



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)
So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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The Love of the Brotherhood

It is likely more difficult to find songs to suit the topic of *gelassenheit* because, as one writer says, “The ethos of *gelassenheit* never crossed the English Channel.” The English songs never quite conveyed what the Anabaptist songs did. There is a book that has about half of the songs of the *Ausbund* translated in English. If you read those songs you understand why he said that. They have a differ-

ent understanding possibly in their terms used to describe the relationship between the Christian and his Lord.

I would like to share a few verses that also was a subject dear to the heart of the Anabaptists. 1 Thessalonians 3:11–13 says, “Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. (12) And the Lord make you to increase and abound in

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love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: (13) To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” Notice in the centre of these verses is the love of the brotherhood. Paul says, “may the Lord direct our way,” or, “may the Lord make you.”

We have a common enemy and that forces people together. That

is what the Anabaptists faced. They had a common enemy. They were required to help the brotherhood survive. One of the ways they did that was by blowing in the horns. I had the privilege to visit with a man from Switzerland. He asked where our ancestors came from and I mentioned Berne and the Emmental. “Oh yes.” he said, “the Emmental, I know right where the Emmental is.” He described exactly what you read in books

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— mountain valleys full of caves and crevices where Anabaptists could hide, and also where the blowing of a horn would ring down the valley for miles and miles. An Anabaptist hunter could not get very far until a horn would blow and the whole congregation was alerted to the fact that danger was at hand.

That was one of the practical ways that they expressed their love for the brotherhood. We do not need to literally do that today. Nevertheless, as we face the enemy, and we see the enemy coming we, the faithful brethren — the brotherhood — will blow the horn as well and warn others of what is coming. Paul implies in verses 12 and 13 that this whole brotherhood concept — “love toward one another, and toward all men . . . To the end” — or for the reason or for the purpose “that he may stablish your hearts.” Or, that He may ground and keep and “unblameable in holiness before God.” He implies here that when love in the brotherhood is what it ought to be, and needs to be, it produced a blameless holy life.

There is a connection here and the Anabaptists understood it. The brotherhood was so essential to my survival. In our setting today, or in the world around us, the brotherhood concept is basi-

cally gone. We can safely say that wherever the brotherhood concept is lost the church is lost as well. Individuals by themselves are not able to maintain what the Scripture teaches in the long term. The brotherhood is so essential. Paul implies that it is that essential. If the Lord makes you to increase and abound in love then your hearts can be “unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father.” This is not only for today, but he says to “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” — to the very end — right to the last minute. It was the heartthrob of the Anabaptists that they would remain faithful amidst this terrific persecution they faced to the very end.

As they faced persecution they were uneasy with themselves because of the danger of recanting at the last minute and throwing it all away. They saw the brotherhood as so essential in helping them maintain their salvation. The same truths apply to us today as well. We know they do. We have seen them in our own lives and in the lives of others. May God help us to increase, and the Scripture says, “The Lord will make you.” I think we also know the Lord does not make someone that does not want to be made to increase in love. May we allow Him to make us.

Gelassenheit Versus Pietism

The subject before us is somewhat rather vast and we will need to touch it somewhat briefly. Gelassenheit versus Pietism is an interesting thought but very involved. Is gelassenheit the actual opposite of Pietism? That is one question I raised in my mind. In one sense it is, but as you would think of a pendulum on a clock Pietism would be the one extreme to the right, and possibly formalism would be the other extreme to the other side. It is like brother Isaac Sensenig used to say. “The position between formalism and Pietism is almost like a razor edge — the true position. You can so easily fall off on one side or the other. What we are looking at — gelassenheit — is the Scriptural view, the sound position, the position that represents the truth.

We will be referring to the Anabaptists. We cannot avoid history as we look at this. Gelassenheit is what separates the Anabaptists from the Protestant churches. We will see that. Maybe it is good here in the beginning to very briefly say what it was like in the 1500’s and also prior to that. I will use United States geographic terms to communicate. (This would not have been true necessarily.)

If you lived in New York State and the New York leaders were Catholic then you were Catholic automatically. If you lived in Pennsylvania, you were automatically a Quaker. If you lived in Maryland and they were something else then you were automatically whatever they were. I guess Quakers would not have fit the European setting. However, if you were Catholic or Protestant they had wars. The countries would have wars and sometimes it would switch. The leaders who were Protestants took over and now you were a Protestant. You were born into a community and whatever that community was that was your religion.

Therefore, when the Anabaptists said “That is not a Biblical view. That is not New Testament Christianity. That is not Scriptural.” They started to say that their relationship with the Lord was a matter between the Lord and them as a person. As a true believer you will also be part of a visible body that is made up only of true believers. They have nothing to do with the political system. The church must have standards and they are to live a holy life apart from the State church. Immediately they

found themselves on a collision course with the surrounding communities, in which they lived. That is exactly what happened. As a result they suffered tremendous persecution. That is what we are looking at that set them apart in this head on conflict. That provides the background.

I would like to define this word *gelassenheit*. The Mennonite Encyclopedia says, “Self surrender, resignation to God’s will, yieldedness to God’s will, self-abandonment, the passive opening to God’s will,” (I thought that was an interesting phrase) “including the readiness to suffer for the sake of God. Suffer — keep that word suffer in view. That is basic to what we are talking about. In the book entitled *The Theology of Anabaptism* by Robert Friedman, we have this definition, “The man who through yieldedness seeks to follow Christ along the narrow path has to overcome all self-centeredness and has to open his heart to a loving — and subsequently, usually suffering — attitude” — a loving attitude, a suffering attitude. Michael Sattler expressed this attitude when he wrote to the church at Horb when he was in prison. He wrote this, “In this pearl, I completely surrender myself unto the

will of the Lord and prepare myself even for death for His testimony.” One writer stated that martyrdom could only become bearable if you had that kind of surrender and commitment. That is the only way. That is the word we are looking at.

The Martyr’s Mirror would also abound with such sentiments. Another person said, speaking to the authorities, “We would rather, through the grace of God suffer our temporal bodies to be burned, drowned, rack tortured as it may seem good to, or be scourged, banished, driven away or robbed of our goods than to show any obedience contrary to the Word of God. And we will be patient therein committing vengeance to God for we know that He says, ‘Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense’(Hebrews 10:30).” That is the outlook. That is the attitude of one who embraces the concepts of *gelassenheit*. It is foundational to their understanding of many areas and I would like to look at those soon.

If you read Mennonite history and Mennonite literature of the past there is one thing that will stand out and that is how much attention they give to humility. I think sometimes we could give a little more attention to it. They saw humility as foundational.

The Scripture says, “to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isaiah 66:2). There is a brokenness of heart, and humility. Have you ever read Mennonite literature where they talk about pride? It seems like every other sentence they are talking about pride. When they get into the dress question, they do not talk about being worldly. They will say pride. They looked at it that if sisters made little frills on the ends of their sleeves what was the origin of that? Well, the origin of that was pride, the opposite of humility. The only way you could be accepted was to be humble. Therefore, pride was contrary. It was a basic sin in their understanding. They emphasized brokenness, humbleness of heart, living simply, and dressing plainly in an effort to help foster and express their humility. Anything opposite that is pride and giving vent to that which will mislead you. That is a basic concept of what we are talking about. It is all part of this concept of yieldedness, surrender, and suffering. I am talking about us, not one of the other groups down the road. It bumps into us. We would like to look at how that happens.

I would like to just contrast a

few things to help us see gelassenheit compared to general Protestantism and Pietism. 1) It affects one’s view of Christ for example. *The Anabaptists saw Jesus as the Lord.* Protestants, general Christendom, or your Pietist, was more apt to look at it as Jesus as Saviour. Anabaptists emphasize that Lordship creates a responsibility toward God and that always resulted in a sobriety and reverence. If the Lord is my Lord, then He is above me, right? He has something to say to me and I am accountable to Him. I must deal with myself in light of Him. That is something different from simply looking at Jesus as only the Saviour.

The Anabaptists emphasized the thought of the fear of God, that yieldedness, that suffering being before the Lord, and that humbleness of heart. The Protestants saw Him merely as a Saviour, as someone who gave you a gift you did not have. Thus, you had more joy, more rejoicing. We will see that more as we move on. Now, it is not that the Anabaptists did not see Jesus as a Saviour, but they had the added dimension of seeing Him as Lord and that is what they emphasized.

2) *The view of the cross is affected.* The Anabaptists used the cross as something undesir-

able to the flesh, which a believer will voluntarily accept. The cross involves obedience to the commands of the Lord at the expense of suffering, and the suffering of the flesh — yieldedness and suffering. We can sometimes emphasize that a Christian should be happy. Is that really the most important thing? No, he is to be holy. He is to be committed to the Lord. Do you think our Anabaptist forefathers when they were in prison suffering, always felt like laughing and smiling? Do you think they were having fun like you hear church people talk about? I do not think so. They were suffering. It was the cross. They had joy. Do not misunderstand me. However, the idea somehow that you become a Christian and everything is glorious here ever after, is not a true concept of Christianity.

That is why Protestants, for example, do not emphasize Good Friday. Plain churches do, do they not? That is right. They emphasize Good Friday. Protestants emphasize Easter [the Day of Resurrection] more and Pentecost. Maybe we do not emphasize Pentecost as much as we do the other two. Do we understand the pattern? Death to self first — the cross of Jesus Christ, then the resurrection — walking in newness of life, and

then of course the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That is the true New Testament emphasis. Now, when it comes to general Christendom, they do very little over Good Friday. They know it exists. They know Jesus died, but they emphasize a lot more the day of Resurrection.

3) *How one views a Christian.*

I would like to even go broader than Protestantism. The Catholic, for example, looks at being a Christian essentially as being sacramental. You go. You are baptized. You have communion and that takes care of your sins. We know that is not right. I knew this but having this reviewed again, I found interesting. The Protestant is essentially doctrinal. He is concerned about right creeds, right thinking, right theology, and right doctrine. Luther, when he backed away from the Catholic church somewhat overreacted — “We are saved by grace,” but when it comes to works he never liked the book of James, did he? He never liked the book of James because that was a strong book that emphasized works. Therefore, he put his emphasis on grace, and on theology. Now, he was not even sound on all of that, but that is where the emphasis was. The Anabaptist said, “The important thing is that you

are a disciple, obedient to God, yielding to God and suffering whatever it takes.

I cannot help but think of the old Amishman. He had a neighbour that was always giving a glowing testimony of how wonderful and happy he was in the Lord. Finally, one day the Amishman said to his neighbour, “Well, to me it is not so important what you say. The more important thing is how you live it. How do you live? That is the most important thing.” That is Anabaptist thought.

4) *The view of salvation.* The Anabaptists emphasized death to self including Scriptures like Romans 6 where we are buried with Christ. Those were emphasized, where the flesh was dealt with. Then we “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4), a voluntary surrender to Christ, giving up self. That is the emphasis. Their thought was this way, not that there is no resurrection but if you die to self the resurrection will naturally follow. Protestants tended to emphasize walking in newness of life but really did not start with the dealing with self. Of course, the outcome was considerably different. They emphasized the resurrection of Christ, and newness of life. Hence they held a very joyful view of salvation.

The Anabaptists had joy, but they had a sober side. They knew the suffering side. They knew the cost of obedience. They knew what it meant to the old man and to really truly be a Christian. They had joy but the emphasis was not there. They held a sober, ongoing death attitude toward salvation. In other words “die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31), like the apostle Paul says. They were less apt to shout and to give a glowing testimony because they were in a battle with themselves dealing with the flesh. They were focussed on that warfare and were less apt to make a lot of noise. Sometimes we are accused at street meetings of not smiling enough. People walking by say “You people look so sober.” Well, it is part of our Christian outlook is it not? We get encouraged to smile, and I am not against all that, but I had to think of that when I was studying for this message.

One historian put it this way: the Anabaptists had invited people to follow the “bitter” Jesus — the bitter Jesus of the cross — obedience and suffering. Protestants or your Pietists called people mainly to a “sweet” Jesus, of a personal salvation, of an inner victory and a warm embrace. The Anabaptists primary focus was on Christ’s

words “Follow me” (Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 19:21; Mark 2:14 etc.), while the Pietists and Protestants tend to focus on the thought of “by grace are ye saved” (Ephesians 2:8). Do we see the difference in emphasis and outcome? One writer says it this way, the Anabaptists also believe in “by grace are ye saved” but they also went on to Ephesians 2:10 where it says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” The Pietists never got to that. He was not interested in the works part of it, only the idea of a gift and grace and “Now I am saved,” and not a lot demanded of me — happiness being the emphasis.

I want to share something from *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries* by Robert Friedman. “The Anabaptist is not interested in enjoying his salvation like the Pietist, but rather as a regenerated Christian sees his duty only to be obedient in following a definite way of life. This means conflict, steadfastness, an inner surrender,” (and now he has *gelassenheit* in parenthesis right behind that sentence which I thought was interesting). “These characteristics are quite different from those cultivated by the Pietists.”

5) *The view of the Church.*

The Pietist sees the Church more as a fellowship and a place for encouragement. The Anabaptist saw something more. It has a solid sense of collective identity. They were the people of God. They were the kingdom of God, representing the kingdom of God here in earth, in contrast to the kingdom of this world. They had a sense of solidarity. They were the kingdom of God on earth. They were a pure body of believers in Christ together. They could only be a Christian in a body of believers, submitting to that community of believers. There you are again submitting — that yieldedness.

In other words here is the difference: the Pietist sees his relationship primarily to God. He might go to church but he really does not see that his brother has much to do with his relationship with the Lord. The Anabaptist understood the New Testament that salvation is not only vertical but it is also horizontal. I am only in Christ as I am in His body, and losing my identity in that body and letting that body direct my life, and I submit and I yield. There, brethren and sisters, is one of the greatest contrasts between those of Anabaptist thought (I will say Biblical thought) and general Christendom. Right there is the

difference. We will be enlarging on that a bit.

I thought of our counsel questions. These questions hit right at the heart of what I just said. “Can you confess peace with God?” All right, there is that relationship. “With your fellow men?” “Are you willing to work with the standards of the church?” There is the body — I am yielding to the body. I am recognizing the body’s authority over me. Then, “Do you desire communion?” The Anabaptists would have understood that. I do not know if they used that wording. They probably did not because they did not have the English language. The point is they would have understood that content. That would have made perfect sense to them because they recognized the place of the church.

Anabaptists viewed true Christians as part of a visible church with the church exercising authority over her members, and the members submitting and yielding and allowing the flesh to suffer. They understood that. They willingly abided by the community’s values. They understood that is what it meant to be in Christ. They understood that if you will be in Christ then you will be in Christ’s body. There is where individuality

stops and brotherhood begins. They understood. I have more quotes to help emphasize what we want. Quoting from *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries*. “Likewise the essence of fellowship was fundamentally quite different between the Anabaptists and the Pietists. However, much both stressed its value. Both recognized some place for the Church.” I will change some of these words. This writer has some words that are rather heavy. I will put it in my own words here a little bit. But, “The Pietists represent the Church as a devotional gathering of the regenerated in which each one is a consequence of his own private experience and his own sense of assurance of salvation that he has felt distinctly himself and he really does not sense the need of the fellow brother. These gatherings are of individualists. Even though these individualists were ready to a limited extent to devote themselves to the group. The Anabaptists both sought and achieved something essentially different in their fellowship. It was the utmost possible disappearance of everything personal and selfish in the practice of a true brotherly relationship. Even in times of most severe persecution when it was possible to meet only at night in lonely meadows

or forest retreats for the celebration of the Lord's supper or for baptism, this fundamental, essential purpose remained." Now, this is interesting because we have heard this said many times, "The parable of the bread and the wine [fruit of the vine] which was so popular among the brethren in which each separate grain of wheat and each separate grape from the vine had to give up its own being illustrates clearly the meaning of this concept. It is the fellowship of the unity of the Spirit. And as it was occasionally named the fellowship of the unity of the Spirit which, to them, mattered the most." We see the difference there and I think that little quote is very helpful in understanding that relationship.

I would give another at this time that maybe helps us to grasp this concept a little further. This is somewhat a summary of what we have been saying and then we will shift our thinking a little. "Anabaptist theology was simple. It was based on a voluntary commitment." Do we grasp that — yieldedness, submission, brokenness? That just rings through and through. That is what we are talking about. That meant to be a disciple of Christ in life. "When Conrad Grebel fled from Zurich leaving his family behind, one

can fairly assume the following passage encouraged his soul 'And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life' (Matthew 19:29). The Anabaptist testified that sacredness or holiness do not apply to special words, objects, places, persons or days. Yet, their followers, the Mennonites, embraced their brotherhood with the idea of church standards and discipline with an air of sacredness. The brotherhood to them is a disciplined community in which each member finds fulfillment." So we understand that? A community, a brotherhood. John Ruth (an historian) wrote, "The key to the right fellowship," "was non self-assertive humility and faithfulness." We are back to that again. We will be touching some of that in some illustrations a little later when we look at some illustrations for today.

I would like to define Pietism. Some of these things are very hard to define. I listened to a speaker the other day. Somebody heard I had this subject, and he gave me a tape from a preacher I never met. He said there is a relationship between piety and Pietism. Piety is the idea of

being devoted to one's religious obligations and devoted to one's religious commitment. In contrast, Pietism makes that devotion personal and elevates it beyond, to the neglect of other things that the Scriptures call for. That is Pietism. Thus, if you are Pietist then there will be some things that happen. First of all, how you feel about your relationship to the Lord will be more important than what your brethren have to say about your relationship to the Lord. I thought of a certain brother in Guatemala whom we were relating to. He said, "You can take my membership. You can. That does not matter. That does not matter at all. I am still right with the Lord." Oh? See, he had a false view of that. He was elevating his personal relationship. We give testimony to a personal relationship but I will let you help me judge my relationship to the Lord. You see, that is the difference. Of course, if my personal testimony is so important, and my personal devotion and commitment, it finally comes down to this; that the Lord might be asking something of me that He is not asking of you. Therefore, the Holy Spirit might tell me something and He might tell you something a little different." Have you ever heard that empha-

sis?

I remember visiting an old Mennonite preacher of whom I had benefited from his writings. I knew he had shifted his position and I asked him this question, "Now, the Mennonite church where she is today, is that apostasy or it is progress?" He had been a Mennonite preacher that used to teach at LMS [Lancaster Mennonite School]. Many of our older preachers had him as a teacher. They say that there is where they gained their convictions for plain clothes and all of that. However, when I went to visit him, he had television. He was a Baltimore Orioles [professional baseball team] fan. In his congregation the women were not even wearing the veiling anymore. I asked him "Now, is what you see in the Mennonite church today, is that apostasy or is it progress?" I had expressed to him my appreciation for his writings and how it had helped. Just like that [snaps his fingers] he gave me the answer. He did not give me the one I was expecting he would say. He said, "It is apostasy," as quick as that. However, here is where he went. He said, "Who am I to judge everybody else? We have a sister over here in the rest home" (where he was) "she has cut hair. Yes, I do not consider it right, but

I cannot judge her because I do not know how the Lord and how the Holy Spirit is dealing with her.” Well, that is Pietism. It is not recognizing the place of the church in helping me find my way.

We could give the history of Pietism, but I will not take the time for that. It goes along with the Reformation as far as the time and as a movement. I guess it has been present for all time. I will read a few things here. This now comes from a book about the Old Order Mennonites, *Old Order Mennonites of Ontario: Gelassenheit, Discipleship, Brotherhood*. “Pietists were deeply concerned about morality and helped to create deeper awareness of sin.” That is a positive thing. “However, Pietists did not separate from the State church because such a move invited persecution. Instead, Pietists took passages like John 14:20 which says, ‘At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.’ They emphasized the indwelling of Christ that is the relationship between God and the individual. But the idea of the Church comprised solely of believers was not part of Pietism. The Pietist’s individual outlook explains why they did not share the same concern about their

relationship with their fellow men as the Anabaptists who believed the Church was to be a body made up only of sincere, born again Christians. In a State church society, everybody, both sinner and believer, was part of the national church. Pietists laboured and took communion with the established church. They emphasized an emotional, personal experience of salvation. It was an inner experience where the joy of salvation and the resurrecting power of the blood were stressed.

“In contrast to the Pietist, the Anabaptist had left the established church. They stressed the concept of a brotherhood of believers. Although faith was definitely personal, the emphasis remained on being a disciple of Christ and of crucifying self.” There we are again back to mortifying the flesh, crucifying self with Christ at the cross, and suffering. That is the idea. “Pietists sought to avoid the cross of suffering by compromise, which was to live a pious life within the State church without persecution. The early Anabaptists did not identify with such a compromise. Even though over time the Anabaptists became more and more comfortable with making a compromise, the Anabaptists’ original emphasis was to apply

the teaching of the Word to their lives. They had a high regard for both the Old and New Testaments.”

Why did it not say there that the Anabaptists in time backed off a little? Did you ever hear of the half-way Anabaptist? They maybe were never a full Anabaptist. Some of them would have been and backed off — half-way Anabaptists. They became like this by thinking that if they will kill you for living the truth, could not we at least live the truth inside without giving so much outward expression to truth? Do we see the emphasis? Then maybe we can avoid persecution. Therefore, you had what they call the half-way Anabaptists. Some of them stayed within the State church. Some of them quietly had their own religion at home. “Let us not live out Christianity in shoe leather so openly. Let us do it behind the scenes and in our hearts and thereby avoid persecution.” That is Pietism — that is very clearly what that is.

I have a quote from a tract which is a reprint of an article *The Inroads of Pietism* by brother David Burkholder from *The Eastern Testimony*, February 1985.

Because Pietism overlooks the foundational elements of ongo-

ing group life and survival, solidarity never develops. Groups embracing this doctrine usually do not exist for any great length of time. The individualistic, loose approach to fellowship offers no protection within the body. Consequently, even though the language of spirituality is heard, very little group interpretation and direction is given on how to live.” They leave that to the individual. “This results in many such groups drifting into disillusionment and worldliness. Liberalism sets in and the spirit of Pietism stalks its next victim.

“The success of Pietism in the broader Mennonite circle is quite evident. Where Pietism has taken root, the church has lost disciplinary power over her membership. Responsibility for determining qualifications has been laid upon each individual rather than the group. The door for participation in communion has been flung wide open and group responsibility and authority have been replaced by personal liberty and judgment. The deciding factor about one’s spiritual standing has become personal testimony or lip service rather than personal life and obedience. Personal convictions are lifted above group conscience until finally and sadly there is no evidence of either. What is left is lit-

tle different from mainstream religion and bears little resemblance to Anabaptism.”

The author goes on to say how that traditions are often reflected against by the Pietists. Another paragraph says, “Another critical area in relation to Pietism is the attitude a group holds toward the church as the body of Christ (Matthew 16:18–20; 18:15–20). Whenever Scriptural church authority is not exercised, Pietism is sure to set in. A lack of appreciation for and a resistance toward all outward direction and restriction develops. While there might not be a conscious objection to a given regulation, there is resentment against being told what to do. There is a clamor for the privileges to decide for oneself. The carnal desire for individual freedom is then nicely and easily clothed in a cry for inner piety without outward direction.”

Do you ever hear anything that sounds a little like that? We hear, even in our own circles, sometimes the idea that we ought to be more spiritual, and that church standards and church discipline simply shows that we are second rate spirituality. That is Pietistic thinking. There is some truth to it. Nevertheless, the point is no individual or church will ever get to the place that they rise to such

a level of spirituality that they no longer need the kind of help that the Scriptures have assigned the church to give. We will simply never achieve that.

He also continues by describing Christian life. “Pietism offers a supposed balm to those who become weary of the increasing demands of church administration.” I remember one preacher one time said he is tired of being the Holy Spirit to his people. Therefore, he would leave it all to the individual and to the Holy Spirit. That is Pietism. The church does have a responsibility. The Scriptures make that plain. That is not our subject but the church is responsible for giving direction. “The claim is made that if everyone were spiritual, church discipline would be unnecessary. Certainly it would be desirable and pleasant if this would be true of every member. But the Scriptures warn of spiritual dangers. . . Yet, on the basis of all being Spirit directed, some leaders have shed their responsibility as shepherds and have become mere advisors to and eventually followers of their flock.” Of course, finally things fall away.

“Still another potentially dangerous situation in relation to Pietism involves an improper understanding and expectation of

the Christian experience. We may try to make Christianity irresistible by making it look attractive and enjoyable. This emphasis makes Christianity with all its satisfactions and enjoyments an end in itself. This nice, quiet, peaceful emphasis can leave people ill-prepared to face the divisive, despised, and cross-bearing side of Christian discipleship. The disappointment and disdain which result from this misconception can lead to hasty retreat in time of battle. While penitence, praise and prayer are necessary and proper, God has often called men off their faces to do that which was difficult but needful. We may never overlook the Bible conditions of self-crucifixion and self-denial, and the inevitable conflict of the Christian life. Luke 14:26, 27.”

Sometimes there are church conflicts, and I do not know of any group or any period of history that has ever escaped all of those. Sometimes in some of the heat of those conflicts, people can get the idea that the Gospel must not be working or our church life, the approach does not work. We need to be careful because that can actually tilt us toward Pietism, when really there is simply a battle going on for the hearts and souls of men.

I would like to shift our think-

ing a little bit. *I would like to look at the tension between gelassenheit and Pietism that has come, and I would like to bring this right down to our time.* In the past things happened in the turn of the 19th and 20th century. Sunday schools came into the church and revivals. Other things were happening. This was actually the issue that was at stake. I will say something here and then I guess we will let the brethren pick up and enlarge on it maybe through some assignment on history. We would have had a problem with some of the Sunday schools back in those days. I know we would have. We would not have been happy with the revivals that they had back in those days. It was too emotional. It brought revivalism. It reflected what was happening in the Protestant circles. It did not emphasize the demands of discipleship. The Sunday schools were brought Protestant literature and even Protestant teachers into some of the Mennonite settings. We would have had a problem with that arrangement. We would have because the outlook, the concept, the gelassenheit viewpoint would have been threatened. We would have said, “Look, this is a shift toward Pietism.” That sweet Jesus emphasis, that emphasis on per-

sonal salvation, that warm embrace that we talked about, has taken a lot of Mennonites. Suddenly, somehow people get out from under the restrictions, the standards of the church, and out from under needing to listen to people and having the church tell me how to do. “Now, I have true freedom and warmth and all of the excitement.” That was a result of some of that.

I am glad today that the revivals and Sunday Schools as we have it certainly have been helpful in that regard. I believe of all the isms that have touched the Mennonite church, Pietism has done more to rob us of membership than any other “ism” I can think of. You might say, “What about Calvinism?” No, Pietism has done more to rock the church and to destroy her than any other ism.

The excitement of the Protestant versus the more sober and the self-denying Anabaptist thought drew many in the wrong direction. I want to read an account I picked up in this connection where a writer was actually discussing some of the history of the past. He named a certain sister of the church who felt that the restrictions of the dress code of her father’s church. She felt it as restrictions and resented them, while some of her contem-

poraries were content with those regulations. This sister felt that her wedding ceremony left little room for individuality, and she resented that. “Once church regulations are deemed as restrictions the emphasis shifts from the brotherhood to the individual.” That is what happens. “The orders of the church to those who are at peace are considered guidelines. Whereas to those who are discontent the guidelines become restrictions. To those who are at peace, guidelines are guardrails along the highway to protect the traveller from harm. To the others guardrails are restrictions that prevent them from their off the road excursions.” I kind of like that way of expressing it.

This writer also continued by describing what was happening in some of those times — the times of change. This comes down to our time. It is not confined to the early 20th century. “Times of change began to trouble their waters, and the ‘doesn’t matter,’ spirit was the aspiration of many youth. The popular slogan. . .” (see how current this is) “. . . As long as the heart is right then all is well,” echoed over mountains and plains.” He is talking about the early part of the 20th century. “One writer said, ‘The cross of Christ is too heavy

for many. They do not wish to bear it, and say it matters not how we go in and out.’ Christian Horst held a different view. ‘Some say “It is not in the coat, nor in the hat” that is to say if the heart is right, all is right. My opinion is if the heart is right the coat and hat will soon get right.’” That is Anabaptist right? Why, sure it is.

I remember being at my grandfather’s funeral in 1972. He died at seventy-two. He was born in 1900. His brother was there — Uncle David. Uncle David used to be a plain man, but at that grave he was not. He was dressed in a fashionable suit and a tie. One of his old friends from Virginia, who was still a plain man, had not seen him for years. He said, “Why, David what happened?” Very bluntly, but what happened. Uncle David said, “Well, ‘he is a Jew, which is one inwardly’” (Romans 2:29). Do we understand the thought? Is that true? It is only half the truth. If you are one inwardly, you will be one outwardly too. Pietism emphasizes the inside and minimizes the outside. Of course, Horst’s thought was along the lines of the *gelassenheit* and brotherhood where what is expected is a change of life and yieldedness to the fellowship, and of course, that is what we

expect.

It is right, and it is Scriptural. It is Biblical to say that we measure our commitment to Christ by our commitment to His body. Think that through. It is true that one of the challenges to the Church was what was happening in American society. It is still a challenge of our day. When I was a boy, my father’s brothers all filled the silo together. They bailed hay together. There was interdependence, and it needed to be. In my father’s generation they did threshing together. They even included neighbours who were not even Mennonites in getting the work done. There was an inter-relating. Today, I know very little of that happening. Each one has their own piece of machinery. They go and do their own thing. There is an independence and that carries over into church life. We do not sense the interdependence — the need. I do think that is one of the key reasons why we do not want to go the insurance route. Our brotherhood assistance is one of those things that maintains the exercising of this brotherhood concept and the place that we are the kingdom of God on earth. It is we and them. It is the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of the world. It is that concept.

Affluence knocks hard at the

humility concept. Sometimes, do we really have the humility that our forefathers emphasized? I think we do and yet what I see, the affluence and some of its expressions sometimes you really wonder.

A couple years ago Luke Sensenig had a message [1944 — *The Turning Tides in the Mennonite Church*] on what was called the watershed years. I would like to touch that briefly. What was happening? The General Conference (that was the Conference of the Conferences) were having a problem. There was one Conference which was no longer demanding the Christian woman's veiling. Now, you might say, "You mean in 1944 there was only one Conference?" That is the way history reads at least. Whether they all had it uniformly, I guess that would be a question. There were also some other differences.

Some of the Conferences were saying, "We cannot go on like this. We cannot exchange pulpits with Conferences that are not requiring the Christian woman's veiling. We cannot go on." At this meeting there was a deadlock. They were not moving forward. One bishop finally said, "Let us pray about it." Over a period of time and with a little emphasis on the importance of

love they got going again on the basis of love. True love would have made the sisters that were not wearing the veiling wear the veiling right? However, that is not the basis on which it went forward. It went forward with "We will let them do what they are doing, and we will do what we are doing and we will get along and be brothers anyhow." Brethren and sisters that is Pietism. That destroys it. At that moment the kind of church life that we enjoy began to die and to wither until it affected all the Conferences in the next twenty to twenty-five years. That is why it is the watershed years.

To make this really practical, I will do something that maybe you might feel is slightly (I do not know what word to say) over bearing. I do not know how else to bring this thing home to us. Therefore, I will do that. How is it that a brother can preach a sermon on nonconformity of attire? It might even be the same sermon that he preached at the same congregation years before. No one had a problem with it back then. However, in our day brethren may step forward afterwards and reflect on that kind of preaching. That is Pietism. The same sermon could be preached elsewhere and I am sure it would be accepted. When there is a shift

of attitude toward that kind of preaching and they no longer appreciate it, something is happening. Our people generally do appreciate it. However, every now and then we find some who do not. Of course, if we hold our ground, something will happen because a person like that cannot make it among us, and will not make it among us. I share that as an observation.

We hear reflections on plain clothes, or we are too afraid of a conservative practice. We may even start hearing a little of this, “We want inspirational messages. The practical messages do not inspire.” Practical messages will inspire our spiritual person. It sure will. Whenever there is a call for inspirational preaching and practical preaching is kind of frowned on as something a little less than ideal, then something has happened.

Some of the casual dress that we are struggling with, is it because we are too much of a half-way Anabaptist? Are we a little bit too ashamed to be identified as plain people out on the streets of our town? Think about it. Give that some really serious thought. I really think that we are not Scriptural. We are disobeying Romans 12:2 when we can be out in public and no one knows for sure where we

belong. We are disobedient to that Scripture.

I want to review briefly the *Bishops’ Statement for Unifying and Strengthening Our Position*, dated September 4, 1990. That has been in the *Testimony* numerous times. Apparently Pietism knocks at our doors because this statement is addressing some of the very things I was talking about. It is one of the issues that we constantly face in the body of Christ — the Church. My emphasis is that our loyalty to Christ is determined by our loyalty and commitment to His body. That gets challenged sometimes. This was the statement that was prepared. “We believe that Christ and His Body, the church that is loyal to Him and to His Word, are one. We recognize that Christ’s call to the believer will result in loyalty and commitment to the church. To emphasize that loyalty to the church is inferior to loyalty to Christ or to emphasize loyalty to Christ in a way that reflects against loyalty to the church results in undermining the New Testament place of the church.” How true. “While it is understood that Christ is infallible and that the church on earth is ever imperfect and prone to apostasy, loyalty to a faithful church is part of loyalty to Christ. To empha-

size loyalty to Christ without a definite call to loyalty and commitment to the church is an imbalanced emphasis.” That would be Pietism right? “A basic proof that the individual is loyal to Christ is his loyalty and faithfulness to a Scriptural church.” Numerous Scriptures are listed for reference.

Another thing that often gets faced is that, “Cannot the individual be more right than the church?” Is that possible? Is there ever a time when an individual is more right than the church? Well, the Anabaptists, those that pursued the *gelassenheit* approach understood that to be in the kingdom of God meant to be in the church of God and to yield and to submit and lose one’s individuality in that body. That is how it was understood. Now listen to this.

“We believe that spiritual gifts are given to the church. The body is made up of many members. No one member has all the gifts given by Christ. Therefore, we conclude that a spiritual group’s judgment on issues and interpretations of the Scriptures are safer than the individual’s. Even though we recognize that the individual’s contribution and that the individual may be more right than the group in some instances, the individual still has

the responsibility to the body so long as the overall position of the group is in harmony with the Scripture, and should first of all question his own opinion in favor of the group’s.” There is the concept that the Anabaptists would have upheld.

Tradition was also addressed. Someone whose relationship is with the Lord mainly vertical and not horizontal, does not care a lot about tradition. He is only paying attention to what he perceives God is telling him at the moment. He is not so concerned what God told you or what God told somebody in the past. Therefore, tradition does not mean much to him. Whenever you hear an anti-traditional thrust that should always be a warning. We are willing to yield and surrender to the present body, but we are willing to yield and surrender to what the body of the past learned and discovered. We have some obligation to that, and we sense some obligation to that. “We believe that respect for and adherence to this time tested ‘Mennonite way’ will enhance stability and spiritual growth. . . Even though there may have been some unwholesome aspects to the past” (like the use of tobacco.) “These inconsistencies should not be used to reflect against the value of the overall Mennonite tradi-

tion. We believe that to be overly suspicious of tradition leads to undue experimentation.” One could go on with this. Standards, and the place of discipline come in here.

“We believe that a strong teaching ministry coupled with fair and consistent discipline is the Scriptural approach.” Do we grasp that? “It is the Church exercising Her authority. The teaching ministry is finally understood by what is allowed or not allowed by church administration. Personal conviction develops as the Biblical basis for a position is taught and as sound administration admonishes and insists on compliance in patience and love. To imply that carefulness to detail in regard to Bible application is being legal and is spiritually destructive, and that more tolerance fosters spirituality, is to militate against the Biblical emphasis relating to indoctrination and sound administration. True spirituality is measured by one’s carefulness and concern for Biblical obedience.”

Brethren and sisters, it is not how loud you can shout. It is not how high we can jump. It is finally how obedient one is to the Scriptures. That is the issue. Matthew 7 says that God does not care if we can even perform

miracles. That will not be enough to get us to heaven. We can even have the power to cast out demons, but that will not even get us to heaven. We can even be a good Bible teacher and preacher and that will not get us to heaven. That is Matthew 7. I am putting it in my own words but that is what it says. Read it. Matthew 7 says that. There is only one thing that will get us to heaven. What is that? “he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). He will do the will of that Father which is in heaven. He lets the body of Christ help him to know what that is. He yields himself. He will do the will of God, even if it does not make him happy. He will do the will of God even if it means suffering, conflict, leaving father and mother, Even if it means leaving wife and children, houses and lands, whatever the cost. He will be obedient to God and he expects suffering because the Scripture say “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). He will have that kind of attitude, yieldedness, and surrender, in contrast to the Pietist who has this inner warm feeling that he delights in, but has little conflict, and persecution, because he is not living it out in shoe leather.

He is not facing the world with the Gospel and with a life that confronts the Gospel. May the

Lord help us to be true to these Scriptures.

Scripture References

	Isaiah		Mark	15:31	120
66:2	118	2:14	121	Ephesians	
	Matthew		Luke	2:8	121
4:19	121	14:26, 27	128	2:10	121
7:21	134		John	1 Thessalonians	
8:22	121	14:20	125	3:11–13	113
16:18–20	127		Romans	2 Timothy	
18:15–20	127	2:29	130	3:12	134
19:21	121	6:4	120	Hebrews	
19:29	123		1 Corinthians	10:30	117

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From a message by the late David J. Byler, WI

April 3, 2001

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The Scriptural Church — The Place of Uniformity

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T — is it True?

H — will it Help?

I — will it Inspire

N — is it Necessary?

K — is it Kind?

Do we think before we speak?

Book Reprint (Continued)
One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 42.

Christian Duties. — Obedience.

I. To God.

1. Preferred before sacrifice. — 1 Samuel 15:22.

NOTE. — The proposed sacrifice of king Saul, if offered under proper circumstances, would have been a glorious one; but he lacked the first requirement — obedience. Likewise, in our day, obedience is necessary before prayers and donations, and self-denials and other sacrifices can be offered acceptably. Christ expresses the situation briefly and forcibly when He says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

2. The importance of keeping the commandment. Matthew 5:19; Ecclesiastes 12:13; James 4:17.

3. The keeping of commandments an evidence of justification. — John 15:14; 1 John 2:3, 4.

4. The “doers of the word” have the promise. — Matthew 7:24–27; James 1:22–25.

5. Reward of obedience. — Hebrews 11: 8; Revelation 22:14.

6. The danger of indifference. — Matthew 7:21–23.

II. To the government.

1. Subjection to higher powers enjoined. — Romans 13: 1–7; Titus 3:1, 2.

2. The exception. — Acts 4:19; 5:29.

NOTE. — The Bible teaches clearly that Christians should be law-abiding, meekly submitting to what the government requires of them. Ill-natured criticisms on the Government: constant grumbling because we cannot acquire a fortune faster; and otherwise fostering a spirit of discontent are certainly not the outcropping of peace-loving disposition. Let all the “ordinances of man” be submitted to “for the Lord’s sake,” unless, as is sometimes the case, these laws conflict with the higher law of God, when we ought to obey God rather than man.”

III. To parents. — Ephesians 6:1–3; Colossians 3:20.

IV. To husbands. — Colossians 3:18; Titus 2: 4, 5; 1 Peter 3:1.

NOTE. — The duties last mentioned recall several duties of husbands and fathers which are of equal importance. Should any man feel his importance in consequence of these exhortations to obedience, let him read Ephesians 5:25; 6:4; Colossians 3:19, 21, and 1 Timothy 5: 8.

V. To masters. — Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22–24.

NOTE. — As a corresponding duty of masters read Ephesians 6:9. The relation between employer and employee should be carefully studied, and their respective duties discharged in the fear of the Lord. The failure of one to do his duty does not license the other to do likewise.

1. Explain Jude 3.
2. Not mentioning the question of salvation, explain the advantages to obedience.
3. Show how obedience to God affects our life otherwise.
4. Explain the parable of the ten virgins.
5. To what extent should we obey the civil authorities?

LESSON 43.

Christian Duties. — Self-Denial.

I. Death necessary to life. — Matthew 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24.

II. Cross-bearing necessary to discipleship. — Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27.

III. Christ the example. — Matthew 4:8–10; Romans 15:3; Philippians 2:5–8.

IV. What to deny.

1. Self. — Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:27; Romans 12:1; 1 John 3:16.
2. Sinful lusts. — Colossians 3:5–11; Galatians 5:24; 1 Peter 4:3, 4.
3. Riches. — Matthew 13:22; 19:21–26; Luke 16:9; 1 Timothy 6:17–19.
4. Inordinate attachment to friends. — Luke 14:26; Matthew 10:37.

5. Honor. — Luke 14:7–10; Romans 12:10, 16.
6. Carnal pleasures. — Proverbs 21:17; Luke 8:14; Titus 3:3; 1 Peter 4:3, 4.
7. Ease. — Amos 6:1; 2 Timothy 4:6–8.
8. Vanity. — Isaiah 3:16–25; Proverbs 16:18; 30:8, 9; Romans 12:3.

V. Notable examples.

1. Of self-denial.
 - a. Moses. — Hebrews 11:24–26; Deuteronomy 34.
 - b. Daniel. — Daniel 1.
 - c. John the Baptist. — Luke 1:80; Matthew 3:4; 11:11.
 - d. Paul. — 2 Corinthians 11:24–33; 2 Timothy 4:6–8.
2. Of self-indulgence.
 - a. Belshazzar. — Daniel 5.
 - b. The prodigal son. — Luke 15:11–32.
 - c. Herod. — Acts 12.
 - d. Dives. — Luke 16:19–25.

VI. What these examples teach. — Proverbs 29:23; Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11; James 4:6.

VII. Facts taught by history, by experience, and by observation.

1. Self-denial pays even in this world.
2. The world's greatest achievements have all been won at the expense of immense sacrifice.
3. People who follow the dictates of the flesh, degenerate in every line in which the flesh reigns.
4. People who practice self-denial are, as a rule, contented, prosperous, and happy.
5. The smaller the investment, the cheaper the grade of religion.
6. The cause of Christ today is sustained by men and women whose hearts, brains, services, and pocket-books are upon the altar of the Lord.
7. Show me a congregation whose members consult their own convenience before acting, and I will show you a congregation that is ready for the graveyard.
8. If you are seeking true happiness by hunting for it among

your own passions, you will never find it.

9. The immediate pain of denying self is more than compensated for by the satisfaction which follows.

10. God never demands anything of us, when He has not something better to put in its place.

1. Distinguish between self-denial and self-abandonment.
2. Are all sacrifices blessed? Give reason for answer.
3. Where should we begin in the work of self-denial?
4. Why are we asked to deny self?
5. Discuss the question of investment and profit.

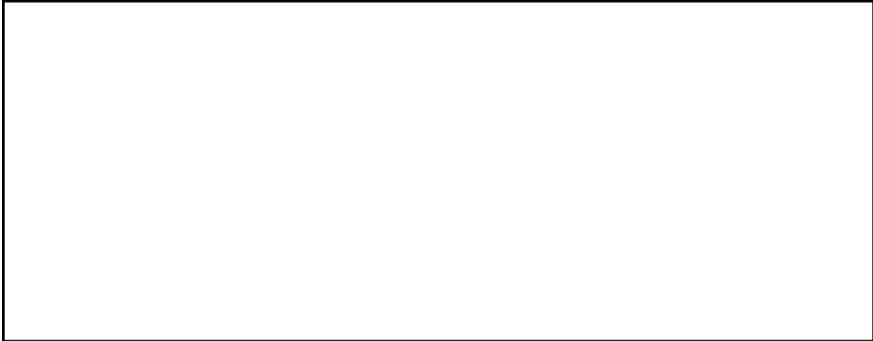
FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

49. There is everlasting punishment in store for all who die in their sins.

The psalmist says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17). Christ, referring to the wicked, says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46). Paul says that when Christ will come again He will punish with "everlasting destruction" those who "know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). In Revelation we are told that the doomed souls in eternity will be in torment; "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and

ever" (Revelation 15:11). The doom of lost souls is described in Holy Writ in the most forceful language, going into details. Revelation 21:8 gives us some idea as to who will go there. And, what is more, no one has any excuse for attributing this awful and everlasting doom of the wicked to the "unmerciful God." Our God is perfect in mercy, "not willing that any should perish," (2 Peter 3:9) making every provision for the redemption of fallen man, moving heaven and earth to that end. Man's greatest sin is his ungratefulness toward the all-merciful and ever-loving God.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" — Romans 6:16



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