

# From the Editor

## What is our core driving force?

Whether we recognize it or not, we are all led by ideologies and principles. Good or bad, principles act as underlying forces that guide us in our everyday lives. Unfortunately, for the most part, the primary principle that guides many people is simply the pleasing of self. Christians, however, should be led by a different principle. Life—especially the hard things in life—tests our ideologies and reveals what is really driving us at the core.

A few weeks ago, we heard the shocking news that Beachy Amish minister Ken Miller was found guilty of kidnapping charges

and now awaits sentencing. The news sent a wake-up call to the conservative Anabaptist world on many different levels. This case reveals to us that times are worsen-

ing. More and more cases like this are likely to challenge our integrity in the near future. Things like this are going to stretch our thinking and redefine our boundaries within the two kingdoms.

The Ken Miller case is perplexing. Dealing with the tangled web of a child custody case between a divorced homosexual civil union couple is confusing even by secular standards. The laws that led to Ken's convictions weren't even laws five years ago. Honorably, when faced with an appalling situation, Ken Miller acted by his convictions. When challenged by the state, Ken told the truth. As a result, Ken may spend a few years in prison as a convicted felon.

This case makes me feel that it is time for us to examine situations like these. We need to talk about them, discuss scenarios, and hear from one another. The subtleties and chicanery of modern government, legislated morality, and secular politics have never been our friends. Nonetheless, our ideology (or rather, our theology) should remain one that champions painful truth telling, as well as respect for government and governing authorities—as long as it does not violate the laws of God. As times get worse, more scenarios like this will affect us. Get ready; as hard times come there will again be persecution.



Ken Miller and family

Considering our rapidly declining society, I was made to think about another time, not too long ago, when society took a plunge. This was the time around WWII. Lately I've been reading the new biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer entitled *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* by Eric Metaxas. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was quite an amazing man. But he was guided by a bit of a different theology and ideology than Ken Miller. Nevertheless, I was very impressed with Bonhoeffer's life.

Early on in his spiritual journey, Bonhoeffer was confronted with a radical challenge to put the teachings of Jesus into practice. He did some radical things during this time. He formed a community of radical Bible students, spoke out against sin and compromise in the church, challenged the concept of Christians' involvement in war, and even traveled to the inner-city churches of Harlem to discover a passionate faith that he did not find among American Evangelicalism or German state-church Lutheranism.

But as the evils of Hitler and the disaster of German Christianity of his time deteriorated before him, Bonhoeffer's new kingdom theology was tested. As a student of Luther, Bonhoeffer's theology of the two kingdoms took on a kaleidoscope of different shades of gray. Once the Nazi plot began to reveal its sinister agenda, the courageous young Bonhoeffer was



Bonhoeffer with school children

torn by conflicting ideologies and loyalties. Eventually, Bonhoeffer became compelled to defend the confusing hybrid of German state-church Christianity, and thereby became entangled in a complex web of deception.

Things went quickly awry for Bonhoeffer. Acting as a spy for the resistance movement, there was not much he wouldn't do to give the impression to everyone that he was a good Nazi. Bonhoeffer wrote letters praising Nazi politics, publically cheered the defeat of conquered countries, and even shouted and wrote the Nazi credo, "Heil Hitler!" Eventually, Bonhoeffer was arrested and executed as a spy in a conspiracy attempt to kill Hitler. To my disappointment, Eric Metaxas, his biographer, de-

fended Bonhoeffer's complicated deception theologically saying:

Bonhoeffer was pretending to be a pastor—but was only pretending to be pretending, since he really was being a pastor. And he was pretending to be a member of Military Intelligence working for Hitler, but ... he was in reality working against Hitler. Bonhoeffer was not telling little white lies. In Luther's famous phrase, he was "sinning boldly."<sup>1</sup>

What exactly did the biographer mean, justifying Bonhoeffer's behavior, by quoting Martin Luther? Despite the fact that I totally disagree with this author's theology, I think he was actually "right on" in describing what happened. In reality, he touched the deeper ideology that had justified and guided Bonhoeffer's use of deception.

## Lying for God

Luther once said, "What harm would it do if a man told a good strong lie for the sake of the good and for the Christian church ... a lie out of necessity, a useful lie, a helpful lie? Such lies would not be against God; He would accept them."

I believe that it was this seed of "tricky" theology that was at the core of the tainted theology that got the admirable Dietrich Bonhoeffer in trouble. As I read all of this, as much as I admired Bonhoeffer's bravery, dedication, and courage, I felt sad about the end of his life. Not that I'm not impressed with him—I honestly feel that I'm not half the man that Bonhoeffer was. However, I feel that we can learn both from his successes and his failures. As I read, I couldn't help but feel that this "Martin Luther seed" eventually yielded sad results in Bonhoeffer's life.

The wisdom of Jesus' kingdom teaching cries out, "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these **cometh of evil**" (Mt. 5:37). Wow, the gravity of that last part—"cometh of evil"—really made me think. I'm thankful that in Jesus I find none of this tricky subterfuge or deceit ... "With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

But what about us today? In light of our rapidly deteriorating society, we should ask ourselves a few questions ... could mankind ever stoop again to the atrocities conducted by the Nazi concentration camps? Could something like slavery be repeated in our day and age? Bringing it closer home, could major "Christian" organizations like the Protestants or Catholics once again persecute people for differences of theology?

<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther boasted that as Christians we could "sin boldly" and still not affect our standing with God, just as long as our "heart" was right.

In the illusion of our enchanted age, it would seem that such crimes against humanity are somehow beyond us. However, I wonder ... are we more sophisticated now, or are we simply more pacified? A quick scan over history would argue the latter. History has demonstrated again and again that the same ideology with similar situations will always produce similar results. When the pacifier drops out of our mouth, we find out what makes us cry.

As our society melts into another round of moral decay, let's be careful. Let's not be fooled ... economic disasters, stock market crashes, changing laws, societal breakdowns, and even war itself are not the problems—but rather, they are the outward manifestations of the decayed moral ideologies working at the core of our society. Hopefully, as Christians, we are led by different thinking, whether in times of peace or times of turmoil.



## Jesus has another way

Every day I'm more convinced that the only thing worth putting my life into is the simple, child-like acceptance of the teachings of Jesus. I believe that Jesus meant what He said. But even more, I believe that Jesus' plan for humanity is actually a great idea! Sometimes the ways and wisdom of Jesus don't make sense. Like Bonhoeffer, even sincere Christians often think we need to help God's kingdom along with a little lying, power, money, fighting, and even espionage! I think it is high time the church reevaluate our motivations—reevaluate our trust in the words of Jesus—and then give them a try! Like Ken Miller, some of us may find ourselves imprisoned for taking such a stand. But history has proven time and again that if we trust Jesus like this, we won't be disappointed. Every radical, world-changing movement of God was started from this same ideology.

In this issue of *The Heartbeat of the Remnant*, we start off by addressing some of the problems that happen when we allow a detour away from God's kingdom. In a very practical article, we interview Bro. Dean Stump for a hard look at enduring, not just starting. In other articles we look at selfish Christianity, and at how the mighty love of God can burn our ego away.

May that love flame in you as you read this issue of *The Heartbeat of the Remnant!* ~Bro. Dean