

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.

Greetings in Christ Jesus name.

This month the “SNIPPETS” has been focused on two of the main members of the “*Music Committee*” which was instrumental in the compilation and publication of the Mennonite Church Hymnal which most of you would be familiar with.

Part of the intent of *The Australian Anabaptist* is to give a sense of history of the Anabaptist movement in more recent times and to provide a conduit for those of us not brought up in Anabaptist circles, or living near those who are, to get a grasp of the various aspects of their practices of faith, their lifestyle, so that we may obtain a better understanding and appreciation of the Anabaptist way of life.

I am well aware that not all are inclined to look at history but we can learn from it – we may not agree or appreciate all the things that are expressed in the articles presented, coming as they do from a American perspective, but they do give us a background against which we can formulate our pattern of life and, much more so we should use the Bible to do that, it also is full of history! – the scriptures ofcourse take precedence. If we are serious about following the example of the Anabaptists in their Christian faith then we need to know about them and their descendants so that we may learn from them the guiding principles which were based on scriptures and how they applied them to their lives. We have no examples in Australia that we can look at and learn from.

It is my sincere desire that you may have open hearts and minds as you peruse what is written, that you will not put it to one side because of cultural perceptions, yes we do have a different culture in Australia but let us be open enough to see what others have to offer before we decide what, if anything, we can use to improve/benefit our relationship with each other, but most importantly with God.

No matter our culture, all of us should be prepared to learn from each other so that we may grow into the image of Him who made us.

God did not make racial or cultural groups per se, what He did do was: Genesis 1:27...**God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.”**

JvL.

MINISTER'S CORNER

Brother Robert J Klassen.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom... "(Psalm 111:10).

We could ask several questions to begin with: What is the fear of the Lord? How is it established? When present in the heart, what are its fruits? Why has it waned in the world, and how does this affect the church today?

Wisdom is desired in the world, and much effort is put into obtaining it. Yet, in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he says the world's wisdom is foolishness with God (1 Cor. 1:20-31). The beginning of true wisdom is the fear of God. It is said of Noah, that he, upon being warned of God about the future, moved with fear and built an ark (see Hebrews 11:7). Webster's first definition of fear is "to have reverent awe of." Hebrews 12:28 states, "... whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Moses' message in Deuteronomy 13:4 reads, "Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him."

We can conclude that the fear of God contains awe and reverence, which will follow through with obedience. However, the fear of God that is the beginning of wisdom is not a servile fear such as a slave or captive would have. Such fear causes one to cower. A parent who is mean, abusive, or alcoholic can create a cowering fear in a child that causes him to avoid the parent. God is not asking us to cower before Him but to reverence, respect, and obey Him.

The experiences of the children of Israel in the wilderness were intended to establish in their hearts awe of God and that disobedience brought retribution. When these points were firmly established, they brought willing obedience from the heart.

Today's Christian parents have a foundational responsibility to establish in their children the fear of God. To see God as creator and preserver of all things, visible and invisible, teaches awe and reverence. We believe that His all-seeing eye sees us in secret, even to the thoughts and intents of the heart. Then parents make their children aware of retribution punishment for disobedience. This they first learn from parental discipline, and it is reinforced in our Christian schools. Together with this, our children learn from

hearing and seeing that the laws of our lands are built on the same principles-awe for those in power and realizing that breaking the law will bring retribution.

The realities of these principles are expressed in the church as well. The church receives her authority from Christ, who is her Head. Therefore, there needs to be a proper awe or reverence for that relationship. We speak of it as love for the church and her doctrine. It needs to be settled in all members that when carnality affects their lives and a drift takes place, the discipline of the Church will be activated for their help. If not responded to, it becomes retribution or punishment for disobedience.

What then are the fruits of fear when established in the heart? We already noted that in Noah it worked obedience. In the case of the Ninevites who heard Jonah's message, fear of God's judgment moved them to fast and cry to God for mercy. This delivered them from retribution at the time. Acts 10 gives an account of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, who, together with his household, feared God. This fear worked in him to worship, pray, and give alms. It brought with it openness to the angel's message and, later, to Peter's message. Another way of saying it would be that Cornelius had a teachable spirit because he held God in awe and reverence.

Peter writes that the last days will have scoffers who make light of God's promises and words (2 Peter.3:3). To scoff means to mock or jeer. This would be the opposite of awe and reverence. We bemoan the fact that fear of God and His judgments have waned greatly. This may be especially true in the western world, which was at one time largely influenced by Christian thought. Many of the laws of these lands had their roots in the Law of Moses. As fewer people pay attention to the Bible, children no longer go to Sunday school, and no reference to God is allowed in the country's classrooms, the fear of God is lost. Much of the so-called wisdom of the world says there are no absolutes. This is much like the disrespectful child saying to its caregiver, "You're not my mother," and, therefore, he or she feels no obligation to obey.

One would have to place a good part of the responsibility of the waning of the fear of God on the shoulders of those who professed Christianity. Within these ranks in the past century, much of the teaching in the Bible has been minimized or neglected. This has broken down the awe and reverence that bring obedience because God is God. Many professing Christians today have a much thinner Bible than was originally written!

Due to this, the true Christian in the church is under a continuous and subtle influence that laws can be broadly interpreted (as they are by many judges). Parental laxity and permissiveness gives that same message. Things that should be black and white are blended to produce grey areas that leave much to an individual's own interpretation. This, in turn, affects how an individual hears and interprets the preaching and teaching within the church. The scoffing spirit can easily take root in the heart, saying, "It's not that serious or important"

Such a spirit soothes the conscience and quenches the Spirit. When fear wanes, people do not pay attention to warnings or teachings. Eve's disobedience in the Garden was a direct result of Satan beguiling her to not fear God. That loss of fear caused her to listen to the question, "Yea, hath God said?" (Oh, He's probably not real serious).

Today, masses of people are taking that approach to the biblical teaching of self-denial, cross bearing, obedience, judgment according to works, and eternal punishment in hell fire for the ungodly. Within the church, our struggle would not be in denying the above but in a nonchalant approach to the teaching and preaching. This expresses itself in not changing anything until threatened with discipline.

To revive the fear of God among us, ministers need to preach and teach clearly the judgments of God and the realities of hell fire (retribution). So do parents. It is not wrong to speak to children about hell, nor should parents or ministers apologize for doing so. Further, timely discipline needs to be exercised in the home and church to establish that what is said and taught is indeed truth.

We must beware of worldly thought and modern Christendom's lack of awe and reverence, for it is a deadly leaven.

SNIPPETS.

Composers/Writers of Hymns used in the Mennonite Church Hymnal
Courtesy of: Cyberhymnal.org.

Samuel Frederick Coffman
1872-1954

Born: June 11, 1872, Dale Enterprise, Rockingham County, Virginia.

Died: June 28, 1954, Vineland, Ontario, Canada.

Buried: First Mennonite Church, Vineland, Ontario, Canada.

Biographies courtesy of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

Coffman spent most of his school years in Elkhart County, Indiana, where his family had moved in 1879. He graduated from the Elkhart High School in 1890, and attended the Moody Bible Institute (1894-95 and for six months in 1897-98). From 1890-94, he worked for the Mennonite Publishing Company in Elkhart. He was converted at meetings held in Elkhart by his father, and was baptized on May 26, 1888. He was elected superintendent of the Elkhart Mennonite Sunday school on December 28, 1893. In 1894-95 he served in the Mennonite Home Mission in Chicago, Illinois. There he was ordained to the ministry in 1895; he became bishop in Vineland, Ontario, in 1903.

Coffman served widely in his denomination beyond the borders of his own congregation and conference. He was moderator of the Ontario Conference in 1931-34, and moderator of the General Conference in 1911 and 1933. He also served as secretary of the General Conference for a time. He was a member of the following General Conference committees: Music Committee from its beginning in 1911 until 1947; Peace Problems Committee 1925-49; Historical Committee from its inception in 1911, and its chairperson from 1911 until 1947; General Sunday School Committee from its beginning in 1915 until it was incorporated into the Commission for Christian Education and Young People's Work in 1937. He served for a time on the Missions Committee of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. He served on the Mennonite Board of Education from its inception in 1905 until about 1944, serving as secretary for about 20 years. He also served on the Publication Board and its Publishing Committee. He was the founder and served as principal of the Ontario Mennonite Bible School in Kitchener, 1907-47. He was editor of the Bible study department

of the Christian Monitor from the beginning of its publication in 1909 until 1953.

He served as pastor of the Moyer congregation in Vineland from 1902 until he died in 1954, and as bishop of the Niagara District from 1903. He was a charter member of the Non-resistant Relief Organization in Ontario, organized in 1918, and its secretary 1920-54. In 1918 he was appointed the special correspondent with the Canadian government regarding military service and the immigration of the Russian Mennonites. He was associated with the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (1922-44), and actively aided the immigration from Russia to Ontario (1922-25). In his earlier ministry, he was widely used in Bible conference and evangelistic work. In 1901 on a commission from the Ontario Conference, he organized a number of congregations and ordained ministers and deacons in Alberta.

During Coffman's time as hymn editor of the Music Committee, the following books appeared at Scottdale, Pennsylvania:

- *Church and Sunday School Hymnal Supplement*, 1911
- *Life Songs*, 1916 (co-editor)
- *Church Hymnal*, 1927 - *Hymn Editor*
- *Songs of Cheer for Children*, 1928
- *Life Songs No. 2*, 1938 (editor)

Hymns

1. In Thy Holy Place
2. We Bless the Name of Christ, the Lord

John David Brunk

1872-1926

Born: March 13, 1872, near Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Died: February 5, 1926, Elkhart, Indiana.

Buried: Prairie Street Cemetery, Elkhart, Indiana

A member of the Mennonite denomination, Brunk taught music at West Central Academy, Mt. Clinton, Virginia, and Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, Virginia, and headed the School of Music at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. He worked together with Samuel Coffman on the Mennonite Church Hymnal as the Music Editor. His works include:

- *Church and Sunday School Hymnal* (music editor) (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1902)
- *Educational Vocal Studies*, 1912

- *Church Hymnal 1927 – Music Editor.*

Music for Hymns in Church Hymnal:

1. Hagerstown (Great God Indulge My Humble Claim)
2. Before Jehovah's Awful Throne
3. Behold the Man
4. In Thy Holy Face
5. The Day is Past and Gone
6. Love at Home
7. The Prayer Upon The Mountain
8. Ye Are The Light Of The World
9. With Tearful Eyes I Look Around
10. I Heard The Voice of Jesus Say
11. Alone With Thee
12. We Would See Jesus.

Balanced Christian Living (Part 3)

By Bro. Lamar Garman, Denver PA.

Form Without Legalism

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). The word *form* as used in the title means "a set way of behaving according to custom or rule; formality."

The words *form*, *ceremony*, and *tradition* are not very popular to many people today. The objection is that mere adherence to outward form and tradition may become more important in the life of an individual or a church group than a vital, soul-cleansing relationship with the Lord Jesus. The possibility for such an experience exists. Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for this very thing. "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3).

However, form based on Scriptural command is essential in the life of every Christian. Jesus taught the need to observe a life of form regarding His Word: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

Also, form and uniformity of belief and practice are imperative in keeping a church group pure and in negating worldly trends. These serve as levees by holding back the storm surge of apostasy.

When form is lacking, the prevailing practice easily degenerates to a level recorded in the time of the Judges. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). Time has not changed human nature. Every Christian should desire to be a part of a spiritual brotherhood that sets standards of conduct based on the Scriptures. These standards serve as a guardrail to protect us from the precipice of a worldly lifestyle. No one feels safe driving on a dangerous mountain road that has no guardrails. Neither is it safe spiritually for a Christian to live without the form dictated by Bible commands and the direction of a Scriptural church to present-day applications.

How can we experience the blessings of a life of order and form without becoming legalistic?

A spiritual new birth experience is paramount. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

We need to love the Lord supremely. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37).

Our lives must be directed by the Holy Spirit. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

Finally, we must keep our lives clean and pure from sin with the help of other faithful, Bible believing Christians. "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

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Can we Learn From history?

Maybe my presentation will seem negative. I am conscious of that, but we must tell it how it is and learn from there. I have a great appreciation, as I look back to what our fathers faced, what they stood for, and how they laboured for the faith. In Acts 7, we have Stephen preaching to the people. In verse 9 he says, "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him." God later established him as a leader and ruler in Egypt. The people did not do this, but God. Then in verse 35-36 we read, "This Moses whom they refused, saying, who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders."

We see the theme and the message which Stephen was trying to give. They rejected Joseph, and yet God used him. Then the Scriptures say, "Moses." They rejected Moses' deliverance, yet God used Moses to deliver Israel. Then in verse 51 Stephen says, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Stephen points to the fact that God sent Jesus, and they, "resisted Jesus" "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." (verse 52) He then let them finish the story. They rejected Jesus . . . "But Jesus."

Did they learn from history? Can we learn from history? Will we repeat the failures of our fathers, or will we look back and learn from the good and learn from the bad? Most of us recognize the value of experience. If we are an employer, it means so much more to us if a man has experience. He may come to us and say, "I took a certain college course in electricians' work or carpentry or welding, and I am all ready to go." If we are any kind of employer, we realize that is no guarantee that he is a good employee. However, if someone comes in and says, "I worked down here at this manufacturing place, as a welder for twenty years." That means a lot more to us.

There is really no substitute for experience, or is there? What about in church life or in child training? Do we need to go back and experience it all over again? Is that our only choice? Some experiences take a lifetime to really see the results. However, there are some people who are inclined to find out through experience and experience only. *History is a form of borrowed experience.*

We can look back to our fathers and it is like sitting down with an old grey-haired man and asking, "How did things work out?" However, it is better than that because we can look back to a span of not only seventy-five years of experience but hundreds of years of experience. We can learn from the experiences of the past.

Five main causes in our Anabaptist heritage

As I consider some of the conflicts, it is disappointing. Yet, in many things, we have shared the same vision, goals, and purpose. Recently, I was asked to preach a message in New York on "A Heritage Worth Preserving." As I studied into it and realized all the different aspects that are a part of our heritage, whether it would be church authority, our view of the Bible authority, discipline, separation of church and state, separation on nonconformity, or many different points that we agree on as plain people with an Anabaptist heritage. It seems that as I consider the total package of points of conflict, there are about five things that stand out to me. I would like to consider those and see what we can learn from them.

1) What constitutes spirituality?

This has been a big question that has faced us in generations past, and is facing us in the present generation. We believe that God has created us. We believe that we are accountable to God because we are part of His creation and someday we must answer to Him. Man has long aspired to God's approval. If we have come to the place where we do not care about God's approval that is a sad condition to be in.

Our fathers were concerned about God's approval. - Am I walking in truth? That is what much of it was about.

What must I do to be saved? This is an old question from a man who came to Jesus. Anabaptists have struggled with this question of what constitutes spirituality. One thing I would like to notice and

conclude is that in history, there is no one man whom I can look back to and say that he was the perfect model, or a man whom we could look up to, whether it would be Menno Simons or whoever, except for Jesus Christ. I can point to Jesus Christ but men are fallible, finite, and short sighted.

Originally, the Anabaptist vision of what constitutes spirituality was, that spirituality begins with a regeneration and a change of heart. Our heart and desires must be changed. God has to get in there in some miraculous way, and the Holy Spirit must change our heart so that we no longer love the old things of the world.

They also believed that true spirituality was followed by a life of radical discipleship. Because of this change we no longer follow the sports, or take pleasure in earthly things but we have a heavenly mind. That was the original vision. That was sound, Biblical, and apostolic. This is a foundation worth building on. At the same time, the Roman Catholics and the Reformed churches made much over correct doctrine. They had their meetings and they studied out doctrine, theology and correct doctrine, and theology. Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz and those responded, "It is more than theology. It is more than doctrine. It is a life. It is a change of heart."

The Catholics and the Reformed leaders gave little attention to the change of heart and discipleship. They continued baptizing infants and including everyone in the membership. They continued with the priests and the preachers living in sin. They were building on their correct doctrine.

Looking back to our Anabaptist history, we see a line coming through of those who believed in a balance of the regenerated heart, a change of the inside, and also a proper emphasis on proper discipleship, living the outside as well. We also see as we look at this history that there were times where our forefathers went off on a limb. Some emphasized (let us say) "Discipleship, discipleship, discipleship," in response to another group which was preaching, "The inner change, the inner change, the inner change." Then there were other groups who said, "It is not all only plain clothes and non-resistance, there must be some life here." Therefore they preached the inner change and the heart is all that matters.

On one extreme, we have conservative groups making cold, mechanical lifeless formality the essence of spirituality - "If we only live right, and follow exactly the way the Scripture teaches it." That was the essence of their spirituality. Another extreme says that spirituality is a heart change and that is all that really matters. If the heart is changed, there is nothing else that matters. These groups strive for some experience to confirm their spirituality, whether some vision, dream, moving, or feeling that "I am spiritual." I wrote a bit of a form, which indicates, on different church issues, how The Formalist, The Pious, and The Pietistic look at those various aspects of doctrinal and church issues. (See chart on page 15)

One of the first things that those who look at the heart look for is a crisis conversion experience. They emphasize that if we cannot point to a minute, day, and an hour when we were converted, or had some dramatic conversion experience, then we were not converted. That was their emphasis.

The conservatives, on the other hand, tended to call this the "Methodist spirit," because that is what the Methodist's taught in the 1700's. Therefore, they resisted it. A goodly number of Mennonites and Amish were lost to those great camp revivals which emphasized the inner change. Martin Boehm was one of those. He was a man whose testimony was that he was a Mennonite minister. He was plowing one day and as he went around the field, every round he made with the horse and plow, it kept pounding on him, "You are lost. You are lost." He fell down there in the furrow and cried out to God, "Save me, I am a sinner." He experienced a dramatic conversion experience there.

However, he went on to leave the Mennonite faith. In one of the meetings in his home, history says, "The people fell about the house as dead." Their cries might be heard afar off. And it became very much of an emotional "Pentecostal" thing. Many times, immorality was the result of those emotional movements. It was nothing but a feeling based thing. It was a fleshly thing. Yet, I would say, as far as Martin Boehm's experience, how many of us could relate to the struggle of striving against giving up and then coming to that place of total surrender and God changing our lives. Is that not a part of the

conversion experience?

What we want to notice is that we are all subject to being caught up in extremes in straying from the centre of the road. John Oberholtzer was another man who made it a heart matter. He threw plain clothes and a number of these things that were Mennonite values out the door. This lopsided spirituality (if I can call it that) was often short-lived and followed by many divisions. However, the cold formal, lifeless groups were prime candidates for warm heart-felt Pietism. It is not only in our day, or the late 1900's that the church has faced this. It is many centuries old. The Church has faced this challenge of the heart-felt faith and how to relate to it and what constitutes spirituality.

To the formalist, the extremes of formalism of the New Birth meant a change of clothes, but really all we had left was a wolf in sheep's clothing. What is the lesson? True spirituality begins with a heart transformation that changes our attitudes, desires, goals, and interests, and produces a life of obedience and radical discipleship. This is the centre of the road. That is where we need to be. We can look back to some of these divisions and so on, where there were extremes and we do not want to follow in that path.

Remember that we need to cultivate a balance. How do we cultivate a balance when we are caught in an extreme and want to bring about a balance? We know that there is the extreme we are involved in, and we think that we are off the centre of the road - on some limb - and we want to be balanced in the centre of the road. The way to relate to that is not to go over to the other side and preach the other extreme, or you will create another reaction, and another imbalance.

The way to cultivate a balance is by teaching the "all things." We must teach the sound and true. I would say, in all reverence and respect for these men, that Jacob Amman, John Herr, Jacob Stauffer, Jonas Martin, are examples of men who reacted. Part of the reason I conclude that is because there were some strong attitudes that came through at the start of those movements. Our feelings and attitudes often keep us from seeing the real issues and bring about an imbalance and a reaction.

Formalist

Pious

Pietist

New Birth

Joining Church
Dressing Plain

— Brokenness
—Penitence
—Yielding Self to
Christ and Church

Experience

Assurance

Church
Member

—Word
—Church
—Inner Witness

Inner Witness
and
Experience

**Lord's
Leading**

Church

—Word
—Church
—Spirit

Spirit

Authority

Church

—Word
—Church
—Spirit

Me
Bible

**Church
Government**

Discipline,
Standards

—Personal and
Group Convictions
— Discipline

Democratic

Devotional

Study
Theology

—Study Word
—Prayer
—Meditation

Prayer

**Church
Services**

Learn Doctrine
and Creed

—Learning Truth
—Conviction
—Fellowship
—Inspiration

— Fellowship
—Inspiration

Mission

Not
Necessary

—Leading our
Families and
Communities to
Discipleship

— Winning
Souls

Evaluation

Cold
Mechanical

—Warm
—Attractive
—Solid & Stable
—Consistent
—Fruitful

—Exciting
—Emotional
—Unpredictable
—Unstable
—Drifting

These men were trying to defend discipleship. They saw the church was neglecting discipleship, and they tried to defend discipleship but were weak on the change of heart. Repeatedly these Old Order groups are people who are prime candidates for Pietism, Methodist type movements, or other movements that have appeared and emphasized the warm heart-felt faith. Today we have become very verbal with our faith, have we not? We can explain grace. We can explain forgiveness. We can explain the atonement. We have become very verbal with our faith. As I look back to history, I wonder how our fathers passed on the faith, no more verbal than they were. How did they pass on the faith?

I preached a message last Sunday on "Example." There is something even more important than a verbal faith and that is a visible faith. Much of our heritage was passed down, not necessarily with words and a verbal faith, verbal expressions, but through a visible faith. As I look back to my father, my grandfather, and so on, I have pictures and scenes that I can relate to as far as family worship and facing different incidents. Finally the greatest way that we will pass on the faith is through the visible. We know in teaching how important visible aids are.

I would like to challenge us: will our children look back and will they have visual aids to preserving the faith, or will it be all verbal, where we have explained, taught, told, over and over, and read? We told them to read but they can go on through life and not appreciate it at all because they have visual things that they are thinking of, "Yeah, he taught it, but did he live it?" "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matthew 7:20)

2) *The next one I would like to look at is separation.*

Separation has both a positive and a negative aspect. On the positive side we believe that the Scripture teaches separation unto God. On the negative side is separation from the world. Those are two integral parts of separation. If we emphasize the one, at the expense of the other, we will become imbalanced. Both are important. I would like to think of one aspect of separation unto God as we think of our heritage. Separation unto God involves not only my personal relationship with God but also my concept and my relationship to His

bride, the Church of Jesus Christ. That is a part of the separation unto God.

I would like to focus briefly on this concept of the Church. There was a man in my office a number of years ago. He was a travelling salesman and would stop in frequently. He liked to discuss church matters and spiritual matters. He told me one day, "You know, with your people, your life is centered around the church. For us," (he was from a Protestant setting) "church is something we do on Sunday." I did a lot of thinking on that. It is a part of our heritage that the church is the centre of our lives.

What is our concept of the Church? What does the Church mean to us? We could turn to Ephesians 4:11-12, where it says, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

I have the confidence with our people that, as fathers and mothers, if for some reason we were called to move to some Western state, or had to move elsewhere for whatever reason, one of the first things that we would want to know is, is there a church there? What kind of church is there?

Why is this? Why are we concerned? It is because of our concept of the Church. We believe it is part of our heritage. We believe that the church is an integral part of preserving the faith. If I move to Wyoming (yes, I might have some big government job and make \$100,000 a year) but my children are not in a godly church, and a godly school they will lose out. We believe that do we not? Yes, it is because of our concept of the church.

Our lives, as an Anabaptist people, are deeply invested in what I will call the Christian community - the church. We believe that this community is important to our spiritual survival, do we not? Or, are we of the persuasion that it is unimportant, and that we do not need the Church, or that we can go out on our own and have our relationship with God. We call this Christian community, the brotherhood. We can go back to ages past. Our fathers talked about the brethren. The brethren, it is our concept of the church. The purity of this community has been a burden of our fathers down through the years.

Men like Jacob Stauffer, John Herr and different men were concerned about the purity of the church. There were bad business dealings. In Jacob Amman's situation there was a woman in Hans Reist's congregation who told a lie and then she told more lies to cover up that lie. Hans Reist was not addressing that, and so history goes.

We need to be concerned about purity in this church body. Yes, we believe that sin must go and righteousness must be cultivated.

We make ourselves accountable to the Christian community. We also take accountability for this Christian community. Probably making ourselves accountable to this Christian community is more difficult, and gives our flesh more struggle than taking accountability for it. That is the way the flesh works. It is quite easy for us to take accountability for what my brother is doing, "Brother, you are going off track here," but what about whenever he comes and he points out something in my life? We know this is a part of this Christian community to maintain spirituality and the faith in this Christian community.

Pietism on the other hand, beginning with European Protestantism has typically played down the role of church. It emphasizes our personal relationship with God. We do not want to under emphasize that. We hear about walking with God, and I want to emphasize that. However, we need to understand that the Church is equally as important.

The Church is an integral part in maintaining that walk with God, and the Church is established for that purpose. There is a direct relationship between our concept of the Church and our separation from the world. They go hand in hand. If we lose our appreciation for the Church, we also lose our appreciation for the doctrine of separation and staying away from the wrong crowd.

Now, I would like to think of the other aspect of separation. Most professing Christians would profess to believe in separation. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." (2 Corinthians 6:17) We profess to believe in separation, but the confusion comes with how far do I separate myself from the ungodly world that we are called to live in? One thing I have noticed, it seems like we are much more inclined to

see how close we can get, rather than how far we can stay away. This is typical, is it not? "Do we have to be any more different than this?" There is the desire to blend with the ungodly society.

The Old Testament church was warned continually to beware not to go the way of the heathen. She was warned about her proximity to the heathen about them. Are we exempt in this day of grace from that concern? Historically this barrier between the church and the world has played an important role in the survival of Anabaptist communities. We can look through history and see where men decided that the barrier was too high and unimportant and they lowered it, or they totally removed it. We can see where they disregarded and did not appreciate that barrier between the Church and the world, and the church lost out and blended right in with the world. The General Conference Mennonites are an example of that. The Amish Mennonites of the late 1800's, were ones that decided that it was old dead tradition, and those barriers were not necessary. In the 1950's, many of the progressive groups felt that separation and non-conformity were a hindrance to the Gospel. They said, "We need to be more like the world to win the world."

In recent years, the Conference Mennonites, the Conservative Conference, the Brethren in Christ, the Church of the Brethren, were a people who believed strongly in a substantial barrier between the Church and the world. However, beginning in the 1950's and the 1960's, many of these groups turned their back on that and today they are faced with all kinds of things, including divorce and remarriage and issues that grieve our hearts.

Yes, they dropped their nonconformity and cultural separation thinking it hindered evangelism. Another thing I have noticed is that their numbers have actually dwindled. I realize that we can look at the church statistics and they make a lot over membership in this state and that state, in this constituency and that constituency, but I have discovered, living in the midst of one of those communities, that those numbers are like membership roles. It does not tell us what the exact church attendance is, nor commitment to daily church life. Those numbers can be deceiving. Actually, it is dwindling. I could share more on that but I will not take time for that.

Uniformity has been especially hard hit, as far as uniformity being an aid. (I share this as my view of history). If you disagree with it, I am not sure what to tell you - study history, study the Scriptures, but show me a group that has maintained the principle without a form and without a pattern. Somehow that barrier between the church and the world must be substantial. Historically, those churches who have not maintained it have invariably lost out.

Uniformity has proven to be a valuable community bond as well as a substantial barrier. Think about that. Study it out. I realize it is a question sometimes, how does that uniformity come about. Is it something that happens as a result of following other Scriptural principles? Is it something that we make happen? I believe that each generation is responsible for searching that out and to understand it clearly. However, somehow, I must conclude from history, that churches which have failed in a clear barrier between the church and the world - a clear line of demarcation between the church and the world - have lost out on the faith.

3) *The next point is administration.*

This is an issue. Historically plain people have been very concerned about preserving the faith. We have already pointed that out. They want to preserve the faith, but the question is how. How do we preserve the faith? How do we get our young people to embrace the faith that we so treasure? How do we accomplish that? Down through the centuries the issue has been, "how do we accomplish it?" This is where the differences are found, not in what we are trying to accomplish. Many of our fathers in the past agreed on what we want as an end product. We want young people who love the Lord, who embrace the faith of their fathers and who will go to the stake and give their lives for their faith. We agree on the end product, but the question is "How to get there?" We are at a place in history where we can look back on a lot of efforts. Therefore, in a sense we are sort of without excuse.

The Amish Mennonite division to me is a clear illustration on the subject of administration. One leader thinks it should be done one way and there are others who think that it needs to be done another way. Then there are others who never realized that it has been tried

in centuries past. Amman was a strong proponent of discipline. His idea was that issues needed addressing - you need to excommunicate - you need to shun - strong church discipline. To help us understand and see this more clearly, these same differences can happen between homes. Some homes are strong proponents of discipline. The father is a strong disciplinarian and that is the way that he is trying to accomplish it in the home. As we say, he will crack the whip, "No you will not. Yes, you will." The Mennonites on the other hand were promoters of teaching. The way to get young people where we want them is to teach them, and teach them, and indoctrinate them, so that they have personal convictions.

Teaching and discipline are both important parts of administration.

If leaders expect to do everything across the pulpit and never venture beyond the pulpit - never get involved in discipline - they will be disappointed at the level of conviction that develops in the congregation. However, if all the leaders are doing is standing back there in the audience, using discipline and never standing behind the pulpit teaching, they will be disappointed as well. Those are some of the extremes that we have seen.

As we follow that through, I would like for us to notice that thought and mentality coming down through the years. I was raised in the Conference Mennonite setting, and have been a member of the Beachy Amish, and Amish Mennonite churches. I have worked closely with the Amish, and I have made some of these observations. The Mennonites promoted education. In the early days of this country, (America) they had *The Martyr's Mirror* printed. There was also John F. Funk who left Chicago and his association with D. L. Moody feeling pressed to start the Mennonite Publishing Company. "We need to teach the people." I think that is what Hans Reist was trying to say.

The Mennonites endorsed Sunday Schools, Revival Meetings, Evening Meetings, and were strong on publication. On the weak side, they were weak on discipline. Mennonites suffered from innovators and innovations. I give these thoughts as generalizations. There were men who rose up over the years and we can see some of these things in the Amish setting too. There were men like John Oberholtzer (who

started the General Conference Mennonites) John Funk, and Harold Bender. Actually, Harold Bender was raised in the Amish setting. I think Garrett County, Maryland was his roots. They found that the Mennonite "camp" was relatively easy to penetrate with their innovations and ideas, and the Mennonite church suffered because of that.

The Mennonite church was looser with their housekeeping. That is what Jacob Amman noticed. That is what Jacob Stauffer noticed. John Herr and others were concerned about this loose housekeeping. We will also notice that in the Mennonite settings, instead of a resident bishop, they have a bishop over a number of churches. This is all part of the same thing - the concept of administration.

As we look at the Amish, my observation is that they majored in rules. Rules were an important part in their church administration. I noticed in my early days of association with those of Amish background (please excuse me, I do not mean to step on anyone's toes) what I call the "allowed to" mentality. This is where members say, "What are we allowed to do here? Is this allowed? Is that allowed?" I soon gathered that this was, as far as rules and standards and so forth, a big issue. It was a more major issue than what I was used to in my upbringing.

The Amish also stressed minimal education. They do not take more education than what is necessary or required by law. I think a part of that was because they saw some of the dangers and some of the things that happened with those who were educated. They also rejected many forms of education such as the Sunday School, even to the point of discouraging Bible reading in some settings. There is also a strong emphasis on resident bishops, and a strong use of excommunication and the ban. They were strict housekeepers but were weak on teaching personal convictions with the "allowed to," mentality.

As we study history, ex-Amish, when out from under the strong rule, are very vulnerable. If they have not been taught, or instructed, they are very vulnerable to various movements and teaching, because the training and teaching have been lacking. They can relate to rules but as far as understanding the principles, they are lacking. Because of the Mennonites' loose housekeeping, men arose crying for

stronger discipline. This is why we see in the Mennonite setting a number of men rose and said, "There needs to be stronger discipline." Things were happening in the church that needed to be addressed.

Again, I would like to say that both are important. We need to teach and we need to explain but finally that teaching needs to be backed up with some discipline and some housekeeping.

I hope that I have given that in a balanced way. I desire to present this in a manner where neither group is the winner, and yet all of us together (as we bring the two viewpoints together) are the winners. No matter what our background is, we have things to learn. Let us not go off on some extreme. We see people, and we look and see some of the faults of their background and say, "That was all dead traditionalism." Then we say, "We do not want to have anything to do with that, and we will throw all the rules out," and they throw the baby out with the bathwater, as the saying goes.

Yes, discipline is important. I would say historically that those who have erred in the way of discipline have more to show for today, than those who erred in the way of liberalism. Many liberal and Protestant settings today are getting their numbers from settings that were under strong discipline. Certainly, there are benefits in a disciplined home, and in a disciplined church.

4) Another point of contention is the matter of change.

We value our heritage. We appreciate what has been taught to us and the things that have come our way, especially as we get older. As I get older, I want my children to have the same heritage that I have, but change has been a point of contention. Some of us naturally hate change. We like to get into a routine with our work. We like to stick with the same old job and we hate change. There are others of us who are adventuresome and enjoy change. We like a change of scenery, or a change of setting. Therefore, we have that temperament makeup as part of our congregations which we must work with.

However, as far as change, some want to freeze our lifestyle, freeze our means and methods of doing things, just like it is today. We appreciate it, we love it and we want to freeze it. There are some things where we can do that, but there are other things where that is very

difficult to do. I work with some Amish and excuse me for being this plain, but I want to teach a principle here. There is a man whom I work with and have a high appreciation for. I appreciate his spirituality and his understanding. However, in this particular community, they like to be farmers. I observed him taking care of a couple of acres of wheat, barley, or small grain some time ago. They spent days at that in threshing, and finished with a few bags of grain. Across the hill there is a man with a big brand new John Deere combine who can come in and in only a couple of minutes have it all cleaned up.

We teach that there is some value in hard work. However, we need to stop and think about that small pile of grain, and how many dollars he actually received from that, and what the return was on that. The bottom line is that he has another job that pays well which subsidizes that project. We see that commodity prices and everything, are geared to the means and the methods of producing those commodities.

Therefore, we need to change to a certain extent to go along with some of those things. Maybe the 1700's were a better time to live, but we need to find ways to survive in our day. Therefore, some change is necessary.

I do not want you to think that I criticize those who are trying to hold on and not make changes. The Old Order divisions in the late 1800's were a resistance to change, and rightly so. The world about them was fast changing. America was industrializing, it was the age of reason, and Sunday School, evangelism, and many such things were coming into the American colonies. The Mennonites saw that they would lose those old Biblical principles. Therefore, there was a resistance to change, and I say rightly so, because there was a concern for some of the changes and there was also a concern for not making changes. Finally some realized that the German language, the church meeting once every four weeks, and some of those things were not meeting the needs of the young people. Many young people were losing out on the faith because of it. John Funk's vision was that we need to teach and preach. He felt it was time to make some changes.

There were those in the middle of the road who understood the real principles and the issues at stake. We must understand the difference between a principle and application. We need to freeze principles and we need to understand them, but we also need to understand how that applications are either contributing to the principles or hindering them. A principle never changes but applications may change to better serve the principle.

Progressives enjoy the cutting edge, but that has its risks. I am sure there are personalities who enjoy being on the cutting edge or out front. When there is something new, whether some new method or invention, they are the first ones to go and buy this electronic gadget that is supposed to make more money and save more time. We have those people among us. However, let us be careful of change.

The Sunday School Movement as an example of differences.

Progressives in the Sunday School movement accepted this Protestant innovation "hook, line and sinker." They felt, "It is a good thing, it is spiritual. It will help our youth." They took it and suffered the consequence of turning out to be Protestants with their picnics, games, political themes and war. Moderates understood the principle of teaching and pursued that. What was really the issue in this? The issue was that our young people need to be taught and need to understand. We need to teach them the Scriptures. Therefore, in some settings, they dropped the German because they realized that the young people did not understand German, and they taught in English, so that they could be taught the Scriptures.

How do we make changes? We must teach clearly the Bible principles. I think this is the foundation on which to make changes. If a proposed change comes up in our churches, are we looking at the principles involved, so that we can make an intelligent change? I have seen some churches, whom I say, have a strong braking system. Their administration is to hold the brakes, let it slip a little, hold the brakes, let it slip a little ... well, that is better than being on the cutting edge, and simply taking everything in. However, is that sufficient? We are still making changes. We are staying fifteen or twenty years behind, and in maybe some things we are. There is a point in not being on the cutting edge, but I would like to emphasize the im-

portance of teaching principles by which our people can make applications and we can help them to make applications, not only through teaching, but also through discipline and church standards such that proper applications can be made to Scriptural principles.

A braking system is not sufficient. Will we start accepting contemporary music because it has been around for a while? Those are some of the questions that we face. We must understand the principle. It is a principle of entertainment.

5) *Another cause of division and conflict is offenses.*

I would like to look at Hebrews 12:14-15, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." As humans, we are finite. This reminds me of the story of the six blind men who went to observe an elephant as best as blind men could. One put his arms around the elephant's leg and said "The elephant is like a tree." Another held the tail and said, "The elephant is like a rope." They all had their different concept of what the elephant was like. This is where we are as human beings. There is no one who has the whole story. This is why the Christian community is so important, because to get a proper picture of the elephant, we need all six inputs. We need the total group.

In disagreements, we can lose sight of the real issues. We need each other. The brother who is concerned about these innovations is not to be ignored. The brother who thinks it is time for a change is not to be ignored either. It does not say that we must go one way or another, nor does it say that the middle (the half way between the two) is the right way either. We need to learn to find a balance in the Christian brotherhood, in the Christian community that God has designed, the Church, such that we might benefit from each other, and not go off in extremes.

Our emotions can take over in disagreement and we can feel, "He never appreciates something I say." Thus, attitudes get involved and the real issues are lost sight of, and it comes down to an attitude thing. Our respect or lack of respect for our brethren, has great returns. I cannot emphasize that enough. John F. Funk, had a vision for

teaching and for Sunday School. In the same churches in the Yellow Creek district in Northern Indiana, Jacob Wisler was bishop and resisted Sunday Schools. He did not appreciate the innovations. John F. Funk had the publishing company, and was selling his idea. He was very instrumental in having Jacob Wisler silenced and put out of the leadership. In his place, John Funk was ordained bishop.

However, within ten years of his own bishop ordination, John Funk was silenced, because more progressives thought that he was too strict, too tough, and too rough - ten years after he had rejected Wisler that way. What we sow we will reap. This includes our respect. Later, because John Funk was disciplined, his own daughters, his own son-in-law left the Mennonite church. His grandsons became Episcopal priests. Yet, John Funk was one of the most visible and influential men in Mennonite history.

I heard recently of a Conservative Mennonite couple who were staying in a Beachy Amish home. In the morning they came down for breakfast and this young Beachy Amish boy was making fun of their Amish heritage as well as ridiculing their means and methods of farming and so on. I am not sure what all he was doing, but this grieved this Conservative Mennonite couple because the night before (their bedroom was next to his) they heard a radio over there playing. We can disrespect our backgrounds and heritage and we can fail to respect our forefathers, whether Old Order or whomever, but we will pay a high price for this.

We need to have respect and reverence even for those whom we feel were overly concerned sometimes. Wrong attitudes lay a foundation for reaction. How many people have walked away from the values of their past and said, "I do not want to have anything to do with it," and went away with anger, threw everything out, lost everything, and suffered miserably with their own children. They reacted and they went to the other extreme. We are all subject to that. Our emotions and feelings can get involved and we can become bitter. We might say, "I am getting out of here. I do not want anything to do with it, and there is no good in it." May God help us. These extremes are very unhealthy for the church, when one extreme brings about another, and we go that course.

In closing, will our children enjoy the same heritage that we have? We can look at the failures of our fathers, and can criticize them. As I look back to our fathers, I see a people who were very concerned about preserving the faith. They realized that preserving the faith meant preserving the community. There were times where maybe the only thing that was passed along was the fear of God, but we know that is foundational to everything else. I say, "praise the Lord for a godly heritage." I am concerned about my generation. I am concerned that I am not the breach in that godly heritage.

From a message by L.Diller, Summersville Mennonite Church KY.

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“God wants to save us even more than we want to save ourselves.”

Milo Zehr.

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