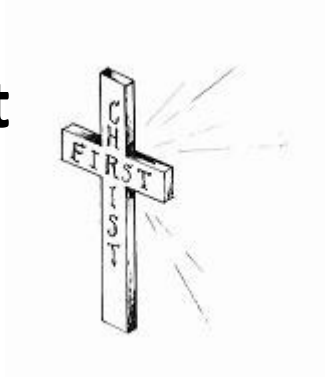
Committed to Christ



(Selected Scriptures)
1/20/08

Introduction: Matthew 10:34-42

How much does it cost to be a Christian? Nothing. . . and everything.

**** The Christian Life is one of Commitment!***

How do I express my commitment to my Savior?

I. I am not afraid to <u>TESTIFY VERBALLY</u>
*(**My <u>WORDS</u>** about Christ show my commitment to Him)*
Matthew 10:32-33

II. I am not ashamed to <u>IDENTIFY VISIBLY</u>
*(**My <u>WALK</u>** with Christ shows my commitment to Him)*
Mark 8:38

Are you willing to publicly identify with Jesus Christ by being Baptized?

III. I am firmly decided to <u>SERVE FAITHFULLY</u>
*(**My <u>WORKS</u>** for Christ show my commitment to Him)*
John 12:25-26

Conclusion: Matthew 16:24-25 - We must die to selfish ambition

Committed to Christ

(Selected Scriptures)
1/20/08

Introduction:

When I speak of Commitment I mean dedication to a person or cause. Commitment is the heartfelt, passionate, patient, consistent, steadfast, faithful dedication to a goal.

Commitment involves a sense of obligation and duty propelled by conviction and love.

On Commitment:

Vincent Lombardi:
The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender.
Ferdinand Foch:
The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire.
Abraham Lincoln:
The probability that we may fail in struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just.
Vincent Lombardi:
The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.
E. M. Gray:
The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don't like to do. They don't like doing them either necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose.
Pat Riley:
There are only two options regarding commitment. You're either in or out. There's no such thing as a life in-between.
Elbert Hubbard: Commitment Quotations
To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, be nothing.

Matthew 10:34-42

How much does it cost to be a Christian? Nothing. . . and everything.

Becoming a Christian costs you nothing! Salvation is free! (Rev. 22:17) Eternal life is a gift! (Rom. 6:23) The inheritance of Heaven is all of grace (Eph. 2:8-9; I Pet. 1). Jesus paid it all! He did the work! He endured the cross (Heb. 12:2)!

Becoming saved costs you nothing, but it cost our Heavenly Father His Only Begotten Son!

Being a Christian costs you everything! Whereas entrance into God's family does not cost you a thing, once in God's family there is a price to pay as long as we live on this sin-cursed earth.

You see, Heaven charges no admission fee, but the world charges a high departure fee when you leave its philosophies, ambitions, morals, etc., after being born again.

There is no charge for God's offer of Paradise (no price could match its worth); however, all those who have accepted God's are not appreciated by those who have rejected His offer . . . and that's where the trouble comes from.

A preacher once titled his sermon: *"Heaven & Hell on Earth"* His points were:

I. For the unsaved, this is the closest to Heaven they will ever experience.

II. For the saved, this is the closest to Hell that we will ever experience.

ILLUS: The Parables of the Builder and the King (Luke 14:28-32)

V. 34

"To send" - Does not describe purpose but result. In other words, Christ did not come with the motive or intention of bringing conflict, but He knew that conflict would be the inevitable result of His coming.

Jesus does bring peace to the hearts of His people (Jn. 14:27); but unfortunately, His peace cannot extend to those who are at war with Him.

Christ's mission in His first coming to the earth was not merely to make peace between man and man or nation and nation.

There cannot be true, lasting peace in human relationships until there is peace with God. As long as people are at odds with God, they will be at odds with others.

Although at Christ's first coming peace was not achieved, at His second coming peace will be realized. SEE: Isaiah 2:1-4. Why will peace finally come?

1.The Prince of Peace will rule the earth (Is. 9:6; Rev. 20:4-6)
2.Satan will be bound (Rev. 20:1-3)
3.The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord (Is. 11:9)

"A sword" - speaks of conflict and war; not started by Christ or His children, but by the enemies of Christ.

The unsaved, humanistic, Antichrist, anti-Bible world has throughout history opposed God's people. We should not be shocked by such antagonism, because Jesus said it would be this way (Jn. 16:33; cp. I Pet. 4:12).

Satan is the chief instigator of trouble! He stirs things up! He stirs up the heathen to oppose righteousness (Acts 19:23-34). He uses man's wicked and deceitful heart (Jer. 17:9) to rebel against anything connected with Jesus Christ. He is busy energizing those who are spiritually blind (II Cor. 4:4) as he works out his diabolical plans in the *"children of disobedience."* (Eph. 2:2)

People are offended when you leave "their religion." They are grieved when your allegiance shifts from them to Jesus. They are agitated when your righteousness becomes a rebuke to their unrighteousness. They are annoyed when your light exposes their darkness! They are upset when blessings flow upon you and not on them. They are perplexed when they observe your confidence and hope, while they grope in lostness and confusion.

Face it, folks, the world has never been a friend to Christ!

The world's philosophies. . .ideologies. . .motives and methods (ambitions and ethics). . .moral standards. . . are totally different than God's!

Such different world views produce conflict. Such opposing world views produce friction, and friction causes heat, and heat causes fire!

V. 35

"Variance" **-**to split up; to sever; to cut into two parts; hostility on the part of the unsaved will set him against the saved; the result being division, disunity, and separation.

God teaches that believers should strive to be at peace with all men. But you cannot force them to be at peace with you (Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14). Not peace at all costs!

"There is a difference between the 'offense of the cross' (Gal. 5:11) and offensive Christians." (Wiersbe, p. 39)

Usually, those who will have the greatest reaction against you will be those who are the closest to you!*Son - Father*
Daughter - Mother
Daughter-in-law - Mother-in-law

In the Last Days, iniquity will abound so much that the love of many will wax cold (Mt. 24:12); people will be without natural affection (I Tim. 3:3). Family members will actually betray family members (Mt. 10:21).

ILLUS: Pastor Jordan's rejection by his family

ILLUS: MacArthur, p. 231

This tragic disloyalty and abandonment of natural affection is not something new. Even in the Prophet Micah's day, he said: *"For the son dishonoreth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house."* (Micah 7:6)

V. 36
"Foes" = enemies

To have your own family turn on you has to be the most terrible feeling of betrayal. Yet at the same time, such family antagonism will be the greatest test of your faith and test of your devotion to Christ. When such domestic turmoil occurs, you will have a choice: family or Christ. Where will your loyalty be placed?

**** The Christian Life is one of Commitment!***

How do I express my commitment to my Savior?

I. I am not afraid to <u>TESTIFY VERBALLY</u>
*(**My <u>WORDS</u>** about Christ show my commitment to Him)*

Matthew 10:32-33
Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Don't Let the Fear of Man <u>EMBARRASS</u> You

Paul confessed, "For I am <u>not ashamed</u> of the Gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1:16)

***"Confess me" -** to <u>say the same thing</u> about Jesus that the Bible says about Him.*

Confession before men is a manifestation of true salvation.

***"Before my Father" -** Jesus will say of those who testify of him: "Father, they belong to me, they believe in me."*

***"Before My Father" -** Jesus also said that He would confess us before the holy angels of God (Lk. 12:8). Why? So that they will know who to gather up at the Rapture (Mt. 24:31; cp. Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:26)*

We can deny Christ by <u>word</u>, <u>act</u> ("works" - Titus 1:16); or by <u>silence</u>.

To be <u>denied</u> by Jesus will be the greatest loss!

For Him to say, "I do not know them" or "They do not belong to me" will be the height of tragedy.

NOTE: Peter denied Christ (Mt. 26:34, 75) but later repented and then boldly and fearlessly acknowledged Him (Acts 2-5).

The Anabaptist Balthazar Hubmair did the same.

No one is a possessor of Christ who is not a confessor of Christ.

"The fear of man bringeth a snare (a lure into a trap - an eternal trap!) but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Prov. 29:25).

II. I am not ashamed to <u>IDENTIFY VISIBLY</u>
*(**My <u>WALK</u>** with Christ shows my commitment to Him)*

Mark 8:38
Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Romans 1:16
For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Philippians 1:20
According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

The believer's first step in making a public commitment to Christ is his/her public baptism.

There is a close connection between belief (repentance) and baptism?

1. Baptism always occurred <u>immediately</u> after belief (Acts 8:37)

2. Baptism was an outward expression of an inward change

3. Baptism was the distinguishing mark that showed your new identification with Christ.

Michael & Margeretta Satler - Michael had been a priest, but left the priesthood after he found there was no Biblical evidence for celibacy. So he left and was married. More than that, they joined a group called the Anabaptists. The prefix Ana means again. The again-baptizers; more easily said, re-baptizers. The Anabaptists were people who believed that their infant baptism didn't count, because they said it's not found in the Bible; therefore, we need to be re-baptized as adults upon profession of faith. And so they went ahead as adults, having professed faith in Christ, and they baptized one another as part of a little group way back in Germany in 1526. When they were coming back from a little town called Schlicime, they were arrested while walking through the forest and captured and on May 17, 1526, they were tried, and after 1 1/2 hours, the judges came back with this verdict, "Michael Satler shall be committed to the hangman who shall take him to the square and there first cut out his tongue and then chain him to a wagon, tear his body twice with hot tongs and five times more before the gate, then burn his body to powder as an arch-heretic." He was brought to the place, and just before he died, he cried, "Almighty eternal God, thou art the truth, and because I have not been shown to be in error [he had asked if he could debate the point from the Bible, but his prosecutors said "No."], I with thy help on this day testify to the truth and seal it with my blood." With a sack of powder tied around his neck to hasten the death, Satler

was thrown into the fire. When the ropes on his hands burned through, the dying man raised his hands in a sign of triumph and prayed, "Father, I commend my spirit into thy hands." His wife was persuaded to recant, but she did not. Eight days later, she was forcibly drowned in the Necar River.

Erwin Lutzer - "The Anabaptist Controversy" (tape: origins of infant baptism)

Baptism is one of 2 ordinances given by Jesus Christ to His Church to practice until He returns.

What the Bible says about the ordinance of <u>Baptism</u>

1. The <u>institution</u> of baptism

a. Baptism was Christ's first public act

(Mt. 3:13-17 - "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.")

b. Baptism was Christ's last command

(Mt. 28:19-20 - "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.")

c. Baptism was an early church practice

(Acts 2:41 - "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."; 8:38 - "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."; 10:45-48 - "And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost...Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord...")

2. The Mode of baptism

Biblical baptism is immersion into water

Proof:

a. The meaning of the Greek word *- "baptisma" (noun); "baptizo" (verb)*

1) In classical Greek - immersion (Liddel & Scott lexicon)

2) In Septuagint Greek - immersion (II Ki. 5:14 - Naaman)

3) In the New Testament every passage requires or allows the meaning of "Immerse"

b. The syntax of the Greek

1) In relation to "water"

a) Water is never the subject of a passive verb -
EX: Water (subject) was poured (passive) on him

b) Rather, water is always the object of a preposition.
EX: He was baptized in water

2) In use with prepositions

The prepositions (eis; en) that follow the word baptized specifically mean "in" or "into" never "by."

c. The context of the baptisms. *Circumstances in contexts describing baptisms support immersion.*

EX: "Coming up out of the water" (Mk. 1:10)

EX: "Went down into...came up out of" (Acts 8:38, 39)

3. The subjects of baptism: only believers

a. Only those who repent can be baptized

EX: "Repent and be baptized"
(Mt. 3:2-6 - "And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."; Acts 2:38 - "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,a nd ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.")

b. Only those who <u>believe</u> can be baptized

*Mark 16:16 - "He that **believeth** and is **baptized** shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*

*Acts 2:38 - "**Repent** and be **baptized**..."*

*Acts 2:41 - "Then they that gladly **received his word** were **baptized**: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."*

*Acts 8:12 - "But when they **believed** Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were **baptized**, both men and women."*

*Acts 9:36 - "And Philip said, If thou **believest** with all thine heart, **thou mayest** [be baptized]. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."*

*Acts 16:14, 15 - "Lydia ... **attended** unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was **baptized**..."*

*Acts 16:31, 33 - "And they said, **Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...and [he] was **baptized..."***

*Acts 18:8 - "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, **believed** on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing **believed**, and were **baptized**."*

c. Only those who have the <u>Holy Spirit</u> can be baptized

(Acts 10:47 - "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?")

d. Only those who are <u>disciples</u> can be baptized
(Mt. 28:19-20 - "Go ye therefore, and teach [lit. make disciples] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . .")

****Infant baptism has <u>no</u> Biblical support at all - It is a doctrine of men, not God.***

Infant baptism destroys God's intended purpose for baptism and that being the believer's choice to publicly identify with Jesus Christ.

God expects you as a Christian to identify with Christ by being Baptized (immersed in Water)

This ordinance does not save, but is an important matter of obedience. Its important because it's part of the great commission.

III. I am firmly decided to <u>SERVE FAITHFULLY</u>
*(**My <u>WORKS</u>** for Christ show my commitment to Him)*

John 12:25-26
He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour.

v. 25
Verses 25 and 26 are not as isolated as they may at first glance appear to be. Verse 25 teaches: Just as Christ would willingly give His life, so His followers should be willing to give theirs for Him if it was God's will.

v. 26
Just as Jesus would serve the Father and do His will by giving his life, so His followers should be willing to serve Him no matter what the cost.

Serving Christ involves following Christ and being close to Christ. And tot hose who serve Him, He promises blessing from God the Father.

If you want honor from God, you must serve Jesus Christ. He honors those who honor His Son.

John 5:23
That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Commitment to Christ is measured by faithfulness.

1Cor. 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man <u>be</u> <u>found</u> <u>faithful</u>.

Acts 20:23-24
"… the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. "

Conclusion: **Matthew 16:24-25**

We must die to selfish ambition:

"If any man will come after Me" - "If any one desires (wishes) to follow me" - This does not refer to the means to salvation, but to sanctification; not relationship with Christ, but fellowship with Christ.

"Deny himself" - (*aparneomai* - a strengthened form of *arneomai*) - meaning to utterly say "no" to oneself; to turn away from your own self-centered ways; to totally disregard one's own selfish ways.

When a conflict of wills occurs (God's will vs. our old nature's) and we by the power of God's Spirit under the direction of God's Word choose to say "No" to selfish impulses, we have denied self.

When our flesh screams out for gratification (outside of God's ordained boundaries) and we don't give in but rather disregard temptation's cry, we have denied self.

True Christian maturity is not when we do right because we feel like it, but when we do right when we don't feel like it.

"Take up **-** the imperative anticipates willingness to do so. You must decide or choose to take it up.

The "cross" to which Jesus refers is not a physical handicap nor a "nagging wife" nor a "domineering mother-in-law" (MacArthur, p. 48).

"His cross" - Each one of us must take our own cross, our own instrument of death.

Each must die to self for oneself!

Such cross bearing is to be *"daily"* according to Luke 9:23.

In response to Peter's repulsive remark against suffering and dying (v. 22), Jesus tells him that unless He is willing to suffer, he cannot be a true disciple of Christ.

The "cross" was a common symbol of death. Many were hung on them, but none of their own volition. The purpose of the cross was not to bear it, but to die on it.

Jesus calls upon us to radically abandon our life for the purpose of living for Him! To die to our own plans, our own ambitions, our own desires, our own goals, our own praise and glory, our own fame and fortune. . . all for the purpose of fulfilling His plans, ambitions, desires. . .

Gal. 2:20 - *"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

"The only good Christian is a dead Christian" (dead to self, that is).

"And follow Me" **-** Jesus is not calling upon us to deny self and die to self for no purpose. Our purpose is to free us from that which keeps us from following Christ.

How well you follow Christ can be measured by how often you choose His ways over yours!

You need to be willing to pay the price of resistance, rejection, family disruption, opposition.

The Testimony of an African Pastor:

"I'm a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit Power. The dye has been cast. I have stepped over the line the decision has been made. I am a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tame visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals. I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, platitudes or popularity. I don't have to be right, first recognized, praised, regarded or rewarded. I now live by faith lean on His presence, walk by patience, am lifted up by prayer and labor by power. My face is set, my gate is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions few, my guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, shut up, let up until I've stayed up, paid up, prayed up. I am disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, work till He stops me, and when He comes for His own, He'll have no problem recognizing me at all!"

Excursis:

Persecution

In this article persecution will be defined as coercion for religion's sake. It is often thought of as primarily physical torture and extremely cruel forms of execution such as crucifixion by the Romans. But mental forms of persecution have always existed and have been revived with sadistic twists in the 20th century. In Anabaptist and Mennonite history discrimination for the sake of religion has been a common if less severe form of persecution.

Religious people have frequently persecuted those of other religious persuasions. Pagan Romans persecuted early Christians. Fifth-century Christians triumphantly persecuted pagans; early in the sixth century a pagan Roman senator wrote one of the most eloquent pleas for religious liberty that any civilization has produced. Seventeenth-century Japanese persecuted Roman Catholics in support of official Buddhism. New secularists, worshippers of the Goddess of Reason, persecuted staunch Roman Catholics, especially clergy, during the French Revolution (1790s). In the 19th century, Russian Orthodox Christians persecuted Roman Catholics in Poland and Moslems in Turkey. For many centuries Christians have persecuted Jews systematically and capriciously. Many Mennonites think that some forms of excommunication, applied rigorously with the ban, constitute persecution of Mennonites by other Mennonites (Bear; P. Friesen). In short, religious conviction easily turns to righteous indignation against religious nonconformists or dissidents and breeds a malice that has produced some of the most cruel forms of persecution humans have ever devised.

Traditionally Mennonites viewed early Christians and the Anabaptists as focal points of the most severe persecutions in church history. Van Braght shaped his Martyrs Mirror around those two periods. Early Christians were harassed, imprisoned, and executed in barbarous ways, commonly on the charge of atheism since they did not believe in the socially accepted divinities. Or they were accused of sedition because they refused to regard the emperor as deus et dominus, god and lord; Romans believed absolute allegiance to an absolute god-emperor to be a necessity for holding together in one society many people of diverse ethnicities and religious cults. Romans displayed their predilection for terror as a means of cowing conquered tribespeople into submission in the form of uncommon cruelty in torture and overeager execution. But they bad a penchant for the rule of law, and they created a body of law and juridical thought of the highest order. Generally they intended to grant free exercise of religion to the diverse cults of their heterogeneous subjects. Indeed, one of the major reasons for Christianity's success was the Roman Empire's relative freedom of worship, interrupted by some vicious but usually local outbreaks of persecution. Systematic, empire-wide persecutions under Decius and Valerian (250-59) and Diocletian and Gelarius (303-11) were the exception to the rule.

Anabaptists were persecuted severely. It makes little difference whether one counts several hundred or many thousand martyrs: the psychological impact was terrifying, persuading many to recant and frightening away many more prospective converts. Catholics imprisoned and burned Anabaptists as apostates. Lutherans exiled or beheaded them for blasphemy and sedition. Reformed leaders (Calvinists) imprisoned and drowned them for sectarianism and breaking the body politic. (It should not be forgotten that Lutherans were also persecuted by Catholics in Austria or that Protestants routinely executed Roman Catholic priests when they were discovered while ministering to the underground Catholic church in England well into the 1600s.)

Almost everyone used torture to compel these religious deviants to return to the true church. Societies have always used torture, both to punish but also to extract confessions, in some places and times more than others. In the West juridical torture derived largely from the rediscovery of Roman law. Used largely by the church in its Inquisition (early 13th century and following), it was adopted increasingly by civil courts because it was thought to be effective. By the 16th century its use was common, in many Germanic lands routine, in numerous types of court cases but especially where heresy was presumed. It was used to induce confession, secondarily to extract information about Anabaptist leaders, places of meeting, etc. Physical forms of torture included primarily the rack -- stretching the body until the joints separated; often the thumbscrew, sometimes the suspension of the body from arms tied behind the back or from the thumb of one hand, with weights attached to the feet. Today many European museums display standard instruments for late medieval torture.

By the beginning of the 20th century the West thought that it had decisively rejected juridical torture, beginning generally in the 18th century. But the 20th century has introduced newer forms, quasi-legal or sanctioned by law, gravitating more toward mental forms, although some new physical forms have been invented -- electric shocks to sensitive parts of the body, for instance. Brainwashing is the term invented in our times to describe mental torture. In the 16th century interrogators tortured victims mentally by questionings so lengthy that they exhausted the prisoners, promising reunion with spouse and children if one recanted, giving filthy quarters and insufficient food for weeks on end to reduce resistance, etc.

Anabaptists sometimes remonstrated against persecution. One of the best illustrations is Menno's moving tract, "A pathetic supplication to all magistrates" (Writings, 523-31). He knew that governments used the edicts of Theodosius II (emperor, 401-50) against rebaptizers (418ff) to persecute Anabaptists, and complained that those proscriptions had been wrung from Theodosius by bloodthirsty bishops. He pleaded for mercy, but also for that kind of justice in which magistrates would compare the moral lives of Anabaptists with those of other Christians. Europe's wars of religion bred a new class of politiques, leaders who preached religious indifference as a necessary way to end the bloodshed in which one religious group fought another in the name of God. in the spirit of the politiques the more severe forms of persecution gradually were replaced by discrimination, sharp in southern Germanic regions until the French Revolution granted citizenship to every human including Mennonites and Jews, mild but still painful in the North.

What forms did it take in the South? In the Swiss Confederation Mennonites could not inherit land, and their children were technically illegitimate because the state had not legally approved their marriages. Or they were imprisoned for longer periods of time on bread and water only. In 1710-11 the Bernese government devised an elaborate deportation scheme, working with a land agent to send them to the Carolinas. Some were sent on their way by barge down the Rhine, then released through the political intervention of their Dutch co-religionists when their boat reached the Netherlands. (The Old Order Amish of North America still keep alive oral tradition in the tales of that ordeal.) Some were sold as galley slaves to the Italian city-states. Swiss democracy emphasized equal participation of all, especially in times of war, more than the rights of the individual before the law.

In southern German states, including Alsace, Mennonites and Amish paid a special tax merely because they were religious dissidents. Or they were forbidden to buy more land when their population increased. Or they were harried into court, for example, when they baptized two young girls, born Amish but forcibly raised Catholic, contrary to the express prohibition to proselytize. Or, if they developed good pasture on mountainsides too steep to till, jealous villagers drove their own livestock into those pastures and forcibly excluded cattle of the Mennonites.

In northern regions Mennonites were often forbidden to enter the standard craft and trade guilds (in Danzig, for example). Some therefore became innkeepers. Or they were excluded from the universities and therefore from certain professions such as law, a prohibition that was galling to the Dutch Mennonites who were bursting with creative energy. There were other forms of discrimination; but on the whole, northern Teutonic Mennonites were less discriminated against than were the southerners.

Other times and places of special persecution or discrimination against descendants of the Anabaptist family include the Hutterian Brethren in late 18th-century Hapsburg lands of eastern and central Europe; Russian Mennonites in the 1920s and since World War II; some African, Asian, and Latin American Mennonites, especially since World War II; and finally, some North American Mennonites during wartime.

Hapsburg Empress Maria Theresa (ruled 1740-80), true to a sincere but dogmatic Hapsburg family Catholicism, finally exiled those few Hutterian Brethren who refused to recant. The recanters were subjected to rigorous religious supervision, required to attend mass or special Catholic homilies and prayers, or both, more frequently than were their native Slavic neighbors -- well into the 20th century according to the memory of some of their surviving so-called Habaner descendants (Velke Levaré, Czechoslovakia, for instance). The exiles wandered in misery from one region to another before finding refuge in the Ukraine.

Twentieth-century Mennonites in Russia were driven from their villages and sent to slave labor camps where many perished. Some of their most severe tribulations occurred during and immediately after wars -- World War I, the Civil War, World War II -- and cannot be separated easily from the normal but intense suffering caused by modern warfare. (All ethnic Germans were subjected to mistreatment under the Spetskommandatura [deportation regime], 1941-55.) There is no doubt that Mennonites were persecuted for their religious faith; other Christians and Jews suffered similar persecution from a self-proclaimed atheist government determined to impose absolute conformity on everyone for the benefit of all. There is some dispute among Russian Mennonite historians on the issue of whether or not Mennonites were singled out especially for persecution. The Bolsheviks reproached them for their use of weapons in self-defense against bands of anarchists (Selbstschutz).

Mennonites in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have been persecuted, more commonly as Christians than specifically as Mennonites. In the 1960s in Zaire Mennonites were caught in the cross-fire between rebels and the central government, and were suspect in both camps. Some suffered the destruction of houses and goods, others were threatened with death, still others were impressed into forced labor. In each known instance the Mennonite was presumed to be a spy, or at least a partisan, of the other side. The church learned that Christianity means persecution. In Indonesia in the late 1940s Mennonites were suspected, sometimes accused, of being partisans of either Dutch colonialists because of their contact with missionaries, or of native freedom fighters. And during the anti -Communist upheaval in the mid-1960s Mennonites, together with other Christians, were falsely accused of Communist affiliation. No one seems to have been killed, but many were threatened; and the church learned the painful lesson of persecution for the sake of Christ. In the 1980s Central American Mennonites are persecuted together with other Christians.

In the 19th century Pieter Jansz, the first Mennonite missionary in modern times, was harassed by the Dutch colonial government in Java (later part of Indonesia), in part because he criticized colonial policies in tracts that he published in The Netherlands. His friends in the Dutch Estates General supported him. But the Javanese Dutch government treated him much more harshly than Reformed missionaries. Warfare has been the occasion for persecution or discrimination. All people suffer during war, especially those who are caught in the theaters of battle. But Mennonites have often been especially singled out for accusation or threatened violence or outright attack because of their nonresistance: Palatines during the French Revolution, Virginians during the Civil War in America, Alsatians in 1870, American draftees during World War I (two Hutterian Brethren died as a result of maltreatment), in addition to instances mentioned earlier.

European and North American Mennonites often think of the Martyrs Mirror when they reflect upon persecution. They have not kept careful records of discrimination or outright persecution in the 20th century; nor have they tried to learn much about persecution of their brothers and sisters in the non-Western countries. Often public inquiry by Westerners puts indigenous Christians under jeopardy of property destruction and even death. But an urgent desideratum for our times is a serious study of contemporary persecutions and martyrdoms.

Bibliography

For the Anabaptists see among others:
Braght, Thieleman J. van. The Bloody Theatre, or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians. . . (see the Martyrs Mirror article for various editions).
The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, vol. 1. Rifton, NY: Plough, 1987, cf. A. J. F. Zieglschmid, ed., Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder. Evanston, 1943, and Rudolf Wolkan, ed., Geschicht-Buch der Hutterischen Brüder. Vienna, 1923.
Clasen, Claus-Peter. Anabaptism: a Social History, 1525-1618. Ithaca: Cornell, 1972, esp. 358-422.
Schraepler, Horst W. Die rechtliche Behandlung der Täufer in der deutschen Schweiz. Tübingen: [Fabian Verlag], 1957.
Stiasny, Hans H. Th. Die strafrechtliche Verfolgung der Täufer in der freien Reichsstadt Köln, 1529 his 1618. Munster: Aschendorff, 1962.
On Mennonites in Russia, a few selected examples:
Epp, Johann. Von Gottes Gnade getragen. Gumersbach: Verlag Friedensstimme, 1984.
Hamm, Gerhard. Du hast uns me verlassen: Erfahrungen christlicher Familien in der Sowjetunion. Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1978.
Toews, John B. "The Origins and Activities of the Mennonite Selbstschutz in the Ukraine (1918-1919)." Mennonite Quarterly Review 46 (1972): 5- 40.
Toews, John B. Czars, Soviets, and Mennonites. North Newton, KS: Mennonite Press, 1982.
Wolk, Heinrich and Gerhard Wölk. Die Mennoniten Brüdergemeinden in Russland, 1925-1980. Fresno: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1981, English trans. as Wilderness Journey. Fresno, 1982.
On Mennonites in Africa and Asia see:
Bertsche, James E. "The Shadow of Suffering," and Wilbert R. Shenk, "Who is this Christ?" in A Kingdom of Priests: the Church in the New Nations, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk. Newton, KS, 1967: 126-39, 10- 22.
Eidse, Ben. Pastor Emmanuel in the Fiery Trial. N.p.: Congo Inland Mission, n.d.
Hoekema, Alle. "Pieter Jansz (1820-1904): First Mennonite Missionary to Java." Mennonite Quarterly Review 52 (1978): 58-76.
Juhnke, James C. A People of Mission: a History of General Conference Mennonite Overseas Mission. Newton, KS: Faith and Life, 1979: 142, for Taiwan.
See also:
Bauman, Elizabeth. Coals of Fire. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1954.
Bear, Robert. Delivered Unto Satan. Carlisle, Pa.: the Author, 1974.
Friesen, Patrick. The Shunning. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1980.
Hostetler, John A. Hutterite Society. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1974.
Das Kleingeschichtsbuch der hutterischen Brüder, ed. A. J. F. Zieglschmid. Philadelphia: Carl Schurz Foundation, 1947, 287ff.
Wenger, J. C. "The Voice of Mennonite history." Gospel Herald 42 (1949): 730-33; and numerous articles in Mennonite periodicals, some of which can be located by using the An Annotated Bibliography of Mennonite Writings on War and Peace, 1930-1980, ed. Willard Swartley and Cornelius J. Dyck. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987, or Nelson P. Springer and A. J. Klassen, Mennonite bibliography, 1631-1961. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1977: p. 609.
Additional Info

Adapted by permission of Herald Press, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, and Waterloo, Ontario, from Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. 5, p. 695-697. All rights reserved. For information on ordering the encyclopedia visit the Herald Press website.
©1996-2007 by the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. All rights reserved.
To cite this page:

MLA style: Oyer, John S. "Persecution." Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. 1989. Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. Retrieved 19 January 2008 <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/P475ME.html>

APA style: Oyer, John S. (1989). "Persecution." Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. Retrieved 19 January 2008 <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/P475ME.html>

Recantation

Under the pressure of interrogation with or without torture, many 16th-century Anabaptists were induced to recant and rejoin the dominant regional church. In some regions, especially where capital punishment for religious error prevailed (Hapsburg lands, central Germany), recanters numbered well over 50 percent of the Anabaptists who appeared in court. In other regions, often where exile was the unofficial but ultimate form of punishment (Strasbourg, some other south German cities, Hesse), the percentage of recanters was much lower.
Why try to induce recantation? Church and court authorities were traditional: recanting was morally advantageous to the soul because the recanters could be received back into the church (Catholic or Protestant) to their salvific benefit. Both Catholics and Protestants, especially the latter, saw the advantage in obtaining recantations from prominent leaders in order to use them to persuade other Anabaptists to recant. From 1538 through about 1560 Strasbourg used recanted Anabaptist Peter Tasch to induce perhaps 200 Anabaptists to recant.

Why did Anabaptists recant? Most of them were pressured intolerably to abjure their faith. Torture, threat of torture, separation for life from spouse and/or children, appeals of relatives and friends, threat of death or at least exile—any of these could be decisive. Furthermore, many Anabaptists (like many Protestants) were troubled in conscience by separation from the church, even a church they thought was an abomination in the sight of God. Therefore some were persuaded to recant by pastors or theologians who themselves continued to exercise a critique against the church (e.g., Michael Schneider at Passau, 1538). Such recanters often retained a substantial element of Anabaptist thought and ethic. One such recanter administered the poor relief program in Strasbourg for many years.

Some, probably most, recanted because they were Spiritualists (Obbe Philips) and relied more on the intervening Spirit and less upon the gathered church of believers. Some Anabaptists recanted several times, rejoining the Anabaptist fellowship between recantations. A few of these appear to have been Nicodemites who maintained some active underground fellowship with like-minded Anabaptists but who outwardly led lives of religious conformity to the dominant church.

Many recanters were fresh converts, immature in Anabaptist thought and life; some had been Anabaptists for only a few months or even weeks. The standard pressures overwhelmed them and they displayed an awesome ignorance of their new faith in court or under interrogation. But major leaders also recanted: Balthasar Hubmaier (who recanted and retracted twice), Jacob Dachser, Jacob Kautz (recanted feebly while seriously ill), Obbe Philips, Hans Pfistermeyer, Eitelhans Langenmantel, Georg (Jörg) Rothenfelder (who retracted and would not recant again) are only a few examples.

It is impossible to find an absolutely clear relation between recantation and torture. Torture was used too frequently as a routine form of interrogation in religious cases to be thought worth recording, even in regions such as South Tyrol where it had only recently been introduced into legal practice. Routine torture derived from Roman law, and thus also was standard practice in canon law. There are instances of Anabaptists recanting only after the excruciating pain of torture.

Some authorities used formulae for recantation; these disguised the individual's convictions but also made relative adherence to Anabaptist thought and practice after recantation less apparent.

Protestant churchmen and political leaders tried instruction to persuade Anabaptists to recant, all the more as executions for religious reasons decreased. Many leaders spent many hours with imprisoned Anabaptists. In some Protestant regions church leaders instructed recanting Anabaptists in detail, covering much more than the normally disputed issues of baptism, nature of the church, oath, and government.

Menno Simons and other Anabaptist leaders of his kind generally disapproved of recantation, associating it in the North at least with extravagant Spiritualism. Some Anabaptist groups were reluctant to receive back into fellowship a retracting recanter. But because of intolerable pressure to recant including torture, Anabaptists usually were reluctant to visit too harsh a penalty on recanters who wanted to return to the fellowship.
Recantation did not necessarily bring release from punishment. Some recanters were flogged, others fined, still others branded on the forehead, a few even killed. In many regions, both Protestant and Catholic, recanters underwent public penance—for example, standing bare-headed with lighted candle, clothed in special coarse cloth, in front of the church or beside the altar at the end of mass or worship for a designated number of Sundays (Schamstrafe). In some regions recanters were required to wear a particular cloak, one that set them apart, for a year and a day. Many were required to swear a special oath, the Urfehde, to remain faithful to the church under penalty of death if they relapsed.

Bibliography

The best material is the largely unworked raw data in the court records, especially in the Täuferakten (see Mennonite Encyclopedia IV:237), which forms the basis for the present article. Occasional brief references to recantation are found in biographies of some Anabaptists in GAMEO.
For one brief account see:
Clasen, Claus-Peter. Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525-1618. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972: 366-370.
For parallels in early church history related to the readmission of lapsed believers and public penance similar to the Schamstrafe described in the article, see:
Frend, W. H. C. Rise of Christianity. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985: 318-324, 409-411.

Adapted by permission of Herald Press, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, and Waterloo, Ontario, from Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. 5, pp. 745. All rights reserved. For information on ordering the encyclopedia visit the Herald Press website.
©1996-2007 by the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. All rights reserved.
To cite this page:

MLA style: Oyer, John S. "Recantation." Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. 1989. Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. Retrieved 19 January 2008 <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/R41.html>

APA style: Oyer, John S. (1989). "Recantation." Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. Retrieved 19 January 2008 <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/R41.html>
The Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO) is © 1996-2008. All rights reserved.