

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.

*Where you are today
is the result of choices you made yesterday
Where you will be tomorrow
will be the result of your decisions today.*

* * * * *

The above quotation was noted at the end of documentation relating to patient information for major surgery. It struck me rather forcefully that that is how my life has progressed and upon reflection you may come to the same conclusion about your life.

Wherever any of us are today, physically or spiritually, is indeed due to yesterday's choices. Some choices we would rather not have made, some we would have desired to make much earlier in life and I especially think of choices pertaining to following the scriptures.

Any of us may still be struggling with choices in respect of God's requirements for holiness, without which none of us will see Him nor enjoy His presence. The quotation is also an encouragement in that what we decide today will affect our tomorrow or to put it in a scriptural context – our eternal destination. The choice is ours – heaven or hell. You and only you can decide that for yourself. To make the right decision on any subject we need the correct information and in the Scriptures we will find all the information we need to make that decision regarding heaven or hell.

The Scripture gives us the facts, the guidelines, it is the blueprint for life in this earthen vessel so that we can make it meet for the Master's use, and gain that crown of righteousness that is awaiting all followers of Christ Jesus.

Allow me to encourage each of you, as I have been encouraged by others, to read the Scriptures daily, meditate upon them and live them. It will bring the sure reward of heaven forever in the presence of our Lord.

Possession of facts is knowledge, the use of them is wisdom,

The choice is yours, choose wisely, choose life in Christ! JvL.

BEATITUDES FOR MOTHERS

Blessed is the mother who is poor in spirit: who ever feels the need of God each day, is ready to forget herself and her ambitions enough to listen to her husband and children and to humbly fill their needs.

Blessed is the mother who mourns, who feels the aches, the burdens, the sorrows, and trials of her family and others; who can sympathize and listen and share in consolation and counsel, and shows she really cares; who lends a helping hand and is willing to receive help and direction in her own times of need.

Blessed is the mother who is meek: who recognizes her own insufficiency; who realizes and lives the life of self-denial; who can and does admit and confess her weaknesses and faults to her family and others.

Blessed is the mother who hungers and thirsts after righteousness: who feels the need to feast on God's Word and spiritual food, whether it be in reading, attending church, in fellowship with fellow Christians; who finds a time to read His Word and to pray and meditate daily; who, by teaching and example, instils this into her family.

Blessed is the mother who is merciful, who realizes her own weaknesses and is, therefore, ready to forgive her children's failings throughout the necessary correction, admonishment, or discipline; who is patiently remembering that they are children and that they need much patient reminding; who is also an example in forgiving her husband and those with whom she is in contact; who is not too ready to judge those around her or to spread gossip and is concerned about their welfare.

Blessed is the mother who is a peacemaker: who is fair and just with her children; who is careful not to vent her own frustrations on her children, thereby abusing them verbally or physically; who tries to teach them positive attitudes in their relationships, rather than allowing feelings of hurt, offence, bitterness; who also realizes that her children are not always right, that their story may be biased, that she needs to take all sides into consideration; who also is careful to maintain peaceful relations with her husband, keeping a united decision, and reserving disunity to their private consultations.

Blessed is the mother who is pure in heart: who often feels the need of cleansing, of self-denial, of the guidance and wisdom and direction from God, of the Holy Spirit's Presence.

Blessed is the mother who is persecuted for righteousness' sake: who is humbly willing to stand for her convictions in spite of peer pressure or those who may scoff behind her back; who doesn't let gossip discourage her; who also implants in her children conviction and the confidence to stand for the right, to also be considerate of others' opinions and thinking, so that we ourselves would not be persecutors.

Blessed are you, mothers, for yours is the kingdom of heaven; for you shall be comforted; for you shall inherit the earth; for you shall be filled; for you shall obtain mercy; for you shall see God; for you shall be called a child of God; for great is your reward in heaven.

*Sister Mary Esther Unruh.
From "The Messenger of Truth" Used by permission.*

The love of a wife to her husband may begin from the supply of her necessities, but afterwards she may love him also for the sweetness of his person; so the soul first loves Christ for salvation but when she is brought to Him and finds what sweetness there is in Him then she loves Him for Himself.

MINISTER'S CORNER.*Bro. Gladwin Koehn.***Keep The Feast.**

The apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians to "keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8). This verse, no doubt, pertains to the communion ordinance, but to apply it more broadly does no violence to the truth. Let us think here of the "feast" provided in the grace of Christ for the Christian walk of life.

It is obvious that the great Apostle is invoking in the believers' minds their knowledge of the Passover in Egypt. As the day of the Israelites' departure from Egypt drew near, every home was to do away with all leaven (Exodus 12:15 &19). They were to take only unleavened dough out of the land (v. 39). This was the commencement of the feast of unleavened bread, "for in this selfsame day," the Lord said, "have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever" (Exodus 12:17).

Thus, God established a perpetual witness to the fact that they made a clean break with Egypt when they went out that memorable night. This was to be commemorated every year "for ever."

We understand God's promise to David that his throne would be established "for ever" (2 Samuel 7:16) as being fulfilled in Christ Jesus. It carried over into the New Testament era and found its true fulfillment under grace. Likewise, the commission to the Israelites to eat the Passover with unleavened bread and keep the feast of unleavened bread "for ever" carries into the gospel age in a spiritual sense. It symbolizes the walk of life undefiled by the old flesh and the world.

The setting of the Apostle's urging to "keep the feast" with "unleavened bread" needs to be considered. The Corinthian church was tolerating a case of gross immorality among them. They apparently were thinking that the grace of God covered such a thing, and they gloried in that. It is unlikely they were glorying in the immorality but in a mistaken notion about grace in relation to sin. But Paul told them, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Corinthians 5:6). They were keeping the "feast" of the grace in Christ Jesus with the old

leaven, not with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Leavened bread and grace have no affinity.

When one looks at Christendom today, is not the spirit of the mistaken Corinthian believers in evidence on every hand? This is not spoken solely of tolerating immorality but in a broader sense of a pervasive, deceptive concept of grace that effects little purging of the old leaven. Oh beloved people of God, beware!

The Lord calls whosoever will to a feast, saying, "Come; for all things are now ready" (Luke 14:17). How can our limited minds take in the extent of that which God provides for His people (2 Peter 1:3)? In Christ Jesus, and by Him, a table that is all sufficient is set for the believers. David knew that feast table and said that even when his enemies assailed him it was set for him (Psalm 23). Not only is there great quantity of food but the variety is meet for every situation in life. There is grace for every trial through His "exceeding great and precious promises." Eating at this table, we are made "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

Jesus taught us that to serve Him is our duty, because we are blood-bought servants. And when we come in from "the field" and are hot and dusty, He is entirely within bounds to ask us to gird ourselves and serve Him a meal before we eat. Having done all this, we should yet say, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). But in another sense, in the feast of grace, Christ is serving our table, and He does not serve sparingly. In a foretaste of the great eternal feast after the Judgment, Christ even now girds Himself, makes us sit down, and comes forth to serve us (Luke 12:37). Christ puts unleavened bread on the table.

Eating at the Lord's Table will ensure a vibrant Christian life. One wonders why some experience leanness of soul, like David's son, Amnon, did. He was asked, "Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day?" (2 Samuel 13:4). Paul would say to us, "Keep the feast. There is plenty of provision."

As the Israelites came clean out of Egypt, symbolized by having destroyed the old leaven, so true repentant believers come clean out of the world. That is, the spirits, attitudes, lusts, and all the "rudiments of the world" (Colossians 2:8) must be left behind. This old leaven includes what the world likes and values highly, its accent, and its way of reasoning. All

this is the old leaven and must be left behind. Sometimes we may loathe the unleavened bread of the pure gospel like the Israelites despised the manna, which was miraculously provided for them (Numbers 21:5). Too many want to come to the Lord's Table with their own bread, and it is always leavened bread. The only true bread of the feast is "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The people of God are who they are by the grace of God, not by their merit. The grace of God produces the identity of "a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Let us keep the feast with unleavened bread, having purged out the old leaven of the world, and thus exalt His grace.

ARE YOU MAKING THE WAY ATTRACTIVE?

JESUS said: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life - John 14:6a

It is a common fact that all companionship is transforming, that we will soon bear the image of the person in whose company we continually are.

Peter was transformed from one who cursed and denied his Master to a preacher of the risen Christ. He was courteous in his talk and filled with the Holy Ghost. His transformation was ascribed to his companionship with Jesus. Knowing the positive influence of companionship, it becomes a matter of great concern what kind of companion we are to others. It is the opinion of some that the Christian's influence is much stronger than that of the worldling.

In conversing with people, one soon is face to face with his companions. They may be other people or books or things, but whatever they are, they have made a deep impression. In meeting a Christian, it can soon be detected how much praying, Bible reading, and Christian fellowship has been enjoyed during the past days. Those whose companion has been the Lord are hungering and thirsting for righteousness and are ready to assist in every good work. Are you making The Way attractive by the companionship you provide?

Paul wrote to the Philippians a good recommendation for all Christians, "that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15).

Jesus was the light of the world, and the darkness could not overcome it. In this crooked and perverse generation, Christians should shine with such a steady and brilliant light that the darkness can never forget it. The sun, moon, and stars, put in place by an Almighty God, are faithful and dependable. Our earthly timetable is arranged by the dependability of these lights. Are you as a Christian providing a dependable light to those in spiritual darkness, thus making *The Way* attractive?

Perhaps the best way to promote good relationships with those around us is to be humble. Humility draws hearts together. We must keep in mind our own great need of God's forgiveness and help in our daily lives. Anyone enjoys the company of a humble person. He may have an opinion but does not push it too far. Feelings of pride or superiority drive wedges between individuals, but humility will help us bring a thought or idea on a subject and then leave it for others to prove. Submitting to others is very difficult for the flesh, but having a proper estimation of ourselves and our weaknesses will make it much easier. Are we making *The Way* attractive by showing humility and submission?

How do we react when we see another person do a job well? Love will cause us to rejoice with them. A sincere compliment would be a proper response. As we practice giving sincere compliments more often, it will become easier and will make *The Christian Way* attractive to those who receive those compliments.

Do we really listen when someone talks to us? Or are we only hearing the words they speak without paying attention to the heart-feelings of the other person. Sometimes we are too quick to judge another person. We should try to see things from the other person's point of view. Are we making *The Way* attractive by being good listeners and promoting up-building, positive friendships?

Love born in the heart will bear fruit in our lives. Some of this fruit will be compassion, courtesy, and kindness. It is good to consider whether we care enough about another person's feelings. Sometimes the easy way is to stay aloof and not become involved in the situation. True Christian love will cause me to lay aside my own work and go help someone else in need.

It will, at times, send us to our prayer closets to pray on behalf of someone else.

We would be surprised how little time is used and how much encouragement a cheery "Good morning!" can give. The same is true of a pleasant smile, a pat on the back to those we come in contact with either on a daily basis or only once in a lifetime. We need to be friendly and show appreciation for people of all ages and all walks of life. Jesus loves everyone equally, and it is a challenge for us to do likewise. Are we making The Way attractive by showing love and concern for those we meet?

Our attitude is the mental position we take toward a fact or state; it is the total emotional and intellectual response of an individual to their environment. We don't have an attitude, but attitudes have us! Admiral Rickover of the U. S. Navy said that three of the most important lessons we learn in life are experience, proper attitude, and common sense. Daniel 6:3 says that "an excellent spirit was in him." This tells us that Daniel had a good attitude about life. Are you making The Way attractive by the attitude you choose to portray in your response to the circumstances you face daily?

Only with God's help can we have the grace to be a proper companion, shine as a dependable light in these dark times, be humble, submissive, good listeners, loving, caring, sharing individuals with the proper attitude. It is a big package, but we have a great powerhouse with the Spirit of God living within us and controlling our actions. May God bless us with determination to make The Christian Way more attractive to everyone we meet.

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SNIPPETS.

Composers/Writers of Hymns used in the Mennonite Church Hymnal.

Anne STEELE

Born: 1716, Broughton, Hampshire, England.

Died: November 11, 1778, Broughton, Hampshire, England.

Buried: Broughton, Hampshire, England.

Pseudonym: Theodosia.

Anne was the daughter of William Steele, a timber merchant who was also a lay preacher at the Baptist church in Broughton. She lost her mother at age 3. At age 19, a severe hip injury made her a lifelong invalid. At age 21, her fiancé drowned the day before they were to be married. From this series of tragedies rose 144 hymns and 34 versified Psalms, which were enormously popular. Her main work was *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional* (1760). When Trinity Church in Boston, Massachusetts (where Phillips Brooks later became rector) published its hymnal in 1808, 59 of its 144 hymns were from the pen of Anne Steele. She preferred to remain anonymous, though, writing under a pen name. Her tombstone carried the following words:

Silent the lyre, and dumb the tuneful tongue,
That sung on earth her great Redeemer's praise;
But now in Heaven she joins the angelic song,
In more harmonious, more exalted lays.

Hymns:

1. Father, Whate'er of Earthly Bliss
2. He Lives! The Great Redeemer Lives!
3. My God, My Father, Blissful Name!
4. Almighty Maker of My Frame

The *Ribband of Blue* Principle In the New Testament.

The concepts that we are looking at have to do with our survival. Many of the concepts that we would like to look at are being hotly debated in our time, but I trust that we are rooted and grounded and know where we stand. Turn with me to Numbers 15:37-41. This, of course, is an Old Testament passage. We will be moving quickly into the New Testament but we want to see this practice as found in Numbers 15. *"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God."*

I would like to look briefly at this *ribband of blue* in the Old Testament. It is a little hard to determine exactly what this looked like. There may be varying differing opinions as to exactly how this looked, but it was to be a special mark. Someone made this observation, and I thought it was interesting that blue represents heaven. (I think we recognize that). Therefore, this mark was to be blue and it was to bring heaven to mind even as they were looking earthward. I think that was the whole purpose of it.

We have this referred to in Matthew. Jesus wore this garb - this *ribband of blue*. Matthew 9:20 says a woman, "touched the hem of His garment." It is referring to this. In Matthew 14:36 it says that they "besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." Thus, Jesus wore this. Sometimes the question comes, "Did Jesus dress any differently from the people of His day?" The answer is a very quick, "Yes." He wore the Jewish garb in the midst of a wicked generation. The Pharisees also wore this. We have this referred to, "all their works they do for to be seen of men." In this case they "enlarge[d] the borders of their garments." Thus, we see they definitely practiced this even as the New Testament era was coming to be.

There is nothing really mysterious about this. Sometimes people will tie

a knot in their handkerchief so that they do not forget. God simply had them put this mark on their clothes so they would not forget. It was that simple.

However, what may seem to be a very trivial outward observance represented a very profound and deep spiritual truth and reality. This is what we want to be touching on. It was to be a mark of distinction - a separation between Israel and all other people. Israel was a peculiar people - they were a special people and God wanted them to remember that. Exodus 19:5-6, says *"Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."* That is what He wanted them to remember that they were. The **ribband of blue** was to help them remember who they were, whose they were, and how they were to live in the midst of the nations. I think that is what God is saying here in a summary.

Let us leave the Old Testament and go to the New Testament and see this principle there. Before turning to the New Testament Scripture that we want to look at, I would like to observe several things in somewhat of an introduction.

1) *The Old Testament has been done away with.* Let us establish that clearly. 2 Corinthians 3:11 would even tell us that what was written on tables of stone has been done away with and that was what? - The Ten Commandments. Many Old Testament principles have been re-established in the New, but as far as the actual Old Testament, it is no longer binding to us who are under the New Testament.

2) *Another concept, it is true that the Old Testament emphasized the outward form and ceremony.* Sometimes I wonder how Israel remembered all that they were to do. Have we ever wondered how they could keep track of everything that they were to do? It seemed that God had them going through outward motions in an effort to somehow impress the heart. It seemed that God started with the outside seeking to get to the inside in the Old Testament. In the New Testament He immediately takes care of the heart problem and then it moves to the outside. Therefore, we do have that difference in principle.

There are many who feel that the moment that we start talking about the external that we are immediately "Old Testament." I would raise the question, "Does the New Testament say anything about the outward?" Does it

have anything to say about ceremonies? There is even a lot of this thinking around that the New Testament liberates, and the idea is that the moment we start speaking about the outward, we are somehow inhibiting the Spirit. Again, I would raise the question, "Does the New Testament address at all the outward form in whatever area?"

There are some who feel that Numbers 15 is fulfilled in the giving of the Holy Spirit. This was to remind and help them to remember all the commandments of the Lord. Some would feel that is the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Therefore, the Holy Spirit helps us to remember, and that is true. We have something in the New Testament era that the Old Testament did not have. We have the Spirit living within that reminds us. Thus, in many regards, the Holy Spirit does answer this passage.

However, I propose that it does not answer it entirely. I would raise this question, "Does the Holy Spirit remind us to love each other without the holy kiss which is an outward form and ceremony?" It does not. I think the answer is obvious. Does the Holy Spirit remind us to help each other in our Christian walk without the feet washing service? Does the Holy Spirit help us to remember the headship principle without the headship veiling? Does the Holy Spirit help us to remember the death of Christ and its meaning to us without the communion service which is an outward ceremony and an outward form? By the same token, does the Holy Spirit remind us who we are and whose we are and how we are to live without any outward help? The answer I think is too obvious. The New Testament does give us tangible helps and that is what we will be looking at.

I will quickly establish this again, *the **ribband of blue** principle (not the practice) is alive in the New Testament.* The practice passed with the Old Testament. I do not see any of us wearing what Numbers 15 speaks of. Therefore, the practice is not with us, but I do believe the principle is with us. Now, the burden rests to prove that.

Romans 12 is the counterpart of the New Testament where this principle (not the practice) is picked up. The principle as given here in the New Testament has a practice. We will see that. Romans 12:1- 2 says, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but are ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*" In verse 2 especially, we have the Numbers

15 principle re-established in the New Testament.

In order to understand this, we would like to look at some of the words that are found here in Romans 12 to help us to understand how we are making this conclusion. We see the term, "be not conformed." It is interesting that those scholars who understand the original language (the Greek) would say that the word "conform" refers to that which can be seen with the sight and the senses. It relates with fashion, dress, clothing and so forth. Thus, conform here means fashion as it relates to the outward appearance.

In 1 Peter 1: 14, this same Greek word is translated "fashioning." *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"* (1 Peter 1:14-16). Therefore, the thought of conform here relates to outward appearance. It is interesting and surprising that J. B. Smith, Vines, and many others who have studied into the Greek language will agree that this word is referring to dress. "Be not conformed to the world in dress." That is exactly what is in focus here.

"Stop patterning your clothes after the world." "Stop rallying around the world's pattern that has its source in the unregenerate heart and mind - the spirit of this age.

Let us now look at the next word phrase, "be not conformed to this world:" then we have a colon. A colon in the English language often indicates that what follows further explains, clarifies, or is at least a parallel thought. Therefore, if the forepart of the verse is talking about dress, would it be wrong to suggest that the latter part also does? We will see shortly that it does. Let us notice the word transformed here. It also speaks of the outward. In fact, it was interesting for me to discover that the Greek word here has a common root with our word "metamorphosis." When an ugly caterpillar turns into a beautiful butterfly what happens? Was it only his inner nature that changed? No, really it was his outward appearance, was it not? Therefore, this word in the Greek is again referring to outward appearance.

Let us turn to Matthew 17:2 to see how this word was translated in another setting. It will substantiate that it is used in reference to the outward appearance again. Jesus took Peter, James and John and, "bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them." His inner nature was changed and He became a new creature inside. Is that what the

Scripture says there? He immediately, "was transfigured." That word transfigured is the same word as was used for transformed. Therefore, when Jesus was transfigured, immediately "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." Again, it was the outward expression and the outward appearance which comes into focus.

Returning to Romans 12:2 we have this thought, "Stop patterning your clothes after the world and your depraved nature, and start something." We often (at least for me) look at this verse as telling us to stop patterning after the world. However, I failed to see that it was a call to start something. Thus, it says, "stop something," but it is also saying, "start something." "Stop patterning your clothes after the world and your depraved nature, and start patterning your clothes after the renewed mind - the spiritual nature." This is what we have in this verse. As we had rallied around the world's pattern, now we should start rallying around the pattern of truth. Again, we often saw the negative side of this verse but there is a very clear, positive side to this as well. We are to start patterning ourselves the way the children of God do - the way a people with a renewed mind do.

There are other Scriptures which enlarge on this thought like Philippians 3:16. Interestingly, someone observed that we have John 3:16, 1 Timothy 3:16 and also another very key verse - Philippians 3:16. It is a key verse because it is so important for understanding this phase of our life. Philippians 3:16 says, "Let us walk by the same rule." The word "rule" as used here means standard. "Let us walk by the same standard, let us mind the same thing." In other words, this is exactly what we are taught in Romans 12:2. Stop going after the world's pattern. Start going after the pattern of the people of God - the rule that the people of God are to follow.

We might say, "The Scriptures are not that clear cut." This is true, *the Bible is written in principle form*. That is right. *We will look at six principles* a little bit later *which govern how one is to dress*. They are in principle form. If the Bible needed to address every issue that ever arose, it would have become an impractical book. For example, when I was a boy, it was fender skirts, drag pipes, and the spinner on the wheels. That is what was then. If the Bible would have needed to spell out, "Thou shalt not have fender skirts. Thou shalt not have drag pipes," there would have been a large audience that has read the Bible in centuries past who would not have even known what they were talking about to start with. Secondly, if the Bible had to be that detailed, it would have become a very impractical

book. Therefore, God put the Bible in principle form. There are some details but in principle form.

Who is to say what form the people of God are to follow, since Philippians 3:16 tells us that we are to do it the same way. I think the Bible has the answer to that. We see in Matthew 16, and 18, and Acts 15, that the Church is to do that. That is a subject in itself. However, the church is to take these great principles of the Scripture and apply it to the current issues of their generation. Brethren and sisters, we are not in the dark on that. We know how the people of God are to dress, Romans 12:2 calls us to establish a stigma and a barrier between us and the world. Let us now go back to this verse and look at some more key words. "Stop patterning yourself after Paris and Hollywood. Start patterning your dress after the Church and the direction she gives." That is the bottom line teaching here. Now, let us look at the word "prove." The text says directly, "That ye may prove." The word prove here could be translated "discern." "That ye may discern what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

This word *proves* is very interesting. Again, it is a word that is used primarily to address the outward. In fact, I think without exception it addresses the outward. We have Scriptures like, "whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." (2 Corinthians 13:5) How do we do that? It is by looking at what the outward is expressing, to know what the heart is about. "But let a man examine himself." (1 Corinthians 11:28) "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." (Romans 14:22) The word "alloweth," is the same Greek word. Again this speaks of the outward. It is interesting how the whole way through this verse, we have the outward coming into living. It is the thought of demonstrating by doing.

This principle and this thought is what comes into focus. We practice the holy kiss, sisters with sisters, brethren to brethren. Let us raise this question, "Do we practice the holy kiss only for the purpose of expressing love?" That is part of it, but it is not all of it. It not only expresses love, but it stimulates love. That is exactly what is coming into focus here. Paul says, "Stop patterning yourselves after the world. Start patterning yourselves after the Church so that you not only give evidence of being separate from the world and separated unto God, but so that it will stimulate that separation." There is the *ribband of blue* principle. This principle is to help us be what we should be in this world.

Prove, has the idea of proving by doing. That is the way Bible principles are. They perpetuate themselves. Separate, nonconformed dress helps us to discern what is "that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." I would hasten to say that we can take an unconverted person and put God's people's clothes on him and he will still be an unconverted person. It is not talking about that kind of discernment. We need the new birth to get that kind of discernment. This Scripture teaches us that a child of God who is already born again will be helped in their understanding of how to live a separate, and how to relate to the world as they obey God in this area of life. That is what is in focus. That is the *ribband of blue* principle in the New Testament.

As the Church takes her place in establishing a uniform pattern and practice, this fulfils the Bible principles in the New Testament. It is that pattern of application that serves as the *ribband of blue*. It is not of a given cut, or of a given stitch, but it as the Church makes total application to all six of the principles that we will look at. It is that total picture of application that becomes the *ribband of blue* in the New Testament.

How many times have we been helped to discern what is right, and to not go a-whoring, to not follow our evil heart, and to remember the commandments of God because we were dressed like a Christian in a given situation? One brother put it this way: he said that he had a bumper sticker on his car, and that helped him many times, in a moment of impatience, to not pass or cut someone off because he knew that when he passed the individual, they would read his bumper sticker. That same principle is what this is teaching in relation to dress. As we dress, rally around the principles of Scripture, and follow the pattern of God's people - the Church, that will help us to behave right in the circumstances of life as we face the world.

Some might say, "Spiritual people have deeper resources than that. They do not need such tangible helps." I would raise these questions, "Do they need communion? Do spiritual people need the holy kiss? Do they need the headship veiling? Do they need the feet washing service? Do spiritual people need that kind of help?" The answer is an emphatic, "Yes," if we will be Biblical and sound to the truth. Therefore, when we seek to be fair with the doctrine of distinctive, separated attire, one will need to recognize that there is a tangible expression that God is calling us to. It is true that this kind of teaching causes a fuss. In fact, there are many people that squirm

over this kind of teaching. I am sometimes startled at how many of our own people squirm sometimes. It seems to be where the cross hits and hurts the hardest. For some reason that is the way it seems to be, but that is typical.

What follows Numbers 15? Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Let us look at Numbers 16:1 and notice what the first word is. Moses had given teaching in relation to how to dress. Then it says, "three years later?" What does it say? "Now." Immediately after that teaching. "Now," and there was the rebellion. Thus we see, "Stop patterning your clothes after the world, but pattern them after the renewed mind, that you may stimulate your ability and that you may be able to discern the will of God. Establish the stigma and the barriers that help keep the people of God apart from the people of the world. Joseph understood that. When his brethren came down from Canaan into Egypt, he understood that principle perfectly. He said to his brethren, "The first thing we will do is go to Pharaoh. We will tell him that we are shepherds, and will tell him that at the beginning because shepherds are an abomination to Egyptians." His brethren could have said, "Now, Joseph let us put our best foot forward. Let us save that for last." No, Joseph understood that if they would survive in Egypt there needed to be an immediate barrier between his family and Egypt. He understood that, and that is exactly what God understands, and wants us to understand.

Some years ago while holding meetings in a distant congregation I heard the story of a brother that went a little like this. He had grown up himself in a Fundamentalist Protestant church. Many of us are familiar with this denomination, and in many ways they believe like we do as far as their teaching, but to his disappointment, he was losing his children, one after another. One day, it dawned on him what the trouble was. He said, "I am losing my children to the world because I am too close to the world." Therefore, he found the Mennonites and he found that this was the answer.

He used to chide his former church friends in the Protestant setting by saying this, "We both know that the New Testament teaches that there is the world and there is the Church and they are two distinct entities. If where you go to church, if that is the Church, tell me where is the world?" He understood, and had come to grasp that there must be a difference, a barrier, and a stigma. There must be something that keeps it clear This is what is being taught here in Romans 12. Now we will leave this line of thought.

We will look next at some observations. First of all, I would like to touch a little history. There is a little of this kind of teaching around that the Anabaptists were not distinctive and they did not dress differently. If they did, their enemies would have been able to notice them, one right after another. We know that is exactly what happened. They did dress differently. Let me quote just some things from history. One hardly knows where to start or stop here in this, but a lot of their enemies recorded things about them.

One opponent wrote, "They insist on modest apparel, and condemn outward adornment." Another writer, "Their daily walk and deportment appears to be pious, holy and blameless. They shun costly clothing. They despise expensive food and drink, clothe themselves with coarse cloth, cover their heads with broad felt hats." Another one said, "There is a certain people called Anabaptists. They want nothing to do with the world because it is written, 'Ye shall not be conformed to the world.' Therefore, like a new order of monks they make rules about clothing whereof, of what form and shape, how long, wide or big they shall be. Herewith they reject all costly clothing and ornamentation. They call all of those "heathen" who make use of these worldly things." There was an Anabaptist brother in prison. The records state that in 1544 a man decided he would go in and try to deceive this brother. The man going in was not an Anabaptist. The records say that, "He disguised himself and was said to be dressed like a brother." Let me ask this, if they were not distinctive in their dress how did they know he was a brother? This helps prove they had their patterns. One could go on and on with that. There was a young man who came home to his parents who were not Anabaptists, and it says "He came home in Anabaptist's clothes." Another person was reported as still an Anabaptist, because he still wore Anabaptist clothes. More could be said.

I would like to make some more observations, bringing it a little closer to our time. We not only have the testimony of history, but we also have the testimony of that which comes from following the Scriptures in relation to this. We have some observations. The Scriptures tell us we are to do some observing, "prove all things:" and then "hold fast that which is good." (1 Thess.5:21) Those Conferences that held the best to Mennonite distinctives in dress, maintained non-resistance the best in Word War II. Statistics prove that. It is not guess work. The Church grew the fastest and enjoyed the most rapid growth during the periods when she was the most separated.

I remember vividly, more than forty years ago when the churches in our Conference area in the valley were talking like this, "If we will win the world, we will need to relax all of this difference. We will need to get a little more like them to win them." I am sure some of you remember that echo going up and down the communities. They also said that if we will be able to keep our young people, then we, somehow, need to relax this whole thing and not be quite as stringent.

I would raise this question, "After forty years what do we see?" Recently I was in one those churches for a funeral and I noticed that their membership must have been down a half or less, from what it used to be when I used to get there as a visitor. I have come to learn that they are not keeping their young people. They are joining the Baptists. And why not, because it is all the same. Did it work? No, it did not work.

A liberal Mennonite minister was at one of our congregations several years ago. He had been very active in mission work. He visited on a night that the preacher brought a message on something in relation to dress. Afterwards, one of our brethren who knew this man, asked him, "How did you feel about that kind of teaching?" He replied, "Well, it is what I believe." (Incidentally that man was still plain himself) but he said, "You cannot do mission work and follow that." It happened to be that one of our brethren who had talked to him had recently returned from the mission field and he said, "Oh, I do not understand that." This man enquired further and said, "You mean you are doing mission work and the people whom you bring into the church on the mission field look like the people here tonight?" Our brother said, "Why, yes." Then, this man asked, "You mean you have members?" Our brother said, "Yes." The man then asked, "You mean your churches are growing?" Our brother said, "Yes, faster than we can keep up." This principle of separation and following the Scriptures in this regard, will help us to grow not hinder.

We also have the testimony of those who lost separation and nonconformity. Those who weaken in this area and drop it, suffer a tremendous loss. It is not very far from losing this principle until we accept divorce and remarriage and a whole list of things. It is very startling how rapid that goes. Someone made this observation, "The Mennonites who have had this practice and drop it, go further than those who never had it." I think of a certain field man who used to come to my place. He was so disgusted with one of the church papers that the Mennonite church publishes, (He was not

a Mennonite) but they had gone further than he had ever gone.

However, the most sobering aspect is that all of this begins in the appreciations. How do we feel about this kind of teaching? That determines where we will be twenty, or twenty-five years from now. I am always concerned how our young people feel. Do they feel good about Bible teaching in regard to dress? Do they appreciate it? Are they embracing it because they know it is right, or is there a bit of disgust about it underneath? It all begins in the appreciations. Are we somewhat ashamed of it? Do we tend to hide it and would we simply wish somehow that we would not have to be quite so practical about all of this? Once the breakdown starts, it is very difficult to turn it around. It is like the old saying, "It is better to hold the wagon at the top of the hill than to try to stop it half way down the hill." One can observe that as well.

We have the testimony of those who come to us. I can think of some brethren who are with us today, who came from the world. They came from drugs, drinking, smoking and all the immorality. Today they see and understand the value in this kind of teaching and understanding to keep free from the world sometimes more than our own do. They understand that as they are approached by evil that clear distinctive attire helps them to remain firm. They see the benefits.

We also have the testimony of the Church. When one thinks of the tremendous effort that the Church has put forth over the centuries to maintain what we are talking about, it stands as a loud cry to this generation. There have been a lot of voices that have come and gone over the years. I am not very old, but I did live during a time when one was hearing strange voices. Some of the voices that come say that distinctive attire closes the doors for witness. Is that true? I always think of one of our brethren who said he was sitting in an airport and a man walked up to him and said, "Every time I see you people God talks to me." Our brother very wisely asked, "What does He say?" The man replied, "Well, this is the way, walk in it." That opened the door, did it not? It did not close the door. It opened the door.

It used to be said that hypocrites wear it. It is possibly true that there are some people who wear distinctive attire who do not represent it, but we do not stop getting married simply because there is divorce and remarriage. Furthermore, hypocrites usually go for the best cover. Maybe hypocrites using plain clothes as cover actually validates and establishes its value.

Someone might say (this used to be a cry); "I do not have conviction for

it." I would immediately raise this question, "Do you have conviction for anything else?" Often a person's conviction in relation to distinctiveness in attire and other convictions go hand in hand. If we see a weakness in this area, we will see a weakness in a broad spectrum. Another cry used to be, "The other denominations do not hold to it." That is true for a lot of things, including non-resistance. Some would say, "It is such a little thing." If it is such a little thing then let us simply do it. That is the simple answer. Again, those voices have come to the Church over the years.

The price that has been paid over the years by the church stands as a loud testimony to this generation. I have access at home to the minutes of Virginia Conference and also of another Conference - the Washington Franklin County Conference. I enjoy paging that and seeing some of the things the church has grappled with. Apparently, people had hair back then, because they were taking issue with the hair fads of that day. When one sees what the church was grappling with, in those days, it is the same thing, maybe in a little different form, but the same thing we are facing to-day. Young people, what we are attempting to do as a church is not some strange far out idea that a few men in this generation decided to try to push. We are continuing something that men stood and fought for, for centuries. We ought to rise to that kind of challenge.

*A few concluding considerations for how we ought to practice in relation to the practical side of this **ribband of blue** and distinctive attire. We are not in the dark. The Bible teaches six principles.*

1) Modesty.

This means that clothes are intended to cover the form of the body, rather than to expose and to accent.

2) Simplicity.

We are not to draw attention to ourselves, have ornamentation, frills and extra buttons and stitches. Our clothes need to be simple so that men can see past the clothes and into the inner character of the man. That is what God desires.

3) Nonconformity.

We are not to follow the fashions of the world. Brethren when the sideburns go down, ours should not go down. When they go up and completely off, ours should not go off. We are not to be influenced by the fads and fashions.

4) *Stewardship.*

We do not have clothing which represents the rich. This does not mean we must always buy the cheapest, because sometimes the cheapest is not the best stewardship. One brother said, "One sister has so many dresses he wonders how many closets they must have in their house." In that case, somewhere the concept of stewardship is not quite understood.

5) *The distinction between men and women.*

They are not to wear that which pertains to each other [Deuteronomy 22:5].

6) *Uniformity.*

The people of God are to dress alike (Philippians 3:16).

When it comes to how we should dress, we are not in the dark. The Church has given a voice, not only in this generation, but in all generations. Further, we know how Mennonites should look. For the men we have the plain hat, the plain suit, black footwear, long sleeve shirts for dress, and buttoned up. I was amazed how that was spoken to in the church in the past. For women there is the plain bonnet, the plain cape dress, black hose and footwear, the veiling, and subdued darker colours rather than the loud, light, fancy type of things.

There are a few considerations in the face of this. We should basically have two categories of clothes, what we wear for Sunday and what we might wear for every day. We might have some things that are in between, but why cannot the "in between" be simply clothing that is a little too worn to wear to church? Therefore, we only have the two basic categories. That will protect us.

We must avoid the casual. Our sisters cannot go down into the streets of our towns unnoticed. The challenge of this really comes to our brethren. We can dress in a way that somehow we can kind of fit anywhere. If we meet a brother he cannot say we are worldly, and if we meet a worldly person they cannot say that we are a brother. We ought to wear our plain clothes when the occasion puts us in a normal dress up situation such as going to the doctor's office, hospital visits and travel. I appreciate one of the older brethren whom I travel a lot with, insists that we wear our plain suits. It can be the warmest day in July, but when we are travelling, in the airports, on the airplane, we are dressed like plain people. I believe it is in honour of this principle.

Of course, when the farmer goes to the tractor dealer and has a greasy part, he will not wear his suit. We know that, but even there I believe there are some of our everyday clothes where there is more distinction today between the plain man and the worldly man than there was a generation ago. Let us be sure to maintain a mark of distinction when we are in public. We need the protection that having a stigma between us and the world provides. We need to have sufficient separation and marks of distinction such that the stigma and barrier remain with the world. We must do that.

Sometime ago I was walking through Chambersburg. Across the street a young man saw me and hollered at me, "Hi smokestack." He was referring to my hat. I felt "Oh, where could I disappear." We need that. That is exactly what we need. We need to be reminded that the we and the world are headed on two different roads, serving two different kingdoms, serving two different kings and headed for two different destinies. May the Lord help us to bear that cross. Sometimes this is where the "rubber hits the road."

May we be faithful in demonstrating what God is teaching in Romans 12.

Message by Bro. H. Lynn Martin. Given at Winter Bible School, Richland Mennonite Church, PA. Used by permission from "The Pulpit Exchange"

COME CLOSER

The essence of Christian life and our hope of heaven are in walking close to the Saviour. He is leading the way, and we must follow closely. One may feel he or she is near the Lord, but because of circumstances or particular needs, the Spirit beckons them to come closer. An evidence of sanctification is an increased urge to walk ever closer to Christ.

Once Peter followed the Lord afar off (Luke 22:54). On the surface, the fisherman had committed himself to go with the Lord regardless what happened (Mark 14:31). But when the test came, Peter could not stay in the footprints of the Master. In spirit he lingered so far behind that he lost the way. Later, when he was "converted" (Luke 22:32), he indeed walked close to the Lord, even unto a martyr's death.

Precious and timeless hymns express the desire and blessing of being close to the Lord. One, "Come Closer to Me," by B. Elliot Warren (1867-1951) says,

"When I get weary with toils of the day, Off in the secret, I kneel and pray; There I can hear my Lord sweetly say, `Come closer, My child, to Me.'" In the common and tiring scene of life, one must stay near to the Master. While toils of everyday life are normal, weariness does, many times, bring an awareness that there is more to life. It is at such times that one feels a longing to lose himself in the Lord. Coming close to Him provides a refuge and rest that nothing else can provide.

"When in afflictions I suffer long," Elliot penned, "Jesus comes, bringing this lovely song: `Trust in My grace and you shall be strong, Come closer, My child, to Me.'" Trouble will make one either better or bitter, depending on whether one stays close to the Lord. Afflictions of body and mind, perhaps more than any other thing, cause us to hear the Lord saying, "Come closer, My child, to Me." This is not an escape from reality, but recognition that true reality is perceived only by being close to the Saviour. Only then does one see these things in the context of fleeting time and the sovereignty of God. And there one lays hold on the promise that even this body will one day be redeemed from its corruption and frailty (Romans 8:23).

Perhaps the greatest need and comfort of being close to the Lord relates to the Christian's status in the world. Again, hear the words of song: "When all around in this cold, dark land, Nothing encourages me to stand, Jesus says, holding me by the hand, `Come closer, My child, to Me.'" The one who finds the world accommodating finds no meaning in these words. But to the cross-bearing believer in Christ, who is a stranger in the world, they mean much. He finds no inspiration, no heavenward drawing, in the things the world has to offer. Nothing here encourages him to stand fast. But his resolve quickens when Christ, tugging him by the hand, says, "Come closer to Me."

Certainly, a Christian is enthused about life. But his life finds its fullest meaning in the context of living for the Lord. He is conscious that he is no accident and that God has a purpose for him. That purpose is distinct and often counters the world's course. Thus, walking close to the Saviour, a Christian shares more and more in the precarious position that Christ had while in the world (John 15:18-20; 1 John 3:13). Rather than compromising with the world and its spirits, the true Christian hears Jesus saying, "Come closer, My child, to Me." Here he finds compensation for his loneliness.

The Christian's basic opposition is from within. The old nature (which of itself is not imputed as sin) is just as strong today as ever. Christians, too, are "prone to wander" because of the weakness of the flesh. Due to the fall of man from his first state, the world wallows in degradation, debauchery, and self worship. The followers of Christ live in the midst of this. Some people point out that the moral depravity of imperial Rome was worse than that of society today, yet the believers endured. But never before has there been such a diverse flood of enticements di-

rected toward the basic self-serving nature of man than in our day. Its appeal is subtle and pervasive, choices are endless, and all in the interest of "the good life." In this way our days are more perilous than ever before (2 Timothy 3:1-2). In all this, does not a Christian hear Jesus whispering, "Come closer, My child, to Me"?

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) asks in the hymn "Am I a Soldier of the Cross," "Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, To help me on to God?" Someone has pointed out that as the world grows more contrary to sound principles, the contrast between it and a Christian will be more noticeable. If in all honesty we would need to admit that the difference is lessening, who is changing position? Christ is changeless (Hebrews 13:8), and that means His doctrine remains the same. Yes, it does need interpretation for our day, but Holy Spirit-led application of the Word never makes "this vile world a friend to grace." Consistent interpretation and practice of the faith will always coincide with Christ's tender plea, "Come closer, My child, to Me."

The Christian's outlook and prospects are as bright as the promises of God. Those promises are "exceeding great and precious" (2 Peter 1:4). Christ has promised to be with us until the very end (Matthew 28:20). He assures us that no man can pluck us out of His hand (John 10:28). And the apostle Paul exalts in the love of God and says nothing can separate us from the Lord. He says a Christian can be more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39). However, these benefits and promises are contingent on staying close, and drawing closer, to Him. Failing of that condition, one has no assurance or hope.

It appears that the realm of spirits opposing the faith is becoming more agitated today. The sea of time is getting choppy as the ship of the true faith nears the harbour. Some people are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). Because of contrary winds, God's children must be established, strengthened, and settled in the true faith (1 Peter 5:10). They must be "rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17). Surely, the Spirit bids us to come close to the Saviour and abide under the shadow of His wing. It's as though a storm is about to break, and where would one rather be than sheltered under His wing, close to His heartbeat of love? The casually minded, proud, resistant, and less than fervent in the Spirit are in great danger.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Colossians 2:6). Walking close to the Saviour means earnest prayer, feeding on the Word, keeping a cleansed heart, having a broken and contrite spirit, and being willing to bear the cross. Here one has a burden for the cause of Christ and, thus, for the Church. To be thus spiritually minded is the greatest need of our day. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

We walk in the Light whenever:

- We worship only God, bending the knee to no other power.
- We love one another as God, through Christ, loves us (not sentimentally, but practically and sometimes sacrificially.)
- We forgive one another.
- We practice hospitality and works of mercy.
- We speak plainly and truthfully.
- We honour our commitments.
- We simplify our needs and share our abundance.
- We testify in word and deed against the rule of darkness and answer that of God in everyone

We have oftentimes occasion to bless God more for crosses than for our comforts. There is a blessing hidden in the worst things to God's children, as there is a cross in the best things to the wicked; to the saints there is a blessing in death, a blessing in sickness, a blessing in the hatred of our enemies, a blessing in all losses whatsoever. Therefore in our afflictions we should not only justify God but glorify and magnify Him for His mercies, that rather than we should be condemned with the world, He will graciously take this course.

Balanced Christian Living (Part 5)

By Bro. Lamar Garman Denver PA

Rest Without Complacency

From bygone years comes the account of a man walking down a dusty road on a very warm day, carrying a heavy sack of potatoes on his back. Another man, coming by with a wagon and team, saw his plight and offered to give him a ride in the back of his wagon. The man gladly accepted. After going a few miles, the driver was chagrined to see that the man still had the sack on his back instead of putting it down upon the wagon. Would he have been complacent to put down the load and rest his weary shoulders? We would say, "Of course not."

Is a Christian showing evidence of complacency when he has learned to find rest in the diverse and trying scenes of life? Most assuredly not! The Lord so graciously invites us to do just that. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord), and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22). "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Resting and trusting in God's all-wise providence does not necessarily suggest the cessation of labour or an end to difficulties. Jesus spoke of rest in the midst of the burdens and trials of life. So graciously, the Lord invites everyone to put down the heavy load of guilt and sin and to take the sweet yoke of Jesus and the light burden that Christians are glad to bear.

How can a Christian experience the peace of God and find rest of heart and mind without yielding to complacency or without becoming smug and self-satisfied?

We experience peace and rest as we recognize that God's peace far supersedes the peace of mind that many pursue through insurance policies, social programs, or lucrative jobs. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

We realize peace and rest as we express gratitude and praise to God for providing for every spiritual need. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee" (Psalm 116:7).

We find peace and rest by carefully obeying the Scriptures and by resisting Satan's temptations to capitulate to our carnal desires. "He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly" (Psalm 85:8).

Finally, we realize rest without complacency by continued spiritual endeavour in the constant expectation of eternal rest. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:11). *Reprinted by Permission from: "The Eastern Mennonite Testimony"*

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