

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house. Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.

Much emphasis, or should it be excessive emphasis, is placed by our western culture on how we look, our outward appearance. For some no expense is too great to "look good" For others it is the reverse, the scruffy, untidy, unkempt look and in both instances the word 'modesty' is something from way back then and most likely not in their vocabulary. For the true Christian, as in all things, there should be a balance, but most of all a recognition that God is not a God of disorder nor is it a good witness to those around us if we profess to have a spiritual life of holiness to the Lord and have the appearance of coming out of the back of a garbage truck that has just done the rounds of suburban streets to remove everyone's rubbish. Let us remember that as born again believers we are called to consider our bodies as the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 3:16) Is your temple a garbage dump or a place where God dwells?

The article "**Dress and Spiritual Life**" is an adapted condensation of a message given at a Conservative Mennonite Church in Pennsylvania USA. Every endeavour has been made to adapt the original message to our Australian understanding without diminishing the scriptural basis or content. A full transcript of the original message is available upon request from the Editor. As with all things that are published in the Anabaptist, you are asked to approach this with an open mind, taking into account that the majority of the articles/messages are addressed to audiences who come from generations of Conservative Mennonite background, one with which most of us in Australia have little if any acquaintance or fully understand. Nevertheless, we can learn much from those messages and grow into how God would want us to be. May they be a blessing to all.

The sermon reprint **Strengthening our Position Against Divorce and Remarriage** clearly outlines what the scriptural standards are in respect of marriage. There are many who do seek a scriptural way of life but are unable or unwilling to deal scripturally with their marriage relationship. We must not condone or practise a critical attitude but should rather respond with compassion and much prayer for those whom we know that are in this state – and for some that may well be immediate family members.

JvL.

DEVOTIONAL.

By Bro. V. Martin, Richland Mennonite Church PA.

Taste Tested Christians.

I would like to draw your attention to a verse found in Psalm 34.1 would like to think a little bit along the line of being taste tested Christians. Today, there are many items made to suit our every taste. Items from. food to furniture, houses to vehicles — many different things. Almost any object we can think of is tailored to fit each and every person's taste or how they would like it. Unfortunately there are even churches today that are tailored for every kind of belief.

There is a colour, model, style, flavour, variety, size, and a price to suit each individual taste. Much money, time and effort goes into seeing what people's tastes really are, what they will buy and what they want. Something very unique or different may come along and people are told, "Maybe you will not like it right away. You need to develop a taste for it." Some of these tastes can be good and some not so good. I want to look at an invitation to a taste that is for everyone.

We find this in Psalm 34:8. The psalmist David says, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." In some surrounding verses we find the prerequisites for the kind of tastes which we need to have, as we think of the taste that is for everyone and the invitation that is universal — whosoever will. I believe the psalmist David is saying, "Come with me and experience the good things of the Lord."

We know that nothing is so convincing as experience. As we experience something we are convinced of it, whether it is for good or bad. David and Paul both speak of having tasted of the heavenly things, and having tasted of "the good word of God." (Hebrews 6:5) David is using some emphatical language as he says, "O taste and see." The sense of taste includes our sight, smell and our touch. The invitation is not to see and taste, but to "taste and see." Usually, when we taste something, we probably first look at it and we might observe it with our sense of sight. However, here we are tasting before we can see. We are called to relish the divine things of God before we can see and enjoy God. This is a voice that sounds throughout the Scriptures and also is echoed by godly generations that have gone on before us.

We might ask the question, "How do we develop a taste for the good things of God?" We talked earlier of maybe needing to develop a taste for some things. Our initial reaction may not be very positive. The Bible tells us that some men's perspectives are so warped that they call good evil and evil good. (Isaiah 5:20) The natural man would say that revenge is sweet and the act of forgiveness is stale. However, we believe otherwise. The Bible teaches us otherwise. One way that we develop this kind of taste is by exercising a faith and a godly fear and trust in God, allowing His spirit to work in and through us, making us children of His.

The latter part of verse 8 says, "blessed is the man that trusteth in Him," (or in the Lord). He is putting his full confidence and trust in Him. Verse 9 talks of having a godly fear. "O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him."

We also need to exercise humbleness before Him as we notice in verse 18. "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." We also develop a taste and become taste tested by studying God's Word with an open mind and heart, by both personal study by collective study such as we may be involved in from night to night as we experience a Bible School setting. We will be able to become taste tested Christians.

I like the words which we find in Jeremiah 15:16, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them: and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts." As we continue to "taste and see that the Lord is good," the Lord is indeed willing to pour out His storehouses of blessing upon us as we wait before Him. *Used by permission: The Pulpit Exchange.*

"The highest study one can engage in is the study of who God is."
Kenny Kuhns

MINISTER'S CORNER.

Bro. Richard Nolt, Millerstown PA.

Maintaining A Principle-oriented Practice

Our godly heritage was received from men who understood that our God is concerned with a practical outworking of Bible principle. They also believed that practice protects principle, "that faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). Just as the Bible gives principles that must be practiced to be of any value, so it gives practices to be observed to help us comprehend principle.

A principle is a fundamental law or doctrine. A practice is the actual performance or application of a principle, the usual way of doing something. The Scriptures are clear that a principle is not truly believed unless it is practiced. Yet in seeking to be practical, it is possible to rigidly adhere to a practice while omitting the weightier matters that go along with it. For example, it is possible to teach non-participation in war, yet fail to love a personal enemy or even a brother in the church. We need to have a practice that is based on the principles of the Word.

What Bible principles must be followed to maintain a principle-oriented practice?

"Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). Unless one is born again, practice does little good. The practices we hold as a group of believers are based on absolute truth, but these practices must be expressions of the new birth. In the case of observing Communion, damnation is pronounced on the individual that eats and drinks unworthily. Good practices, right observance, and even detailed rules to codify practice will eventually be lost along with principle if one is not born of the Spirit.

"Preaching [must be] in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (I Corinthians 2:4). Proclaiming the principles of the Word is vital to maintaining them. We sometimes refer to it as reconvincing the convinced. Our hearts are warmed as we are called to a practice that conforms to God's principles. We are also warned if we begin to stray. Sound preaching follows the New Testament pattern of principle first, with practice following. However, even with the best of preaching, principle will quickly be lost if it is not backed by consistent administration and discipline of those erring in practice. Principle and practice are mutually dependent, and the church

is called to discipline when individual practice is unscriptural. **"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit"** (Hebrews 13:17), **and "be subject one to another"** (1 Peter 5:5). We are also to endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Tremendous spiritual safety is provided in uniform practice and the input of others to help us understand principles of the Word. Submission to a Scriptural church is a way to learn to appreciate the principles that her practices embody.

However, blindly following others in practice without understanding or being guided by principle falls short. This has led some to put a negative slant on practice, especially uniform or mandated practice. While it is true that practice without principle is not Biblical obedience, it is false to claim that one can have principle without practice (James 2:20). Those with only a practice can more easily be helped to understand principle than those that merely claim to believe the principles of the Word and yet ignore basic practical outworking in their life. The idea afloat that practice quenches one's spiritual life is evidence that the father of lies is still trying to deceive the very elect.

"Hold the traditions which ye have been taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). The babe in Christ is more quickly and securely joined to the body of Christ and more likely to comprehend the principles of the Word by conforming to group practice than by trying to sort through every application and situation on his own. An infant is forbidden to climb the stairs, venture close to the pond, or play with a rattlesnake, not to stifle his life, but to preserve it until he can better understand the dangers himself.

Principles can easily be lost because practice has become habitual rather than continuing to be based on conviction. Practices that are built upon Bible principle soon become a tradition to the people of God. If we discover that we are keeping a practice without the accompanying principle, we should endeavour to ascertain the principle rather than discard the practice. If we discard the practice, we will surely replace it with another practice that probably will not be a better one. As a people of principle, our days are numbered if we begin to "meddle ... with them that are given to change" (Proverbs 24:21).

Holding traditions includes teaching them to our posterity. Ezra 9:5-15 records the teaching and regaining of principle and practice and it's good

effect. Teaching our children and others will I effectively help us to preserve principle.

"Go ye teach all nations... to observe all things" (Matthew 28:19-20). Those who carry out this commission discover that sharing our faith builds appreciation for the principles on which our practices are built. Thus, we experience the blessed promise, "Lo, I am with you always." This oneness with Christ surely requires the maintenance of all divine principle and practice. *Reprinted by permission from: The Eastern Mennonite Testimony.*

Distinctive Worship Patterns (Part 1)

Bro. Nevin L Martin, Moravia, NY.

A-Cappella Singing

A-cappella singing, singing without musical accompaniment, has ever been a part of Christian worship. Christ sang a hymn with His disciples (Mark 14:26). Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (I Corinthians 14:15).

In contrast, when Paul mentioned musical instruments in I Corinthians 13:1, he referred to their sounds as "sounding brass" and "a tinkling cymbal." Nowhere does the New Testament suggest the use of musical instruments in early Christian worship.

The introduction of special choirs and musical instruments into Christian worship was an invention of pagan worship. As paganism increased in the Roman Church, a papal choir was organized in the first half of the fifth century. In 666 a.d. Pope Vitalian introduced the pipe organ at Rome.

During the Reformation, musical instruments were eliminated from some Protestant church buildings. But by the eighteenth century, Protestant reservations regarding musical instruments had nearly disappeared.

The Swiss Brethren emphasized restoring New Testament teachings and apostolic practices. On the basis of Bible principle, they rejected the use of choral singing and musical instruments. This position was maintained for over four hundred years. But as some of their descendants lost spiritual vitality, they turned to musical instruments to entertain themselves. As a result, good congregational singing was lost.

History has proven that even small departures from the Biblical, Ana-

baptist position of A-cappella congregational singing will cause us to lose the singing we enjoy today. How can we keep this distinctive worship pattern in our generation and in the generations to come?

By maintaining a high love of respect for the tried-and-proven methods of our Anabaptist heritage. These have served the people of God well over the centuries and will continue to bless us as we appreciate and embrace them.

By avoiding the thrust toward professionalism in our singing. When small groups produce professional recordings, congregational singing begins to seem drab and outdated. This shift to professionalism will discourage others from singing. One writer observed, "If fewer and fewer learn more and more, then more and more will sing less and less."

By understanding the detrimental effect of musical instruments. Instrumental music will distort the line between worship and entertainment. When Biblical words are floated along on entertaining music, God's message is weakened.

May God help us to learn lessons from history. We need to be committed to following the tried-and-proven New Testament methods of worship that God can bless. As all of us raise our voices with singing from our hearts, truly God will be glorified.

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Dress and Spiritual Life

I can hardly think about a subject like this without thinking of the testimony of a clerk in a store some years back.

"They said to one of our sisters when she came to the checkout, "I have been observing you and there is something about your appearance, your modest simple dress that is very impressive to me. Did you make the dress you are wearing?"

The sister replied, "Yes:"

Then the clerk asked, "Now, does this represent a personal taste of yours, or are you associating with a church or people that give you some guidelines as to how you should dress?"

The sister's testimony was, "The way I am dressing is according to my

taste. This is the way I want to dress, but the church I am a part of does give us some direction, some guidelines how we should dress."

What do you think this clerk said?

She said, "Well, that is wonderful. The church I am a part of tell us that we should not be like the world but they do not give us any help as to how that it should be. Your church does a lot for you."

Is that the way we feel?

This subject is one of those subjects, which is like other great doctrines and teachings of the Scripture that we frequently address and talk about without attempting to be exhaustive or say everything that there is to say on a subject like this.

Part of our whole teaching program as a church addresses issues such as this. We do face this issue of dress today in a way that some others at other times did not face. In the writings of the Anabaptists, we learn more about this aspect of their life from the way others described them, than from their own teachings. One of the reasons for that is that it was not an issue in their society and culture like it is for us today.

Today, we face this in a very real way. This issue of dress and attire is as big an issue to us today as some other issues were to the Anabaptists, which are not big to us today because of an attitude of society, and because of what they were facing. For example, they were facing an outlook and a mentality in their day that thought that the State should regulate the church life of the churches. They said, "No." They faced things like infant baptism, and they faced persecution because of that. It was an issue. However, dress was not an issue. We will look at some reasons why that is.

There is a widespread belief today that there is no relationship between dress and spiritual life. This subject suggests that there is, and indeed there is. There is a very strong feeling on the part of many that dress is outward and tangible whereas spiritual life is inward, that is true. However, they go on to conclude that since it is that way there is no connection. That is where they go wrong.

For the sincere Christian everything we do affects us and our spiritual life. Our spiritual life in turn affects everything that we do. There is not anything, or any part of our life that is not affected by our spiritual life, and there is not anything that we do, that in turn does not have an impact on us. It goes both directions. We believe that dress is definitely an indicator of a person's spiritual life.

There is one thing that I would like to get across and will say now.

The truth is that the same Bible which teaches atonement by the blood of Jesus is the same Bible that teaches the virgin birth, it is the same Bible that teaches the inerrancy of Scripture, it is the same Bible that teaches that God created the heavens and the earth, it is the same Bible that teaches the truths related to the Church - Jesus Christ being the Head of the Church and the Church being His body, it is the same Bible that teaches us about the return of Jesus Christ and it also speaks about our personal appearance, and about dress. If there is anything we will need to remember, it is that it all comes from the same Bible.

We live in a time when people tend to pick and choose what they would like to take from the Scriptures. The things that are less appealing are dropped off and the things that are more appealing are emphasized. We really do not have that option because we attempt to take the entire Bible seriously. If we begin to cut out some things from the Bible that we do not like, then there is no basis to keep the things in that we do like for then we have rejected the Scripture and we are an unbeliever essentially. Therefore, we do not believe that we have the option of taking part of the Scripture and living by that, choosing to believe that, and make a lot of that, while at the same time push aside other parts of the Scripture. We do not have that option.

There are certain things which go together in the Scriptures which we tend not to be able to hold as an isolated truth, or an isolated doctrine. You have often heard it said (probably) that non-resistance and non-conformity are two pillars. If you take either of them out, the other one eventually goes. We cannot hold to the one without losing the other.

I want to illustrate that with an illustration from an individual whom I learned to know in Massachusetts. He was attending a Mennonite Church that holds the same standards as this one. He had a really strong appreciation for some things, especially for plain attire, his wife did not appreciate that. I am sure there were some other things that were also connected to it, but she made it clear that she would not tolerate this interest in plain dress, that if he persisted in it, she would leave him, and so she did. He continued to dress plain and associate with plain people. In the process of time he became interested in getting married again and one day he raised this subject. I was with him and he said, "I think there simply has to be a way for me to get married again. I am lonely and I think there has to be a way. I intend to find a plain church that accepts divorce and remarriage." What chances are there? If he would have told you that, where would you send him? What would you suggest? I told him, "You will not find that." "Yes," he said, "I think I will."

"No," I said, "I do not think you will because there are certain things that go together. A Bible stand on divorce and remarriage goes along with other things. A church that does not believe in that, if they have not already lost it, will lose plain dress. They will lose separation. They will lose applying Biblical principles in attire, like they will lose non-resistance. That is also one of them. There are certain doctrines like that which we cannot hold in isolation. It always is that way." Eventually our ways parted. We did not see each other again for a number of years. Then, I was looking through a book on MDS [Mennonite Disaster Service]. It was a recent book that was made on the history, of MDS in pictures. He had been deeply involved with that and in it there was his picture with his new wife in this book. He still looked plain but she was completely worldly. It mentioned where they go to church and it was a Mennonite church but a worldly Mennonite church.

That is simply an illustration of what I want you to understand. Dress and Scriptural spiritual life, Scriptural church life, are very related in that we cannot hold these doctrines of the Scripture in isolation from other sound doctrine. They go together, in a very definite, real way.

I would like to also, by way of introduction, turn to Isaiah 3. In Isaiah 3, we have God's denunciation of the daughters of Zion. I would like to point out that God did not, as He talked about them, make a big issue about how their hearts appeared to them. Rather, He described them as people would see them from the things that indicated what they were - the outward evidence of what they were. *"Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, The rings, and nose jewels, The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils"* (Isaiah 3:16-23), and so on. It is all evidence of what they were. God saw that as an evidence of their pride.

Therefore, is it unimportant to God? I think that the answer to that is that dress and how we appear is **not** unimportant to God. Not at all. Rather, it is a part of Scripture which must be applied. Now, I would like to look at a few areas. The premise, or the basis on which we link dress and spiritual life.

A) The Scriptures do give specific teaching, which must be applied. We cannot accept the Scriptures in part. They always stand together with other Scriptures. Along with that, dress is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures, and there is specific Bible teaching that gives direction on dress and things that impact our dress. There are principles of Scripture that do bear on it. Therefore, we approach this, not as something that has to do with tangible issues that are unrelated to spiritual life, but as something that is related to spiritual life, because the Bible speaks about it. "**Wherewith shall we be clothed?**" (Matthew 6:31) is one of the major questions and concerns of the world around us today. The Scriptures are very clear on that. Therefore, we are not approaching a subject here that is unspiritual. The subject on dress and spiritual life suggests a link between the two, and there is a link between the two because of what the Bible says about it.

B) There are however, a number of problems associated with this subject. That is the next thing I want to make a few comments on. We live in a time when there are a lot of negative views on the subject of nonconformity, especially on the part of those who have been involved in the great apostasy of our times. We know that in the last number of years there has been a tremendous shift, and change in the outlook toward church regulation or standards. We have illustrations from real life of the fact that there is value in those. It not only is our own conviction, but we have a church that helps us to know how to apply principles of Scripture. However, there are a lot of negative views on that idea from the anti-regulation, anti-standard society in which we live.

There is the idea that it is not spiritual. It has been a constant struggle for groups to hold a stable standard when it comes to dress. Much has been written about this subject, for example, of how it was that the Brethren church lost plainness in attire, and how the Mennonite church in recent years lost it. It has been difficult to hold it. If you read works like the old "Sword and Trumpet" bound volume from the 1930's you will soon discover that the Mennonite church as a whole did not lose it because there was nothing said about it. Very much was said about it. There was effort made to hold it. There was a lot of effort put into it, but they did not hold it. George R. Brunk, in one of his writings said that one of the reasons for that is that people are trying to hold it by what they are saying about it rather than by having a definite church standard and then administrating it. However, the church he was in-

volved with did not hold it either. It has been a constant struggle for groups to hold it. It has a way of changing with the slightest increments. Somehow we get accustomed to things. Those are some problems associated with it.

There is the difficulty and the fact that many people think that this is not spiritual. I already addressed that by saying that the Bible does speak about it. I would like to look a little bit now at the historical perspective on this. I would like to pick up a few things from the past that point out the fact that this was an issue in the past. We do not have evidence that in the earliest days of the Anabaptist movement there was a lot said about dress and spiritual life. I mentioned that there was quite a bit that was said about the Anabaptists by their opponents. The reason is not because they were not concerned, but rather because they were not facing the issues that we face today.

C) I would like to read a few quotes from the booklet, *Christianity and Dress* by J. C. Wenger (Pages 14-16). He collected quite a number of things, including evidences from Church history and from the Anabaptist time that indicate that there was a relationship between what they stood for and the way they appeared. In the first place I would like to read two points from the Strasbourg Conference of 1568. To put it in perspective, 1568 was almost a century before the 1632 Dortrecht Confession of Faith. 1568 was not that many years after the movement started. Here is what was said in one of the articles that came out of the Strasbourg Conference of 1568. "Tailors and seamstresses shall hold to the plain and simple style and shall make nothing at all for pride's sake."

I said they did not have any specific regulations that were evident, except there were some like this. Another one was in the same Confession. "Brethren and sisters shall stay by the present form of our regulation concerning apparel and make nothing for pride's sake." There was concern. It was addressed.

Then, there are some illustrations from their opponents. "In the year 1617 a case is cited of a son named Christopher Reichlin who became an Anabaptist. He often wrote to his parents, trying to mislead them. Last Candlemas Day he came home IN ANABAPTIST CLOTHES." What were Anabaptist clothes? He was identified by that. Another illustration: "A certain man came from the land of Moravia in the year 1608. He was not regarded as an Anabaptist for neither his CLOTHING nor his speech were Anabaptist." There was a relationship and a connection.

Another one: "In the year 1598 a certain man named Konrad Wertz was still an Anabaptist for he still WORE THEIR CLOTHING (p. 741). In the

year 1598, less than seventy-five years after the Swiss Brethren organized their first congregation, a certain man named Matthew Kappel was regarded by another party as an Anabaptist ON ACCOUNT OF HIS CLOTHING." Another Swiss writer who was not in favour of the Anabaptists wrote about them. He was not an Anabaptist. "The Anabaptists avoided costly clothing, wore coarse cloth, wore broad felt hats and carried no weapons." These are testimonies that they saw that a Biblical way of life involved applying die principles of Scripture that related to how they appeared. That makes it very clear.

Here is one thing that Menno Simons wrote. He was speaking about individuals who were worldly in their appearance. "They say that they believe, and yet there are no limits nor bounds to their accursed wantonness, foolish pomp, show of silks, velvet, costly clothes, gold rings, chains, silver belts, pins, buttons, curiously adorned shirts, handkerchiefs, collars, veils, aprons, velvet shoes, slippers and such like foolish finery." Then he goes on and says, "Peter and Paul, have in plain and express words forbidden this to all Christian women. If this is forbidden to women how much more then should men abstain from it, who are the leaders and heads of their women. Notwithstanding all this they still want to be called the Christian Church."

That is quite clear that it was an issue to them. I would like to also read another quote that some of you are familiar with from the book *Why Do They Dress That Way?* He comments on the fact that there were changes in society that made it necessary for the Church to draw some more definite lines on dress to protect the spiritual life of their people. These were some lines in more detailed ways that did not need to be drawn earlier.

When stylish, ready-made clothing became cheap and easily available in the 19th century, most country people stepped aboard the constantly revolving fashion merry-go-round which heretofore was only accessible to wealthy riders. The plain people saw a danger in letting the whims of worldly fashion dictate what they as Christians should wear. Even though they could have afforded to do otherwise, they continued to observe the time honoured simple dress which had become a symbol of humility." (P. 21)

He goes on to say that some of these articles of clothing that they simply did not change took some years of time to become fixed. I will read a little more:

"It took several hundred years for the various symbols of nonconformity to become fixed. Some of these symbols have a much longer history than others. Each item of plain dress became established by a very slow process of group consensus. For the most part every generation regarded the prayerful deci-

ions of their forefathers as binding. Accommodation to current fashions was kept minimal.... The plain people have sought to control cultural influences rather than be controlled by them. So what has resulted is their own kind of counterculture, rooted in Christian understanding. Their intent is to create a system for living, including dress, that is faithful to their beliefs and serves as an effective hedge against assimilation into the world." (p. 21-22)

I think that is well said. There was the increasing availability of fashionable clothes at relatively cheap prices, with factory made, inexpensive clothing. "They did not need to make them in the laborious hand weaving like they did earlier. As it was mentioned here, the common person was able to get aboard the "fashion merry-go-round," and many did. At that point the plain churches, in an effort to keep from moving in that direction, gradually settled on some practices that were simply maintained, and held, and did not change. I believe that has been a blessing.

D) I would like to review a few of the Bible principles at this point that do touch dress issues. I made the comment a number of times that the Bible does speak about it, and speaks about it frequently. They are Bible principles which are as binding as other Bible principles. In our time, some of us have grown up in settings where there was a fairly rapid movement away from Biblical dress patterns. We can remember so well how dress was downplayed while certain other things were really "played up," for example, love. I remember in youth class years back in the setting that we were in when the teacher was talking about love. He spent the morning in class talking about love and he said this, (I remember a few things he said) "The essence of everything that the Bible teaches is love. So, if we have love, these other things do not matter." That is not true. We know that, we heard a lot of that. He was basically discounting all the detailed teaching of Scripture, if you have love. I do not know what the subject was but it was not about love.

Sometime back, someone gave me a book on divorce and remarriage written by a contemporary Mennonite author. This person used a book length argument to make the point that we must decide matters like this on the basis of love because love is the overriding principle and teaching of Scripture. Therefore, we must make decisions on divorce and remarriage on the basis of compassion and love and not on the basis of the letter of Scripture. The same Bible that teaches us we should love also has Scriptures like the ones we want to look at here.

There is no other place where we discover truth about God but in the Bible. Where else do we know that has everything we know about God, the fact

that there is a Church, and the birth of the Church? Where else do we know any thing about Creation? Why, it is through the Scripture. However, the same Bible, brethren and sisters, teaches and gives us some direction related to matters as detailed as how we dress. There is tremendous truth in that. We cannot discount it by saying we take the overall idea and we brush all the teaching of it aside. We cannot, must not, do that.

Romans 12:2 is a common Scripture that is used. I would like to point out again a few different words here that really do focus in on the issue of non-conformity. In fact, this is where we get our word nonconformity. *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* I would just like to point out that the same Greek word from which the word "be not conformed" to the world comes from is the same word as is used in 1 Peter 1:14 when he says, *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance."* Bible scholars, including Adam Clarke (if you need at least one from generations back, who is a respected Greek expositor) says that this word "not conformed," and "fashioning," in 1 Peter 1:14 is never used in any other context other than outward appearance. It is never used to refer to an inside experience. It has to do with how we appear. Therefore, in 1 Peter 1:14 when he says, *"not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance,"* he is saying "not living in fashion," "not living in a fashionable way, outwardly like you used to." That is what he is referring to. In Romans 12:2, *"And be not conformed to this world,"* he is referring to being conformed in appearance. *"But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

That word "prove" has the idea of "demonstrate." How do we demonstrate the renewed mind? We demonstrate the renewed mind the same way that we demonstrate other principles of Scripture. How do we demonstrate the renewed mind in the area of submission? It is not by having it as a mental attitude. It is by being submissive.

Submission does not exist apart from its practice - from doing it. A person can say, "I want to be submissive." Submission is when we do, whether we want to or not. Therefore, submission does not exist apart from its practice. It is like love. Love does not exist apart from its expression. There is no such thing as Biblical love that does not act in a loving way. Biblical love is love that expresses itself in an outward way.

Using that same line of thought, how do we know a person has a renewed mind? It is by what we can see about him. According to this Scripture, part of that expression is his conformity to the Scriptures rather than to conformity to the world. That is how we know a person has a renewed mind. That is why Menno Simons, said rightly that a person who has renewed mind, or who says that they are Christians, and are a part of the Church of God, but yet appear this way, and that way, and this way, that is an inconsistency which we cannot bring together. That is a paradox. It does not work. There is something wrong. That is exactly what this Scripture is teaching. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove," (or demonstrate) "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." How can people know what God's will is? Part of the way that they know what God's will is, is by what we do. That is true of many areas of life. So this is certainly a part of it.

1 Timothy 2 is another Scripture that we know bears on it. We cannot claim to be more spiritual than we are Scriptural. If we minimize Scripture, any Scripture, then we are not spiritual. That is an evidence of a lack of spirituality. It cannot be that way. That is why we are looking at some of these here. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 says, "*In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.*"

The Greek word here for modesty, and I will refer back to Adam Clarke in his explanation of this particular word when it says, "that women adorn themselves in **modest** apparel." The Greeks had a word, I will read from the booklet "Personal Appearance in the Light of God's Word" by j Hartzler. Quote- "Adam Clark, the Methodist commentator enlightens us further, concerning the word apparel in 1 Timothy 2:9. In the Greek it is the compound word, *katastola*. According to Clarke, the *stola* was a Greek dress, a long Piece of cloth which hung down to the feet in front and behind, girded with a belt. The *katastola* was an additional piece of cloth which hung down to the waist loosely over the *stola*. Commenting further Clarke says, 'A more modest and becoming dress than the Grecian was never invented; it was, in a great measure, revived in England about the year 1805, and in it simplicity, decency, and elegance were united; but it soon gave place to another mode, in which frippery and nonsense once more prevailed. It was too rational to last long; and too much like religious simplicity to be suffered in a land of shadows and a world of painted outsides.' Nothing was ever more becoming than the Grecian *stola. katastola and belt*. The additional piece of cloth continuing, and

known as the cape today, serves to more adequately conceal the contour of the body which corrupt women desire to display." End of Quote.

I think that is well said. I enjoy that. I like to tell people that the pattern of cape dress that we have actually grows out of the very word meaning of the Scripture.

I will give another practice of ours simply as an illustration which is somewhat related, but not altogether related to this one - the Christian woman's veiling. Our veiling practice grows out of the use of a Greek word in 1 Corinthians 11:15 when Paul says, "her hair is given her for a covering." The word from which that word "covering" in verse 15, is the only time that word is used in the discussion of the veiling. The previous times, when the word covered, or covering is used it is a different Greek word. The Greek word that is used in 1 Corinthians 11:15 means, "wrap around." Paul had made the case for uncut, long hair for women. In the latter part of that it says her hair is given her for a "wrap around" to be put up and covered. That is also a very clear, direct outworking of Scripture. I think we can appreciate those established patterns even before our time. Brethren were concerned about that. People come along sometimes and have other ideas - hanging hair with a veil on top, or a sign veil only - a little thing on top and various other things. However, that Scripture clearly teaches her hair is to be wrapped around, covered, and unadorned.

That is an example, which is in the same category as the cape dress - growing out of a definite Greek word.

We have mention of the non-ornamentation in 1 Peter 3:3, which is a similar Scripture to 1 Timothy 2:3, *"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."* I cannot help but comment on something here. He emphasizes here the fact that the adornment is not to be the outward adorning of putting on of gold or of putting on of apparel. In other words there was not to be a fashion and a show.

We could go on with other passages. There is a lot of teaching in the Scripture where clothing is given as a description of a particular person like the harlot of Revelation, clothed in red and scarlet, and there are other principles that we could come through on that.

E) Traditional applications and church standards related to dress and spiritual life. There are not many churches anymore that have maintained standards that are really expected to be obeyed. They are mostly in the category of the Baptist preacher near us who, in frustration, told one of our brethren that he "preaches, and preaches, and preaches about scriptural standards, that they should not run to the beach so much in the summer time, it is not a good place to be, they miss church. Now they only have a third of their church people^{on} Sundays, during the week, or during the summer because everybody is running to the beach." He said, "I preach against it and they do not listen to me." That is mostly the way it is. One person said that he does not feel right about going to church if he gets his toes stepped on. Someone asked him, why he then does not do it. He got a little huffy about it and said, "Well, he does not tell me what to do." He liked to hear it, but he did not expect to do it. That is the difference, where those who have held to plain dress and the plain groups who have expected that the things that we stand for are a part of all our people. We have church standards and principles of application. Biblical principles in relation to dress have only been held by groups that have moved together and have done it together.

I would like to read another quote from "Worldly Conformity in Dress" by John Horsch. He says it like this, "The claim to stand for the simple life and for nonconformity to the world has a real meaning only where definite restrictions are observed and transgression is made an occasion for discipline.

In the absence of such restrictions it is impossible for a church to handle this question according to Scriptural requirements." He is talking about dress when he says that. The only way to maintain it is by doing it together and expecting that we hold it, and making an issue of discipline to hold it. That is because we see it as part of Biblical obedience and it is the contribution of the spiritual lives of all of us when we fulfil those principles. It is part of maintaining spiritual life and safeguarding spiritual life.

J. L. Stauffer in a two-part article in the old *Sword and Trumpet* bound volume made the statement, "The shores of Mennonite history are littered with the spiritual wrecks of those who have claimed to be able to maintain the principles of Scripture without uniformity in the area of dress." Think that through. We have that today yet. We have this idea of following a Bible principle, but each person makes an personal application and sets their own standard. Well, we know that has been tried over, and over, and over again.

I remember it so well, back in the '50's when an uncle and aunt of mine

were in the process of leaving the Mennonite church and joining a holiness group of some kind. They felt the Mennonite church was not spiritual enough and they needed to find a more spiritual church. They made it very clear that they were planning to maintain the clear teaching of Scripture. Certainly, one of those clear teachings of Scripture was the veiling and modesty in dress. They said that they do not intend to give them up. As a little boy, I remember overhearing quite an animated discussion between my father and my uncle as they discussed this. My father said, "But, you will not do it. It will not happen." "Yes, but we will because the Bible clearly teaches it." But, he said, you will not do it if you are not linked with a group that does it and holds to it, and teaches it. You will not do it." We know what happens with those kinds of things, and we know what happened with them. "They eventually did lose it and they became completely worldly. Today, in their family, there is divorce and remarriage and all kinds of other problems. It goes together.

It is like another individual who told one of our brethren (who was again in the process of leaving the plain churches). He said, "I am in favour of all of the principles of Scripture and I intend to hold them, but I do not believe it is right for the church to say how it must be done. It is the spiritual birthright of every believer to be free to make his own applications to the principles of spirit as he himself is enlightened by the Holy Spirit." (This is the Pietist mentality and we see it displayed in people we know. The Editor.) That was quite a position they took on that. One of our brethren said, "I would predict that you will not maintain it because unless you do it together it will not happen." "Oh, it definitely will." Then this brother did relent and say, "Well, maybe you will maintain it, but I doubt if your children will." Well, they did not. That was thirty years ago in 1975. There were two families that were involved in that break-off at that time and today they do not even take a position on non-resistance or non-participation in the military. They are satisfied to live with that. Even the parents that grew up in plain settings have gone to that position.

The Scriptures are clear, if we will maintain the principles of Scripture in the kind of world in which we live, we need to do as the apostle Paul tells us to do, in Philippians 3:16, *"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."* I remember a preacher years back saying that means that we are to believe the same thing, and we are to practice the same thing. That is what that means. Doctrine and practice. "walk by the same rule ... mind the same thing." It is to maintain

spiritual life, because when we finally get to the place where we become careless (and we will get there) in applying the principles of Scripture, we have lost spiritual life. And we will get there unless we stand together.

There are people who cannot stand with anyone else because of circumstances. (Such as most, if not all, of us in Australia – The Editor) They may be alone, and I believe the Lord gives special grace. There is special grace in that situation, However, God's plan is that we are a part of each other in the context of a Biblical church where there are some definite things that are required.

In conclusion, there are a few areas that I think of as issues that we face today related to the dress question, and that are an indication of dress and spiritual life.

One of the issues, of course, that we face today is the casual clothes trend. People sometimes say, "What is actually wrong with that?" It is very simple, I think it avoids identification with the church and it is affected and regulated by the fads and the fashions of the world not by the church. It is very simple. Those are some issues that we face, the baggy shirts, the baggy pants, (and /or skimpy, tight revealing clothing –The Editor) and so on. It is those areas where we face deviations.

Children's dress is really important in maintaining a concept of the connection of dress to spiritual life. Recently, someone who did not come from Mennonite background was commenting on the struggle to maintain a connection to some things that many people naturally keep a connection to. One of those was dress and the connection of certain dress patterns to maintaining simplicity. This person went on to say that there are some things that seem wrong to people that have always been dressed right that do not seem near as wrong to people who have not. That is right. It shows the importance of dressing our children from little on up so that they have a concept of what is proper, how it is proper to be dressed, and makes them feel out of place when they are not dressed that way. Sometimes it does take a generation to get that established but hopefully that can happen because we dress our children so that there is not a big bump when it comes to later dressing and meeting the standards of the church.

We could mention a number of other issues that we face today. One is the issue of shoes. Again, I think as churches we have addressed that where jogging shoes and casual clothes have become the dress tip wear for many people. That is what they go to church in. Back a little from that it had started coming into schools and school boards needed to give direction on the kind

of shoes that could be worn at school because somewhere there has to be a line. Sometimes people belittle that and say, "Why are you so detailed - trying to define such small details?" Someone asked that recently and I said, "Do you agree that somewhere there must be a line?" "Well, sure somewhere there must be a line." I then said, "The place we disagree on is where that line should be. Do we understand that?" They supposed that was about the way it was. "How do we decide whether you are right and I am wrong, or whether I am right and you are wrong. I-how do we decide that?" I said, "Neither you or I will decide that. That is decided on a broader level."

It leaves me with no room for movement, and it leaves me with an absolute obligation to where we as a brotherhood stand. That gives a stable line and security and protect-, spiritual lives. May the Lord bless us as we continue to believe and teach this. The Lord bless us.

*From a message by Glenn Sensenig September 2005 Latimer Mennonite Church
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**Every One Chooses Whom They Will Serve,
By Not Choosing *Jesus* You Default to Satan.**

SNIPPETS.

Composers/Writers of Hymns used in the Mennonite Church Hymnal (CH) and The Christian Hymnary (TCH)

PEACE Albert Lister

Born: January 26, 1844, Huddersfield, England.

Died: March 14, 1912, Liverpool, England.

Buried: St. Mary's Church, Sefton, Merseyside, England.

Extremely gifted musically, Peace first played the organ professionally at age nine, at Holmfirth Parish Church in Yorkshire. In 1879, he became organist at Glasgow Cathedral. In 1897, he succeeded William Best as organist at St. George's Hall in Liverpool. In his later years, Peace played the or-

gan in recitals at Canterbury Cathedral (1886); Victoria Hall, Hanley (1888); and Newcastle Cathedral (1891).

Music: (Tune)

Hymn:

Green Hill (Peace)

>ditto<

>ditto<

Lux Beata

St. Margaret

Lord As To Thy Dear Cross We Flee (*CH & TCH*)

My God, How Wonderful Thou Art (*TCH*)

Why Should Our Tears in Sorrow Flow (*CH*)

Unto To The Hills Around (*CH*)

- Thou Almighty Lord and God (*TCH*)

- Love That Will Not Let Me Go (*CH*)

Strengthening Our Position Against Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce and remarriage does not receive the opposition today that it did fifty years ago, due to its increasing existence and acceptance in our communities. This acceptance makes it so much the more an issue to spiritual people. It is well for us to remember that the departure from the Scriptural position against divorce and remarriage, in the Mennonite church, was one of the reasons for the formation of our church group. In light of the inroads this evil is making into religious circles, and even into our own families, it is important to fortify ourselves on this issue.

The best place to begin fortifying ourselves is in our understanding of the principles of Scripture on the subject. In the first place, we must remember that the home is one of God's basic institutions for the well-being of man. The home has been a stronghold for God in preserving the truth and shaping lives for Christian service throughout the centuries of time. Our enemy knows that if he is able to destroy the home as an institution, he will be well on his way toward his goal of corrupting the human race. Of the various efforts to undermine the institution of the home, none appears to have been as successful as the evil of divorce and remarriage.

Secondly, we should understand that the home as God planned it normally consists of one man and one woman, legitimately married, and their offspring. Sometimes death intervenes, leaving one partner behind to rear

the family. In such cases God is faithful in sustaining those left behind. But the increasing number of single parent families in our day, due to the divorce problem, is a direct result of disobedience to the will of God.

Thirdly, we need to believe that a proper marriage is the only arrangement that makes it right and honourable for a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife. The live-in arrangements that are so prevalent today are an abomination to the Lord. We must maintain Biblical conviction lest we subconsciously come to approve and accept what God condemns.

The fourth principle is that marriage is for time, and is basically a physical union. The Scriptures state that husband and wife "shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:23-24). A person's spirituality may be greatly enhanced or hindered by the influence of his marriage companion; nevertheless, the spiritual death of a marriage partner does not annul the marriage.

In the fifth place, it follows that marriage is a binding agreement during the lifespan of both partners. Only after the death of one marriage partner is the other free to remarry (1 Corinthians 7:39). To remarry while one's previous marriage partner is living is always wrong (Romans 7:2-3).

The sixth consideration is the principle of the difference between the Old and New Testaments. This difference is explained in Mark 10:2-9, where Jesus makes it clear that the divorce tolerated in the Old Testament is not acceptable in the New. The ease with which a person may obtain a divorce in our day is a contributing factor to the rising number of remarriages. But from the beginning, divorce has been contrary to the will of God (Matthew 19:8). "He hateth putting away" (Malachi 2:16).

In the case of a mixed marriage, where one partner is a believer and the other is an unbeliever, the Scripture is clear in commanding the believer to do everything possible to keep the marriage intact (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). The believer should never apply for or consent to a divorce. In situations where a separation occurs, the Bible gives only two options, "remain unmarried, or be reconciled" (1 Corinthians 7:11). In the same passage, verse 15 states that if a believer's marriage partner departs he "is not under bondage in such cases." This statement in no way gives license for the believer to remarry. It rather means that he does not bear the guilt and responsibility for the dissolution of the marriage if he conscientiously tried to keep the marriage together.

Another principle in Mark 10 deserves our attention. Jesus declared in

verse 11 that "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her." The word *committeth* indicates a continuous state of adultery. Therefore, if an individual remarries while a former marriage partner is living, his second marriage constitutes a continual state of adultery. This truth goes to the heart of the issue and defines the seriousness of it. Adulterers shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21) & [1 Corinthians 6:9].

The divorce and remarriage problem is complicated by the variety of explanations that are commonly given, even in religious circles, to make room for it. We strengthen our position by having a Scriptural answer to these explanations. The following eight points take us to the Scriptures to expose some of the erroneous ideas of our day.

1. *"The innocent party is free to remarry."* This statement has no basis in the Scriptures. "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery" (Luke 16:18). The word *whosoever* is used twice in this verse and clearly sets forth the divine restriction. Either party who remarries commits adultery.

2. *"Jesus made an exception for cases of 'marital unfaithfulness.'"* The exception referred to is found in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. We believe this exception applied to unfaithfulness in the betrothal (engagement) period rather than in marriage. Jewish couples were referred to as husband and wife during the betrothal period. The commitment was so binding that legal action was necessary to break it (Matthew 1:19). This interpretation is further supported by the fact that the term fornication, rather than adultery, is used in these verses to describe the nature of the unfaithfulness.

3. *"The first marriage is the only valid marriage."* This explanation is often given to justify going back to the first marriage partner. We believe, however, that God recognizes remarriage as marriage, even though it is contrary to His will. When the Samaritan woman tried to conceal her sinful life by declaring that she had no husband, Jesus said, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly" (John 4:17-18). It seems clear that this woman had been married five times and was presently living with a man to whom she was not married. If only the first marriage was valid, why did Jesus say she had had five *husbands*? Or why does the Scripture condemn remarriage if it is not valid?

4. *"If divorce and remarriage takes place before conversion, we can overlook it and the couple can continue in their remarriage relationship."* This statement suggests that God's laws for marriage do not apply to non-Christians. But John the Baptist boldly reproofed King Herod because of his unlawful marriage relationship (Mark 6:18). We believe that the sin of divorce and remarriage can be forgiven, nevertheless, logic tells us that if a converted thief is to stop stealing, and if a converted drunkard is to stop drinking, surely converted adulterers and adulteresses must stop committing adultery (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

5. *"Man cannot dissolve what God joins together."* This conclusion is drawn from Matthew 19:6, where Jesus said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." We wonder why God would warn man not to do something that was impossible? The warning, we believe, was intended to communicate God's intention for marriage to be a lifetime commitment between two individuals, and that divorce is never right.

6. *"It is expecting too much to ask divorced and remarried persons to separate and live single lives."* It is not up to us to decide whether God is asking too much or not. It is our choice to obey or disobey Him. Jesus indicated that some persons will chose to obey the Lord at great cost. "There are some . . . which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (Matthew 19:12). What sacrifice would be too great if it meant the difference between heaven and hell?

7. *"To break up a happy relationship would only be making a second mistake."* It is never a mistake to correct that which God calls sin in our lives. The separation that was necessary in Ezra's day was accompanied by confession, trembling, fasting, and weeping as long-standing, unlawful marriage relationships were broken, but it was the way to holiness (Ezra 10).

8. *"When there have been multiple marriages one should go back to the first partner whenever possible."* The New Testament gives no instruction for untangling mixed-up marriages, that leaves the involved persons still married while other partners are still living. Rather, to follow New Testament teaching prohibits mixed marriage entanglements. We believe that for the persons involved in divorce and remarriage to live singly, as long as more than one marriage partner is living, is a safe and consistent position.

What positive steps can we take to strengthen our position against divorce and remarriage?

In the first place, we must maintain the Bible standard of moral purity. The divorce and remarriage issue is primarily a matter of morality.

Secondly, we must maintain a healthy reserve between men and women in our circles of acquaintance. We cannot be too careful in this area. Continuing the practice of segregated seating in our worship services will help us.

Thirdly, we must insist on high courtship standards. Those who conscientiously practice a "hands off" policy lay the groundwork for an enduring marriage. We must also maintain simple, Christian weddings that are free from frivolity of the world. Homes begun and built lightly will more easily collapse when the storms of life come.

Fourthly, it is important that we relate properly to family members who have become entangled in divorce and remarriage. We dare not allow emotional pressure from this angle to subconsciously lessen our abhorrence of this evil. We must maintain communication, but we dare not have the same free social exchange with them as with other family members. As couples, they should not be permitted to be overnight guests with us, or invited to our family weddings.

Lastly, we need to develop an increasing appreciation for the typology in Christian marriage. The precious, holy union of Christ and the church is typified in Christian marriage (Ephesians 5:22-33). As Jesus satisfies the church, so we should be satisfied, and do everything we can to enhance, guard, and build our marriage relationships.

Mark Torkelson, Keymar, Hopewell Mennonite Church. MD.

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Compiled & Edited by:
J van Loon Deloraine TAS 7304

Openness

Lord of immortality, before whom angels bow and archangels veil their faces, enable me to serve Thee with reverence and godly fear. Thou who art Spirit and requirest truth in the inward parts, help me to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. Thou who art righteous, let me not harbour sin in my heart, or indulge a worldly temper, or seek satisfaction in things that perish.

I hasten towards an hour when earthly pursuits and possessions will appear vain, when it will be indifferent whether I have been rich or poor, successful or disappointed, admired or despised. But it will be of eternal moment that I have mourned for sin, hungered and thirsted after righteousness, loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity, gloried in His cross. May these objects engross my chief solicitude! Produce in me those principles and dispositions that make Thy service perfect freedom.

Expel from my mind all sinful fear and shame, so that with firmness and courage I may confess the Redeemer before men, go forth with Him hearing His reproach, be zealous with His knowledge, be filled with His wisdom, walk with His circumspection, ask counsel of Him in all things, repair to the Scriptures for His orders, stay my mind on His peace, knowing that nothing can befall me without His permission, appointment and administration.

From Puritan Prayers.