

# The Triumph, Peace, and Power of True Christianity

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Second Edition

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## **Abstract**

An Early Anabaptist Tract on Defencelessness and Fidelity to Christ originally published as *Aufdeckung der Babylonischen hürn*.

*The Triumph, Peace, and Power of True Christianity* is translated from a facsimile of the second edition of the tract *Aufdeckung der Babylonischen hürn* (Augsburg, c. 1540) as found in Hans J. Hillerbrand, "An Early Anabaptist Treatise on the Christian and the State," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (1958). Permission to use this facsimile is given by the editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Goshen College, Goshen, Ind.

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## Introduction

In 1517, the Saxon monk Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the Wittenberg church door. Little did he know that his doing so would spark a debate that would rend the fabric of Western Christendom. As the battle lines were drawn, Luther and his followers quickly saw in the Roman Catholic Church the fulfillment of John the Seer's vision of the Great Whore of Babylon.

Over the next years, tracts flowed from Luther's pen plotting the direction of his reformation. The publication of his German translation of the New Testament in 1522 further advanced its progress. Now even illiterate Germans heard the Bible read regularly from the lecterns of Reformed churches. As they listened to the words of Christ, they heard the promise of a new kingdom where justice and peace would reign.

In their simplicity, the peasants expected that the reformation of the church would also mean an equitable restructuring of society along the lines laid down in the gospels. They were to be sadly disappointed. Europe was also in the midst of an economic revolution. In an effort to benefit from this change, rulers and landlords sought ways to maximize their capital by extracting the most they could from their tenants. So instead of things becoming more equitable, they became more inequitable. In 1525, the South German peasants revolted, staging work strikes and calling for changes based on the law of God. Luther, terrified that his reform would be tainted by the charge of rebellion, urged the princes to "knock down, strangle, and stab" the insurgents. The rulers needed little such encouragement, and the Peasants Revolt turned into a blood bath. Feeling betrayed, a great number of peasants turned their backs on the Lutheran Reformation.

However, in several short years, the sword that the Reformers had so readily urged against the peasants swung back to threaten them. The Emperor Charles V, determined to rid his realm of Lutheranism, implemented a series of edicts against it. Those German princes who supported Luther formed the Schmalkaldic League in 1531 as a military alliance against the emperor. Lutheran theologians, who had

during the Peasants Revolt insisted on strict obedience to the emperor and other civil authorities, quickly rethought their theology regarding the sword to justify the resistance.

In the midst of this Pilgram Marpeck, an Anabaptist leader in Strasbourg, wrote *Aufdeckung der Babylonischen hürn* (*The Uncovering of the Babylonian Whore*).

The Anabaptists originated in Zurich, Switzerland in 1525. There a small band of true-hearted Christians, led by Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and George Blaurock were convicted by God's word that only believers should be baptized. Disregarding the city council's edict, they baptized each other with "true Christian baptism." This seemingly innocent action was in reality revolutionary. It threatened the whole religious foundation of Europe by calling into question what really made a person a Christian. Was it the "christening" of infants by water baptism? Or was a person a Christian when he recognized the truth, repented, believed on Christ, and then was baptized. The Zurich authorities, at the instigation of the city's reformer Ulrich Zwingli, quickly moved against the Anabaptists. Harried from pillar to post, they spread out from Zurich preaching the gospel and baptizing.

Many of the peasants in South Germany listened eagerly to the Anabaptist preachers. Their message was indeed good news. Despite the threat of persecution, many turned from lives of sin and self-centeredness to lives of following Christ and living in community with their fellow believers.

Yet sadly, there arose a disagreement in their ranks over the issue of the sword. Could a Christian (a follower of Christ) serve as a magistrate or take up the sword of defense? The Anabaptist leader Balthasar Hubmaier and his supporters, the *Schwertler* (sword bearers), argued that they could. Other Anabaptists said, "No, a Christian must follow Christ and live a life of defencelessness." These defenceless Anabaptists were called *Stäbler* because they only carried a staff when on a journey. With Hubmaier's martyrdom in 1528, the *Schwertler* party disintegrated. By 1530, most of the Southwest German Anabaptists belonged to the *Stäbler* wing.

For several years until exiled in 1532, Marpeck lead a congregation of defenceless Anabaptists in Strasbourg. He may have written the *Aufdeckung* around 1532 in response to Strasbourg's decision to join the Schmalkaldic League and a corresponding crack down on the Anabaptists by the city's civil and religious authorities.

Though written in the response to specific happenings in his day, there is a timelessness about Marpeck's tact. We too need to hear his warning not to let the arguments of the unfaithful church (the Babylonian whore) lure us onto thinking that Christians can take up arms to defend themselves, their property, or the cause of Christ. Instead, he encourages us to be faithful to Christ and to bear the cross of suffering even as our Lord Jesus did. Furthermore, many of the objections raised against defencelessness in the sixteenth century were the same as those offered today. Thus, his responses to those objections are just as fresh and pertinent today as they were then. Then as now, the triumph of true Christianity rests on following the suffering Lamb who is also our victorious King.

Shippensburg, Pa. Edsel Burdge, Jr.

# Original Title Page<sup>1</sup>

The Uncovering of the Whore of Babylon,  
and the Old and the New Mystery of the Antichrist,  
as Well as the Triumph, Peace, and Power of True  
Christians, How They Submit to Authority, How  
They Carry the Cross without Stirring Up  
Trouble or Defending Themselves, and  
How They Carry It with Christ in  
Patience and Love, Brought to  
Light for the Praise of God  
and for the Strength  
and Inspiration  
of Those Who  
Truly Seek  
Him.<sup>2</sup>

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's (Matthew 22).

Don't get yourself mixed up with trouble makers (Proverbs 24).

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<sup>1</sup>Taken from of the second printing of the *Aufdeckung* tract.

<sup>2</sup>Translation of the title page of the 1544 edition of the *Aufdeckung tract*

# **The Triumph, Peace, and Power of True Christianity**

May God give us grace to understand and to seek the truth from our hearts in these dangerous times of the end. The Lord warned us of these times (Matt. 24). He said that such great deception would come upon us that even the elect would not hold out if it were not for the shortening of days.

Lord, come back soon! Bring time to an end!

Cut it off for the sake of your elect!

May your will be done.

All men can see and feel (even apart from the witness of the scriptures) that time is coming to an end and judgement will be upon us. God's works show this. All creatures have reason to fear and tremble, as they trembled at the word of the prophets who spoke of the great and terrible day of the Lord (Isa. 24; Jonah 2, 3; Zeph. 1, 2, 3). The fact that the lost, perverted, and Sodom-like world is not taking this seriously, nor doing anything about it, is simply another proof that the Lord's word is being fulfilled. These last days are like the days of Lot and Noah. People eat and drink, marry and give in marriage (without fear), but sudden destruction will come upon them all (Luke 17).

The world overflows with terrible corruption—the kind of corruption that used to stay hidden in secret. Along with this, the worldly church, by uncovering its shame, is revealing itself for what it is, like a woman who has long been playing the whore in secret, but who suddenly drops all attempts at covering up and brazenly comes out into the open with her affairs. Now she puts on her harlot's attire and does what she can to seduce and deceive men with the thousandfold tricks of her trade. She leads the whole world into error and deception. All nations are drunk with the wine of her adulteries (Rev. 17, 18), and few are left who fear or whose consciences bother them for what they do.

True knowledge springs from the fear of God.

Here and there, where weak Christians gather, the power of God still works. But the clever whore does what she can to splotch up their garments with the stains of error. Some Christians fall away, but John says they were not of us (1 John 2). And the whore walks along beside us with many false teachings and clever sayings to spy out our liberty in Christ, as Paul says (Gal. 2). Blessed are those who do not contaminate themselves with her adulteries, because they have been bought by the blood of the lamb (Rev. 14). God purchased them to become his firstborn and has saved them through the power of the Lamb.

There is one Lord of Lords who calls all the elect believers to him (Acts 17). To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## **The Whore, The Bride, and The Serpent**

We speak, as can be seen, of the old, red, Roman whore (who passed herself off for so long as the bride of Christ, deceiving herself and many with her). This whore the real bride of Christ—the bride consisting of a new people, married to Christ through his blood and suffering—has thrown out and rejected with all her tricks.

But the old serpent is busy.

No sooner have the new people of God (the reformed Protestant churches) appeared than the serpent has come up with new deceptions. But our bridegroom, Jesus Christ, has overcome him and his worldly ways through his death on the cross. He overcame the world through faith.

Now the serpent and the whore, (Ezek. 23) with all their children can do nothing but watch as simple faith brings their deception to nothing. Their clever plans are becoming known to the true children of God and shall be discussed, for the praise of God and the strengthening of the faithful, in this tract. May God give grace!

The old serpent helped to set up the false bride of Christ for the deception of the world (Rev. 20). He did this for a long time, but when he learned that his time was short, he partially revealed

himself, through his prophets, to get his job done quickly. In this way he actually did the children of God a favour. He let some of his prophets speak out against his own deceptions, such as the baptism of infants and the pope's idolatrous works. But these prophets, instead of coming out into the clear, led those who followed them into great strife over insignificant details. They began to argue about exactly how to celebrate the mass, whether it should be taken in two kinds or without the cup, and through this led the whole world into confusion with their arguments. Satan used this situation to accomplish his purpose.

## **What We Have Inside**

Martin Luther got so caught up with exactly how to celebrate the mass, whether to partake of it in two elements, and so forth, that he paid no attention to the fornicators, gluttons, drunkards, gamblers, murderers, traitors, tyrants, and liars who partook of it. He ended up calling everything and everyone the fellowship of holiness. Luther expected the correct observance of the mass to change his followers into real Christians. But what we eat and drink does not change our nature. Only what we partake of spiritually can change our spirits. What we have inside of us will bear fruit.

Luther and his men use the scriptures to persuade the common people to take up arms and to defend themselves valiantly. They get the people to trust, body and soul, in the force of arms, and they cause lords and cities to rise up against the emperor. What a terrible shedding of blood when false prophets and their followers begin to fight in the name of God! (Jer. 6; Ezek. 22, 23).

The Lord Christ wants to lead his followers out of all this with no hitting back. He wants to lead them in peace, under the cross, and in the shadow of his wings (Ps. 17, 57). Christ the lamb suffers patiently, allowing men to kill him, until the end of the world (Luke 17; Rev. 13). All the leaders of the world, Pilate, Herod, Annas and Caiaphas, unite to do him harm (Luke 23), but Christ gives himself up to their power and exercises no power upon them in return. He teaches rather that we should give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's (Matt.

22). He teaches that earthly rulers have been given the power to rule in everything except that which concerns the vengeance of God. No man, only God, may resort to vengeance (Rom. 12; Heb. 10).

God has appointed no power or rulers on the earth except Caesar. Caesar and his worldly government will rule on the earth until their time is up, as predicted by Daniel (Dan. 11), when the wrath of God will come upon all men (Isa. 24). Until then all flesh needs the power and control of Caesar.

Jesus Christ, on the other hand, does not rule or judge in earthly inheritances or in earthly kingdoms. No matter whether his followers get treated good or evil, they pay back nothing but patience and love. They are willing to submit everything they have, even their bodies and their lives, to earthly powers. That is everything, except their true faith in Christ. No man may use force or rule over others in matters of faith in Christ, for it is not earthly lives but eternal life that is at stake. God himself will not take eternal life away from any creature in heaven or on earth (Rom. 8; Matt. 10). Because true Christians set their hope on eternal life, they do not demand the right to earthly life (Heb. 11; Luke 10; Col. 3), and many are now choosing this. May God be praised!

## **Christ's Judgement**

To summarise, I want to present you professing “evangelicals,” you teachers and preachers, nothing else but the crucified, patient and loving Christ.

Those who do not preach and teach Christ are against him. It does not matter if they are of the old or the new pope, nor whether they can handle the word of God as well as Christ himself. If anyone preaches anything but the meek and humble Christ whom we learn to know under the cross, it does not matter how “evangelical” they may be, they will fall under the judgement of Christ. They will say in the end: “Lord, have we not cast out devils, prophesied, eaten, and drunk in your name?” But Christ will answer: “Depart from me you evildoers. I never knew you!” (Matt. 7; Luke 13).

I wish that those who shy away from the narrow gate of the cross, and who keep others away from it too, would understand Christ's judgement better. If they had real faith within themselves, they would be shocked, because on none does Christ pronounce a clearer judgement than upon people like them—people like the new “evangelical” preachers and their followers, who have much to say about Christ, but who do not enter the narrow gate and who prevent others from entering (Matt. 7, 23).

## **False Evangelicals**

The “evangelicals” use scripture and doctrine to put the sword into the hand of the common man, but according to Jude they will perish with the rebellion of Kore. Stirring up cities and princes to battle, they walk in the error of Cain and will perish in the way of it. Listening to the voice of Balaam's prophets, they will fall into yet greater bloodshed and terror than that of the peasants' revolt. They will perish in the rebellion of Kore, not for the cause of Christ. May the Lord lead his followers out from among them!

I must admit that I learned a good amount, in the past, from the writings and the sermons of these “evangelical” preachers. I used to be a solid Roman Catholic. Their teachings brought me to see that Roman Catholicism was wrong, but it led me only into a freedom of the flesh. Instead of being bound in my conscience as before, I now felt free to eat and drink with such teachers. I thought I must be a good Christian now and set myself against Catholicism with all the writings I could find to serve my cause. Everyone praised this understanding of mine, but it was not what entered the mouth but what came out of the heart that defiled me (Matt. 15).

I gladly accepted “evangelical” positions against auricular confession, papal rules, for this did not infringe on my flesh, and I could do so without the true spirit of Christ in my heart. I accepted many “evangelical” teachings, which were true. But the mystery of the cross of Christ and the narrow gate was not spoken about nor taught, just as it still is not taught in “evangelical” circles. They were totally quiet

about this way of the cross that leads from Babylonian captivity back to freedom in Jerusalem. Much more, if anyone had dared to open his mouth about it, he would have been persecuted by them and delivered to the hangman. It is easy to see that these “evangelical” preachers are the evildoers to whom Christ says, “Depart from me” (Matt. 7).

Those who teach a partial gospel are like a hand pointing the wrong way at a crossroads.

## **The Way of the Cross**

The “evangelicals” lose the reality of the cross of Christ when they sit behind the protection of lords, princes, and cities to defend themselves. Only under the cross of Christ may patience be learned and all anxiety overcome. Christ the lamb triumphs in the cross, not like the lion, the bear, the wolf, the dog, and the leopard who fight and tear one another with their teeth (Rev. 17).

Woe, woe to the teaching and kingdom of Antichrist that must be revealed (2 Tim. 3)! Look and listen, all you who have eyes and ears! Discern for yourself whether the deceivers and troublemakers are followers of the Lamb of God or followers of the dreadful beast! Children of God do not mingle with them. Do not let anyone deceive you. Wish no evil on your enemies, but do good to them, and that from the heart. You have one who judges you, and he is in heaven.

If worldly rulers use their power as God ordained them to use it (Rom. 13), if they use the sword correctly, according to God’s command; you are under a measure of protection. But where worldly rulers use the sword in an unjust way, when they punish the good and let evildoers go free, love liars and persecute the truth, all you may do is to content yourself with calling them to conversion. Leave vengeance to the God whom worldly rulers are called to serve. Christ did not give you any other sword or means of self-protection. Whoever teaches otherwise is a liar and a deceiver (1 John 4; 2 John 1).

The one, who looks for Christ elsewhere than in patience beneath the cross, will not find him. Just as wooden crosses and road signs direct us on the way, so the cross and hand of Christ direct us on our

way to him. Moreover, the cross of Christ does not stand still. It is with us from the beginning and moves along with us to the end. The way of the cross is the way of truth. Out of truth comes life, and life comes by faith. Faith produces virtue and lets us know Christ. “This is eternal life that they should know you, Father, the true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17).

## **Possessions and Self-defence**

To know Christ and his teaching is to live not after the flesh. It is not to hang onto our possessions, but to be born again, through which we die to all earthly things. He who hangs onto his old life and possessions will lose them. But he who gives them up comes to possess eternal life (Matt. 16, 19). He puts (Luke 9) every thought of self-defence behind his back, offers to carry the cross for his master and Lord, Christ, and does this faithfully with all meekness, love, and patience (Matt. 11) as the lambs of God.

We protect ourselves against the enemies of Christ by becoming more than conquerors through him. Our triumph, not limited by time, is eternal (Rom. 8; 1 John 5). Christ says, “Rejoice! I have overcome the world” (John 16). Overcoming power never comes from winning in an earthly conflict. Whoever wins a conflict is overcome sooner or later by a stronger opponent who dominates him. That is because earthly conflicts are not won with Christ. It is the flesh that wins them, and the flesh with its triumphs passes away.

Where Christ’s teaching and life take over, fleshly rule and power ends. But where people are ruled by the flesh, Christ must leave, just as he had to leave the land of the Gadarenes (Matt. 8). Christ had to leave the land of the Gadarenes because his work affected their business (their hog operation), something that needs to be taken into account if we want to be saved. The two demon possessed men held in the bondage of a legion of demons typify the love of God and the love of man, both of which have been hindered for a long time by Satan. Bondage comes from our love of property, as can be seen when the two men (who had been a great danger) returned with Christ, who had

freed them, to the village of the Gadarenes. The Gadarenes, because they suffered damage to their earthly property (the loss of their pigs), begged Christ to leave them.

## **Possession and Power**

The loss of property is a small thing to give up for the love of God and our fellowmen. But it is the fear of losing possessions that deceives the whole world. It is that fear which binds up the love of God and the love of man on the earth.

If Christ must leave, as he left the village of the Gadarenes, unrighteousness takes over. Love grows cold (Matt. 24). Selfishness takes over and all men suffer. It is easy to see how blind, senseless selfishness destroys the whole world, but men would much rather tolerate it than to tolerate sincere, loving Christians. They hate those who try to free them from the devil's destructive power. Oh blind Gadarenes! The whole world is blind!

Satan, through his prophets, wants to find a good-looking cover-up for the use of earthly power. He wants to mix the use of earthly power with the words of Christ by saying that it serves to protect the faithful (where in fact it harms the faithful). Satan asks: "What will happen to those who are called to be in worldly positions of authority if their subjects do not help them carry out their rule to protect the innocent from the evil? If no one helps them, will not the innocent be in danger?"

In this way, Satan convinces people that Christians may be worldly rulers. In fact, he gets them convinced that the world would be better if our rulers were all true Christians, and many sincere people have been drawn by him into military or police service, into the swearing of oaths and government office in the name of serving Christ. Behind all this lies the innate selfishness of man.

Those who think they possess their goods want the government to protect them. They think it necessary to use force to keep peace, to protect their own possessions and those of others. In fact, all use of force comes from the possession of property. From the holding

of property comes all government and force in the world. But the communities of Christ are not based on the holding of property, but on Christ. They are subject to Christ before all else.

Therefore, those who are spiritual concern themselves with keeping spiritual peace, and those who are of the flesh concern themselves with holding onto their possessions in a fleshly peace. Those who are spiritual hold to patience and love in Christ, and obey God the Father, as Christ obeyed him unto death. Those who are of the flesh use the sword to punish the evil and keep order in the world. If they did not do this, there would be no peace among private property holders. All this works together, thanks to God, who in his goodness and mercy desires only what is good for us.

## **The Place of Worldly Government**

God has offered his peace (real peace) to all men, but many have not accepted it. For this reason, he gave worldly power to those who are of the world, to keep worldly property holders from destroying each other. However, the true peace of God is far above the selfish concern for property and can have nothing to do with it.

God only permits. He does not promote the use of worldly force. The use of force does not come from that which is good, but from that which is evil and God tolerates it only out of necessity. God knows that if he would take the use of ungodly force out of the world, society would become totally chaotic. Thus, for the good of his children who must also live in the world, he lets it go.

Because God tolerates the use of worldly force, he also expects his children to obey it, even at the cost of their lives. However, above this, he expects them to give to God what is God's (Matt. 22). That is, he expects his children to give to him their first allegiance and the honour he deserves. We must be true to God although we are also subject as citizens to our worldly governments, remembering that they are called to govern only in matters of the flesh. Only God may rule in matters of the Word and of the Spirit.

Christ told Peter to pay his taxes (Matt. 17), because God, the God of peace, wants us to live in peace with all men as far as possible. Spiritual and bodily peace are the weapons and heraldry of true Christians, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 10. Our eternal God is faithful.

## **The Peace of Christ**

For the sake of peace among the rebellious children of Israel, God gave the sword to Moses to enforce his laws. Joshua, David, and others were given the sword for the same reason—to keep an outward, temporary peace among unconverted men. But Christ and his followers have another calling. Christ does not bring the peace of Moses, nor an outward peace of the flesh. Rather, he calls his followers to have peace one with another and says: “I give you peace. I leave it with you, not as the world gives” (John 14).

The world does not know the peace of Christ, nor has it experienced peace of heart. Only with peace in the heart can one endure persecution, no matter how severe it may be. Before Christ, no one knew about a peace like this. Christ freed us so that we could have peace, and he left this world so that the comforter might come to us (John 16). Now we go through all manner of earthly tribulations without complaining or protesting, because we have peace in our hearts.

True Christians are those who do not complain or protest, as do those who bring each other to trial for offences among them. Those who accuse each other do not know true peace. They are children of the world. But true Christians have peace in their hearts because Christ is their Lord and judge, and they know that he will finally judge the whole world (Acts 17).

## **To Serve, Not to Rule**

So much higher is the office of Christ than the office of Moses, that his followers can no longer be accused by the law neither do they accuse others (Hebrews 3, 8; 2 Cor. 3). Where one is accused or judged on the

basis of Moses' law, the work of Christ has no effect (Gal. 5). Christ said to the Jews who would not believe in him: "I will not judge you. The one who will judge you is Moses in whom you trust" (John 5).

Neither Christ nor his followers accuse men in spiritual or physical ways. Rather Christ and his followers are of a faithful, patient, and meek spirit. Jesus said to his followers: "If you keep to my way of talking, you will be my true disciples. You will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (John 8).

This freedom of Christ is lord over all. All creatures must serve it, but it does not seek to rule. It seeks only to serve (1 Cor. 9, 10). The Lord Most High, Christ Jesus, did not come to rule, force, judge, accuse, or have anyone accused before him. Rather, he came to serve, and to allow himself to be ruled over, forced, accused, judged, condemned, and mistreated. He is the mirror into which we must look if we want to see whether we resemble Christ or not. If we would do so, the question of whether we should take part in worldly government would soon be resolved!

## **Spirit of Elijah–Spirit of Christ**

Those who oppose us are quick to bring up the example of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and others who used worldly force yet were filled with the Spirit of God. They say that whoever has the Spirit of God must also have the Spirit of Christ. Well, Satan has surely done his best here to defend selfishness and personal property!

What our opponents do not take into account is that back in those days the use of force was necessary (as explained above) because man had fallen and all men lived by the flesh. Without fleshly force and government based on fear, no semblance of peace could have existed, as the case of Cain and Abel already shows (Gen. 4). But when Christ died and triumphed over sin and the works of the flesh saying "It is finished" (John 19), he brought the universal reign of the flesh to an end. Now his followers can walk in freedom of spirit, discerning the difference between the accusing, vengeful spirit of Elijah and the Spirit of Christ that comes to those who are born again.

When Jesus' disciples, who had seen and felt his spirit at work, called on him to kill his enemies like Elijah (Luke 9), he asked them: "Don't you know of what spirit you are?" He told them that the Son of Man did not come to kill but to save. In the same way, his followers cannot kill anyone.

Now, let me ask you: Did the vengeful and judgmental Elijah not have the Spirit of God? (2 Kings 1) Or did Christ, when he differed from Elijah, do wrong (if it is as you say that the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ always works the same way)?

The selfish also try to justify themselves with love for their neighbours. They ask: "Shouldn't we defend our neighbours when they are in danger, if we can do so? Hasn't God made us responsible to do this? God told us not to ignore our neighbours when they are in need, and to treat others like we want them to treat us" (Matt. 7).

Using such human logic, Simon Peter took it upon himself to defend Christ. But listen to what Christ did: He reached out and healed the man whom Peter, using worldly force, had struck (Luke 22). Christ does not want the kind of love that causes others to get hurt or despised. Rather, he wants to see us loving and not hating our worst enemies (Luke 6), no matter what they do to us.

## **The Result of Freedom in Christ**

We are all one body under Christ the head. If one member suffers, we all suffer with it (1 Cor. 12). Patience and love rule in this body and motivate us to treat all others with the patience and love of Christ. We cannot do our enemies harm. If we harm them to defend one another, we are not in Christ but in a fleshly union like that of the whole world, which says: "If you help me, I'll help you, and so on."

True Christians help those whom they can, whether friend or foe, as long as no one gets hurt by their help. The spirit of brotherly assistance will never be wanting among them. In fact, Christ's followers are so dedicated to help others that they would be ready to die for them. Complete love in Christ reaches out to friends and enemies. It is the result of freedom in Christ and spiritual union with him.

Christ has passed on the gift of love from our Father in heaven. If our spirits become obedient to Christ, our flesh and blood also becomes subject to him, and to become rulers or to have people subject to us no longer holds any attraction. Nothing attracts us more than Christ, for even though our flesh is weak, our spirits are willing (Matt. 16).

Where fleshly rule is still mixed with the kingdom of Christ, Christ's death is to no avail. In his death on the cross Christ learned and taught the way of obedience, patience, and love toward all men. Christ used no worldly force nor did he come to rule, contrary to what many try to prove with the scriptures. The closer one looks at how Christ handled property and government, the more one comes to realise that he did not have much to do with either of them (Matt. 20).

## **The Cause of Struggle and Discord**

Those who oppose the true Christians accuse them of anarchy, of not paying tithes, of being disobedient individualists who want no one to rule over them, and of being power hungry themselves. They say the Christians call themselves "king of the Jews," and the like. Just listen to what Satan comes up with in his accusations against Christ and his followers!

One question must be put to the world's children and all professing Christians: Is your lust for physical power not the cause of all your struggle and discord? Is it not that you resent the government that is over you, but at the same time want it to protect your private property? The kind of power that is able to keep order in the world is resented by the world because God has given it the right to judge and punish. But its judging and punishing may be either right or wrong.

Pilate, who got his power from God (John 19), sat in judgement on the case of the innocent Christ. But Christ did not appeal to him. Like a lamb, he suffered whatever judgement worldly power pronounced upon him. In like manner, the lambs of God must suffer until the end of the world. Both Peter and Paul (1 Pet. 2; Rom. 13) call upon us to be subject to our worldly authorities unto the point of death like Christ.

We are to endure violence, but we are not to rule over others nor use violence upon them.

Answer me now: Who is more obedient to the government: the one who demands protection for his rights and will not suffer wrong, or the one who claims no rights and suffers everything in the love of God? You blind ones, what can you say to this?

## **The Way of Christ—The Way of Worldly Power**

Those who are deceived take pride in being Christians. They say they are ruled by the Spirit of Christ, but at the same time they are calling for someone else to rule for them—someone who does not have the Spirit of Christ and who will rule with worldly power. They want a king after the manner of the Gentiles, not to tell them what to do, but to protect them.

Hear what Samuel said to the Israelites (1 Sam. 8). When the Israelites asked for a ruler after the manner of the heathen, to protect them, Samuel warned them what that ruler would do to them with his power. But God who knew that the Israelites had rejected him (not Samuel) gave them exactly what they asked for, as a punishment. In the same way, when Christ's disciples asked to drink from his cup, he patiently handed it to them. It was his cup of suffering (Matt. 20).

The Son of Man governs his followers in a beautiful way, with his Spirit. He said to his followers: "You know how it is among the Gentiles. Everyone would like to be the boss. Those who make it to the top use their power to get what they want. But among you it is not to be that way. Rather, the one who would like to be something should be your slave, and the one who wants to be first should spend his time serving all of you" (Mark 10).

The one who does not let the Spirit punish and correct him, and who does not listen to the counsels of the word of the Lord is no Christian (Heb. 12). Therefore, he must still be subject to the law (Gal. 3).

The word of the Lord alone is the Christian's judge and sword (Eph. 6; Matt. 10). True Christians will use nothing more in self-

defence. Whoever despises this fact despises Christ, and whoever despises Christ despises the Father who sent him (Matt. 10), just as the Israelites despised not Samuel, but God. In Christ we have more than Samuel, Moses, the patriarchs, and the prophets (Matt. 12), but the people reject him.

Those professing Christians who ask God for leaders who use worldly power must learn that such leaders govern harshly. Even those Christians themselves will govern harshly if they get the chance, because they are not choosing the way of Christ, but the way of worldly power.

## **Christ, the End of the Law**

Since Jesus Christ broke down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, he has brought Jewish and Gentile law together and made the two into one (Rom. 8; Eph. 2). The only way to become free from the yoke of this law is to let Christ bear us again, when our old spirit and life dies, (1 John 3, 4, 5) and we are made new in him. Once this happens, and Christ comes into our lives, he fills us with patience, and out goes love for the laws of Moses and the Gentiles.

Outside of Christ, neither Jewish nor Gentile law gives life (Rom. 2). The law serves only as a bit in the mouth of disobedient and uncomprehending carnality. For as good as a carnal man may become, he still needs the bit of the law to keep him in check. To be sure there are differing grades of carnality, just as there are different grades of rebellion or obedience in animals (horses seem to be more obedient than donkeys), but all animals must be restrained with the bit (Ps. 32; Gal. 3). The bit and bridle for carnality is the dead letter of the law and man-made rules. It is not Christ, who with his Spirit (apart from the fear of the law) gives life (Rom. 8).

Those motivated by the Spirit of God are God's children. We have not received the spirit of slavery, which keeps us bound in fear, but we have received a childlike spirit through which we cry, "Abba Father." We are children and heirs if we suffer with him, and shall we not also

reign with him? Christ does not reign with the law, neither Jewish nor Gentile law, but through the Word of God alone.

He is the Word of God.

The man who does not have Christ within him cannot live by the Word of God. He is nothing but flesh without spirit. But he who has Christ living in him has the firm government of the Word in his heart. He needs no other ruler than this, as Paul says in Colossians 1. Everyone who rules or punishes apart from this Word (which is Christ, according to John 1 and 8) is part of the government of darkness and the enemy of those who are in the kingdom of the Word (which according to John is the Son of God and the light of the world that enlightens all men in the beginning).

Outside of Christ, we have only one kind of law. Jewish and Gentile laws all become one thing. In the same way, in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. All who are in Christ become one new creature in God (Gal. 3, 5, 6). Professing “evangelical” Christians get this confused. They try to justify their use of worldly force by fusing the Gospel of Christ to the laws of Moses. But they are in the wrong. Christ is the end of the law to all those who believe (Rom. 10).

## **On One Level in Christ**

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6 that there is a fault among Christians who claim their rights, and that before unbelievers. He asks: “Is the wisdom of Christ not among you? Are you not able to admonish one another in love and patience? The simplest person among you should be able to do this if he is filled with the patience of Christ. But you go and quarrel before unbelievers!”

Brotherhood in Christ is patience and love. It functions without bosses or chiefs, and it needs no underlings. In this brotherhood, all are on one level in Christ. Where there are no chiefs, there can, in fact, be no underlings, yet all true Christians are under the control of the will of God in Christ. All Christians are under Christ because he set them free through his living power from the fear of the law—the law

that stayed behind, with its sceptre and power structure, with the tribe of Judah into which Christ was born (Rom. 1, 9; Rev. 5; Heb. 7).

## **Fleshly Rule—Rule Over Flesh**

Jacob the Patriarch had already told Judah that the sceptre would not depart from him until the hero should come before whom the people will fall (Gen. 40). Also, according to the words of Jacob, the natural people of God will hold the sceptre until it will be passed on to the Gentiles, that is, to the swineherds of the kingdom of God. All earthly kingdoms and estates are nothing but pens full of pigs to God—pigs that root up and destroy his vineyard (Psalm 80). And all those who rule over, protect, and manage these pig pens are nothing but swineherds, because outside of Christ there is no faith, neither among Jews, Gentiles, or professing Christians (John 15; 2 John 1; 3 John 1).

The one who refuses the discipline and instruction of the Word of Christ is not a Christian. In the same way, whoever judges or punishes others according to the letter of the law and with the use of worldly force is not a Christian. Christ's way is gentle and not proud. It is the way of patience and love. To Christ was given the power to rule over all flesh (Matt. 28). But he does so with his Spirit (Rom. 8) that brings the flesh into total subjection.

Christ gives life, not death (John 8; 2 Cor. 3), like the sword of Moses' law. Moses, God's slave, handed over his sword when he died and pointed to Christ saying one should stand up among his brothers whom the people should hear (Deut. 18). To this, Christ himself testifies: "If you believe in Moses, you should also believe in me. Moses prophesied about me, and we know that salvation is of the Jews" (John 5, 4). Since Christ has come, we no longer listen to Moses who knew only the sword of the law, but not the law of the Spirit. Now we listen to the word of Christ, which is a double-edged sword that divides between right and wrong (Heb. 4).

To the evil world belongs the evil sword. Evil rulers in the world must rule in their evil way to protect the evil of private property. In this way, a semblance of peace is maintained among the ungodly, for Christ

can have nothing to do with Belial (2 Cor. 6). But the peace of Christ is something totally different. It has nothing to do with satisfying the flesh or hanging onto property. Rather, it is that which allows us to live in great joy and peace in the midst of our friends and enemies, no matter how things go. This is the peace of Christ of which he spoke: “I give you my peace, not as the world gives it.”

The world has peace only as long as property “rights” are not disturbed. But when people’s private possessions are in danger, their peace is already disturbed.

## **The Mystery of Iniquity**

No sword nor worldly force was used by the old Christians from the time of the Apostles until the days of the emperor Constantine. Christians did not believe in using the sword, and Christ had not given permission to use anything more than the sword of the Word. Whoever went beyond that in the days of the early church was considered a heathen or an infidel. But the pope, as a servant of the church, married the church to the Leviathan of carnal power—supposedly doing Christ a service. Then the Antichrist was born and the mystery of iniquity began to appear (2 Thess. 2), which had long been hidden previously.

For a long time the fallen church posed as a spiritual body, quoting scripture and leaving the impression of good works. But like the new Antichrist of today [the Protestant church], these false shepherds did not own the sheep, and they had to crawl into the fold through the roof to make havoc among them—to eat them, to ravage them and to kill (John 10). Like the devil, who is a murderer from the beginning (John 8), this sword-bearing crowd falls upon its victims with worldly power to plunder and steal. Indeed, no human tyrant has ever murdered and choked to death like this most abominable beast that gobbles up, stamps to death, and devastates its fellowmen. To this extent the mystery of iniquity has been revealed.

A few of the most sincere among Pilate’s sons ask if Christ is a king. But when one answers with the words of Christ in John 8 that his kingdom is not of this world, and when one explains how Christ came

to rescue his followers from the false Jews (that is from those who falsely profess to believe in God), they say they do not want a king like that. They want a king whose kingdom is a visible one in this world. In this, they are doing right, because they are the world's children and not God's. They are on the side of the Regent of this world, as Paul says (Eph., 6) that fights against Christ, and it is only right that they should also be ruled by him and not by Christ, who appears to them as a foolish king. When the people wanted to set him up to rule for their material advantage, he fled from them (John 6).

We should still flee from the false prophets who want to marry the patient and loving Christ with the sword of worldly power. Where this takes place, a new Antichrist is born. But I trust the Lord will keep us from this and protect his own from becoming pigs and swineherds that root up his vineyard (Ps. 79, 80). I trust that he will keep us as sheep with shepherds to build up his vineyard, and that we may stay close to Christ our chief shepherd from this time on into eternity. Amen.

## **Good Grain and Weeds**

In closing, I present a parable of Christ to all those who would like to unite the kingdom of Christ with worldly force—to all those who want to tear good and evil apart with means other than through the Word and Spirit of God (Matt. 13): The kingdom of heaven is like a man who planted good seed in his field. But while he slept, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the grain. When the crop grew and came to head, lo and behold, it was full of weeds. The man's workers came to him and asked, "Didn't you plant good seed? Where do all these weeds come from?" He answered them, "An enemy has done this." His servants asked him whether they should go and pull out the weeds, but he said: "No. Leave it alone, lest you pull the grain up with the weeds. Let them grow together until the time of the harvest. Then I will tell the reapers to bind the weeds in bundles and throw them out to be burned. Then we will gather the good grain into the barn."

When Christ's disciples heard this parable, they asked him what it meant. You should listen now to that answer and decide for yourself

whether Christ gave to his followers the sword of worldly power to get rid of evildoers before the end of the world.

Jesus said to his disciples, “The one who sows the seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seeds are the children of the Kingdom, and the weeds are the children of iniquity. The enemy who sows the bad seed is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. Like the weeds were gathered up and burnt, so it will be at the end of the world. The Son of Man will send his angels to gather up from his kingdom all the evildoers and will throw them into the fire where there will be howlings and grindings of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their father’s kingdom. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Take note from this how the Lord Christ now works as a Saviour and not as an avenger. Now he calls everyone to repentance before the time of judgement when there shall be no time for repentance anymore. He allows worldly men to judge that which is outward and temporary, but he does not want us to judge what is inward and eternal, so that the grace of God may not be cut short, until the day when the wheat is gathered up. If it were not this way, Christ would not have spoken this parable.

## **The Gospel and Patience**

As long as a man is alive, he can be convicted by the patience and love of Christ to repent, and some may not turn to Christ until the twelfth hour of the day, as Christ himself says in John 11. But if we would kill him for his evil deeds before this, he would have no chance. For this reason the meek and humble Christ asks his followers (in John 13 and Matt. 11) to learn from him and to wait patiently upon all men. With the above parable he asks us also to wait, and he never calls upon us to take the sword to judge or rule over men. Nearly the whole chapter of Matthew 5 treats this matter of how we should not force others nor try to lord it over them or twist their arms in matters of faith. We need to learn to offer them the gospel with patience. Those who do it otherwise are of the world and not of Christ. They are unbelievers and not men

of faith. Those who fight with the sword will be judged by the sword as John describes in Revelation 13 and Matthew 16.

Also the unbelievers, who do not believe in Christ, the sharp sword of the Word, must be spoiled and eaten up by the sword (Luke 21). Whoever does not believe in him is judged already (John 3). Therefore, the Lord says to those who would follow him: "Let the dead bury their own dead," for outside of Christ there is no righteousness, and no flesh is justified apart from him.

In Christ, the only sword we know is the sword of the Word. It is the sword through which we judge and are judged, and it is the only sword we are commanded by Christ to use. We are to avoid and separate ourselves from those who do not believe the Word until they repent. Then we are to receive them in love and patience. This is the true Christians' judgement in this time. They are not asked by Christ to judge in any other way.

Where this is accomplished, the true Christians keep themselves pure and all things are pure to them in the freedom of the spirit. Whatever serves the purpose of meekness, toleration, and humility through the hope of faith in love is pure. Outside of this, nothing is pure, even though Satan likes to hide behind Paul's saying in Titus 1 that "unto the pure all things are pure."

The one who is in Christ shows the characteristics of Christ: faith, love, hope, patience, meekness, humility, purity of heart, decency, and all other virtues that come through faith. But outside of faith, all good customs and knowledge, no matter how good they may appear are unclean. They are an abomination before the face of God, as one can see in the case of the heathen, who in spite of their many virtues stand unclean before God because of their unbelief.

## **True Christian Liberty**

If one should do the work of the angels and of the apostles, even the work of Christ himself, but have not faith in Christ, it would be unclean. For this reason Paul says that all virtue outside of faith in Christ is unclean, and we should not believe that it is permissible for

us (like Satan who boasts of his “liberty in Christ”) to do anything but what Christ has commanded us to do.

True Christians never use their “liberty” to rule over the godly or the godless. They use no kind of force, but rather allow themselves to be ruled over. They suffer force and violence with patience and love until the end of the world. They remain servants of Christ their Master who did not come to be served but to serve, and who did not come to rule but to let others rule over him.

True Christians need not to worry about government. There are governors enough in this world. They focus instead on staying Christian, and they struggle to the gain the triumph of the lamb to the praise of our Father and of Christ, to whom alone belongs the glory, the majesty, the praise, and the honour from now into eternity. Amen.

Is it not a wonder that Christ and the Apostles (especially Saint Peter after the conversion of thousands in Jerusalem) did not ordain some headman to rule over the church? According to the new “evangelicals,” Christ and the Apostles must not have been thinking very far.

Why did God give the Levites no inheritance in Israel, and why did he give them no property nor civil rule (Deut. 18; Josh. 14)? If the Levites were not to be involved in these things, how much less the spiritual and kingly priesthood of Christ of the order of Melchizedec should be involved! All the works of the flesh and fleshly rule are to be brought to nothing under them, and the types of the priesthood are to be fulfilled in them as Paul writes in Hebrews 7, 8, and 9, and as Christ says in Luke 9. Christ said the Son of Man owns no place where he can lay his head.

The first council of the Holy Spirit, given through the Apostles, was sent by Judas and Silas to Antioch and throughout the churches. It was a message that ran as follows: “It has pleased the Holy Ghost and the Apostles to lay no burden of laws upon you other than the most necessary things. That is, to keep yourselves from idolatry, from blood, from strangled things, and from fornication” (Acts 15).

If we would take this simply as it comes, according to the letter of the law, without taking into account the spirit in which it was written, we would see it as nothing but a continuation of Jewish standard making. But it is the Spirit of God speaking through this word from the Apostles.

The Spirit of God testifies to the fact that the Popish and Anti-Christian idolatry of today is worse than all the pagan idolatry of the past. Like Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, if anyone confesses that the food he eats has been offered to idols, he would not eat of it. In this, it is easy to see that the Pope's idolatry is not only idol worship, but the idol itself, for the Antichrist and his followers try to force us to eat from it. It is no wonder that the Spirit of God warns us to stay away from it.

As far as the blood and strangled things are concerned, the Holy Ghost does speak only of things condemned by Moses' law. Rather, he speaks like the Psalmist in Psalm 16 who says, "I will not give you to drink of the blood offering." This becomes clear to us in these last times when worldly power is being joined to the kingdom of Christ. The scene becomes confused as professing Christians shed the blood of other men, something clearly forbidden to us by the Holy Ghost, and something that comes from taking part in that which is strangled.

What strangles, according to Christ, is the love of property, the riches and the glory of this world. Where the good seed falls among thorns it is choked out and strangled before it grows up. It dies without fruit. It is this choked out Word upon which the Antichrist's kingdom is built, and nearly all men eat of it, contrary to the warning of the Holy Ghost.

In the third place, the matter of fornication signifies more than fleshly sin. It signifies spiritual fornication with the great whore (Rev. 17 and 18) with whom all the kings of the earth and all men have joined themselves and are still joining themselves as is now apparent. (This whore is the apostate church, formerly the bride of Christ, who has left her first husband to live with the man of worldly power.) It is necessary that all children of God watch out and stay away from her. If we do so,

we do right. May it go well with you in the comfort of the Holy Ghost!  
Amen.

## ***Bibliographical Note***

Printed for the first time in Strasburg around 1532, Pilgram Marpeck's tract, *Aufdeckung der Babylonische Hurn und Antichrists alten unnd neuen geheymnuß unnd gewel Auch vom sieg, fried und herschung warhaffter Christen unnd wie sie der Oberkait gehorsamen das creutz on aufrür und gegenwär mit Christo in gedult und liebe tragen, zum preiß Gottes und Gotsuchenden zu dienst, sterck unnd besserung an tag gebracht*, sat unknown for almost four hundred years in a few libraries in Europe. Sachsse first brought it to the attention of modern scholarship in 1913 in his biography on Balthasar Hubmaier. Then in 1958, Hans Hillerbrand's presented a facsimile of the second printing of the tract (c. 1540 in Augsburg) in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

In an effort to avoid the specific eschatological connotations that the term "The Babylonian Whore" has in some circles today, the title to the *Aufdeckung* has been changed in this English version. However, the English title is based on one of the phrases from the tract's lengthy German title. Subtitles were added in this edition to help the reader.

Those interested in reading more about the significance of the *Uncovering* and the background from which it emerged can consult the short bibliography below. However, our primary purpose has not been to provide a source to round out the reader's understanding of Pilgram Marpeck's theology. Rather, our desire is that the tract might inspire and convict you, as it has us, to renounce all worldly power and cleave faithfully to our Lord Jesus Christ.

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