial gain and allowing your Nation to be your first love. The only course of action is to repent. To those who overcome Jesus will give some of the hidden manna to eat and a new name. In the end you will love what provides for you.

To the church that gathered in Thyatira Jesus commends for their works. Jesus reminds them of false teachers and prophets would bring strange doctrines especially about sexuality and our created nature. For those who continue in this pattern despite knowing the truth will turn sick in their minds and bodies. These false teachers enter the church and turn the Word of God into something else. To those who overcome these false teachers Jesus will give power over the nations and the morning star. This is more of an anointing for world missions, an apostolic sending body. Groups operating in this anointing tend to be more vulnerable to Jezebel type demonic spirits. Proclaiming the Cross and centrality of Jesus Christ is

paramount toward faithful and fruitful works.

To the church that gathered in Sardis Jesus commends them that some walk worthy before Him. They are a responsive church in the beginning but evidently have grown complacent. To those who overcome shall be clothed in white garments and Jesus will confess their name before His Father and before the host of heaven.

To the church that gathered in Philadelphia Jesus commends them for keeping His word and not denying His name. They are loyal. You have a heart of true worship. Because you are loyal you persevere. The world will go through a testing and My body too. Hold fast. To those who overcome will be pillars in the household of God and Jesus will write on them His new name.

To the church that gathered in Laodicea Jesus is pretty hard on. They are lukewarm. When water becomes lukewarm it is not good for much. Cold water is useful for thirst. Hot water kills bacteria and is used in cleanliness. Because this church has become content in this lukewarm state Jesus cannot do anything with it. To repent in this state would be to turn back or give up what has caused the state of lukewarmness. Jesus

has not provided the things you claim. The gold, garments and eye salve are available to all in Laodicea. Jesus yearns for them to invite Him in; to be Lord of their lives. To those who overcome will rule and reign with Me.

Which of these conditions describes your heart today? What is the Spirit saying to you? What steps in repentance will you take? Now is the day of your salvation. The fields are white unto harvest. The church must go forth while it is day. For night is coming. It will be too late. A tribulation will bring the pressures to overcome. By then it will be too late to be prepared as now is the best time to prepare.

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord- Romans 8:37-39.

A conqueror is one who overcomes. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world- our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who

believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1
John 5:4-5

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea. For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time-Revelation 12:11-12.

It is time to overcome.