



## 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 Three-Fold Being of Man**

I am planning to speak on a subject that is something we do not think about very often. Nevertheless, it is good to think occasionally about man, and the nature of man and especially that man is a threefold being. Man is a complex being. There is a sense in which we sort of take ourselves for granted. We are very familiar with ourselves, and we do not often talk or at least stop and think what we are really

made of, how we are made, and how the various parts of us function and interrelate.

The Bible says that man is created in the “image,” and “likeness,” of God (Genesis 1:26). Natural man is proud. He lifts himself up and exalts himself. We know that man does not really have anything to boast about. Then, when you study the history of man, man’s record, the record is not all that good. Yet, in spite

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of the fall (I am not trying to minimize that) in spite of the degeneration and the evil nature that is in man, any dignity that man has is because of the fact that he was made in the image and likeness of God.

The psalmist said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). We often apply that to the body and talk about the complexities of the bodily functions and the systems of the body and how they interrelate. If

you stop and think a little bit about some of the aspects of human life, of the body, of the flesh, did you ever wonder how God decided it all and how He thought through everything that He did? God in His wisdom, of course, is not limited. Nevertheless, the body is a model. This Scripture applies to more than the body when you consider that man is a threefold being.

*Man cannot arrive at a proper*

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*understanding of himself apart from divine revelation.* I mean not only have men tried to figure out God, but they try to figure out themselves. Apart from divine revelation man comes to a wrong conclusion. We know that man is more than body. 2 Corinthians 4:16 says, “but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” Ephesians 3:16 also mentions the inner man, “to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”

*The body is tangible.* It can be seen and felt and it is something we are very familiar with. It is composed of the same elements that the earth is. Scientists have analyzed and studied the body. There are over one hundred elements, some of which are man-made. Everything in the world is composed of some of those elements or a combination of those elements. You can analyze the body and it is made of materials that God made of the dust of the earth.

*The inner man is more difficult to understand.* It is the non-material part of man. The flesh and blood which we see is not the real person. Our tendency is to focus on the flesh, on the tangible and to evaluate, understand, and interpret life on the basis of the physical and the temporal. That

was the challenge that Jesus faced constantly to help people to think in terms of the spiritual, the moral, and the ethical, rather than to interpret life entirely on the level of the material.

*The flesh and blood is the “tabernacle” (2 Corinthians 5:1, 4; 2 Peter 1:13, 14 ) in which the individual lives.* I would like to read from Genesis 2:7. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” The picture that I get as I read over these verses is that God made the body, fashioned the body from the dust of the earth. That goes back to what I said. The body is made from the same elements that God used to create the world with. There he had the body but it was lifeless. It was motionless, and God breathed “into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul.”

It is a little bit like the story of Elisha and how “he stretched himself upon the child” (2 Kings 4:34), who was dead, the child of the Shunammite. And it says, “the flesh of the child waxed warm.” It was again warm. Life again flowed through the body. Man became a living soul when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. It does not say

“man became a living body.” The body is alive, but it does not say it that way. The “man became a living soul.”

*We cannot explain life.* Life is a gift from God and when it is gone it cannot be restored by man. There is a sense in which the breath of life or the breath of God is in every living creature. I will say a little bit more about this later. I am not trying to put man and animal on the same level but even the physical life of the beasts is a gift from God. God is the Author of life. He is the Source of all life. I have often thought of that in watching young animals. You see the life fleeing, and there is not a thing you can do to put the life back in it. It is sort of a mystery in a way. All living creatures receive that life from God. The Bible says that “all breath is in the hands of God” [see Job 12:10; Daniel 5:23; Acts 17:25]. That is also true of all living creatures.

Returning again and focussing on man, I emphasize that man is a threefold being. There are some theologians who teach that man is two fold. The term that is used in books sometimes is a “dichotomy” versus a “trichotomy.” Some say that soul and spirit are the same, they are interchangeable. They are the same and that man is the inner man and

the body, and that man is two fold. However, the Bible specifically mentions spirit and soul. We have that mentioned. We have the three terms used together in few Scriptures. One of the outstanding Scriptures is in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. There it mentions “spirit and soul and body,” in the same verse.

*It is difficult and impossible to categorize man entirely or fully.* Did you ever stop, did you ever try to do that, decide now, “All this belongs to the body. This is flesh and all these things are part of the soul, and all this is part of the spirit, related to the spirit.” It is hard to do that because there is a lot of interrelation. Nevertheless, in trying to analyze it as much as we can, we think of the body as that which is sense conscious. The sense is a part of the physical and it is through the body that we have an awareness and an understanding of our surroundings — the material and physical surroundings. Through the senses of the body we are aware of that. The soul is the self-conscious part of man, and the spirit is the God conscious part of man.

I) *Looking at those three areas, the body of man first of all.* We already touched on this somewhat but the body is the flesh and blood. It is the tangible

part of man, the material substance, the tabernacle or dwelling place of man. It is the area of activity or the part of the person that is active. We work with our bodies. It is the channel through which the person expresses himself. Sometimes we say that a person's eyes are an index to his soul. The eye is a part of the body. Yet, a person is expressing something and also by his speech he is expressing something that is more than flesh.

I do not watch people's eyes as much as some people do but they often tell something about the person, the kind of personality, the interests and the enthusiasm they have or a lot of things about the character. The body is the channel through which the person expresses himself. As I already mentioned, it is in the body that we have the senses by which man contacts the world around him and is conscious of his surroundings.

The body is the part of man that goes back to the dust after death. We put the body into the ground and eventually it decays and goes back into the elements that the earth is made of. The Bible refers to the body sometimes as "earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7). This body is very fragile and serious injury can cause life to flee and yet

there is a lot of resilience at times and strength.

II) *Moving on, we will spend more time with the soul and spirit of man.* I think of the soul of the man as the person, or the self-consciousness. There is another word that is used sometimes which we do not use because in our minds it always has a negative connotation. I am not sure that in its strictest meaning that it always does, but that is the term "ego." I almost always hear it referred to in a negative way as referring to pride when a person has an ego. When we say that "he has an ego" it means that he is proud. I think the strictest meaning of the word does not bear that out. Ego simply means "the individual as aware of himself." The self is referred to as that. Now, when the person becomes "egotistical," or his ego is hurt, then that is a different usage, if he lifts himself up. Nevertheless, the soul is the self-consciousness of man.

It is true, referring to what I said about a dichotomy versus trichotomy, or the twofold nature versus the threefold nature of man that the terms soul and spirit are used interchangeably in the Scriptures and it is a little difficult to build something strictly on the use of those terms in the Bible. Both the terms are used

interchangeably and they both have similar meanings. Both words are translated at times from words that mean “breath” or “life.” Nevertheless, the idea of the spirit as something different from the soul strictly is taught in the Scriptures. I am convinced.

I want to say this about the terms soul and spirit. They are used in a very general way in the Scriptures. The word soul is used in a very general way in the Scriptures. The word in the New Testament that is translated “soul” is also translated “life.” Sometimes it is translated “mind.” Sometimes it is translated “heart.” We noticed in Genesis 2:7 that man became a living soul.

We often say that man has a soul. Maybe this is a technicality. I know the Bible says, “what shall a man give in exchange for his soul” (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:37)? Notwithstanding, if we take all the Scriptures, and yet I am not trying to contradict that Scripture. I will say a little bit more about that. I think that it is more proper to say that man is a soul than to say that he has a soul. It is not that man — here is this body and then he happens to have a soul. Rather, the Bible says that “man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). The person

is the soul. That is what the person is. Therefore, he is a soul.

When the Bible says, “what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” it is really saying (as I understand it) “What shall a man give in exchange for himself.” What shall a man give? What is more important, more valuable than the person, and what shall a man give in exchange for himself, or for that soul, for his soul? The rich man said, “I will say to my soul” (Luke 12:19), “to myself,” “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” In other words, “live for self.” He is saying, “self.” What it means is that I will live for myself. “Take thine ease, eat drink, and be merry.”

The term soul is used, as I said, in a very general way. In Leviticus 17:11 it says that, “the blood . . . maketh an atonement for the soul.” However, there are numerous places in the Scriptures where the entire person is referred to as “soul.” For instance, there are some Scriptures that say there were so many “souls present.” “And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls” (Acts 27:37), and “not a soul shall be lost.” Leviticus 17:12 refers to the soul as the whole person, “No soul of you

shall . . .” In other words, “Every soul shall be included in this.”

I think of the soul as the human personality. There are some times when we think of personality we think of things that make us different than other people. We say that he has such and such a personality. We can see what kind of people are ready to talk and give advice. Some of that is related to personality. When I am using the term personality, I am not thinking so much of the things that make you different from other people but the things that make us different from the animal kingdom.

What is it finally that makes us different? Did you know that unbelievers have ways of equating it? I have read in books already that they list all the things that we do that animals do and say that we finally are animals. Needless to say, they miss so much. That is related to the physical. I would like to share three basic elements of personality. One is mind — the intellect, and here again it is difficult to analyze the body and separate it. So this is body, this is soul, and this is spirit. We know that we have a physical brain. That is the control centre for the body and that brain can think and reason.

The term mind in the Scriptures, I am satisfied, refers

to more than so many brain cells. Finally it goes beyond the body. Although it is interesting to notice that the deteriorating brain limits, or does hinder a person’s ability to think. Thus, we cannot. We are not getting away from the body. Finally, God made man with the ability to reason, analyze, and think logically. Animals have brains too. They have a command centre, but they cannot think and reason like man can. Thus, man’s ability to reason and to use logic (his mind) is, as I said, part of his soul and yet related to the brain.

Another element that makes a person a person is emotions. We think sometimes that animals have emotions and it is hard to think that some of them do not have some emotion. However, the feelings of love and hate, courage and fear, compassion and anger, joy and sadness, and so on, those are all related to man’s being an emotional being. When those feelings flow they affect the body at times. Yet we think of them as part of the person, the soul.

Another basic element of human personality is the will. Man is created with the ability and the responsibility to choose. We make choices. Animals act primarily out of impulse. The choices that they make are basi-

cally related to survival and protection and that goes more by impulse. However, men choose. God created us that way. God created us with the responsibility to choose destiny. That is related to whether or not we choose to serve God. Man is able to respond to divine revelation, or he is able to choose to not respond to divine revelation.

When I think of the soul, I would also include that some relates to emotion, some of it relates to his will, and some relates to the mind. However, our attitudes, affections, desires, qualities that we have, and the characteristics (some characteristics are inherited, some are acquired) it is all a part of the person and makes up the personality. (I am going beyond what I said now a bit about the basic elements of personality).

This is a bit off subject, but did you ever stop and think about what all went into making you the kind of person that you are? Think back over your ancestors a bit, your parents, and your grandparents on both sides, the kind of people they were and how that all brought together, and you have inherited a lot of things from them. Then add the way that you were raised, the things that you were taught, your environment, the choices that you have made.

It all makes a contribution to the kind of person that one is. Some of it, as I said, is inherited. It is not that I am making excuses, but that is the way it is, and we need to recognize that.

III) *Thinking about the spirit of man.* I said that the body is the world/environment conscious part of man. The soul is the self-conscious part of man, and I wanted to say this yet about the self-consciousness. We all live with ourselves. We are constantly with our own thoughts. There are always things going through our minds. We evaluate and interpret other things by how it relates to us. Then, we are constantly analyzing and interpreting and understanding.

Some people do not like to be with themselves. They do not like to be with their own thoughts and they try to crowd out their own thoughts with other things. Some people must have something going all the time. That is why people have the radio going. Sometimes when you call some business places, when you are waiting for someone that has put you on hold, you hear some tapes or you hear the radio or something like that. I would assume if it is a good tape it is all right, but the thought of the radio I wish that they would leave it off. I do not really mind being by myself

for a period of time.

Sometimes when people travel they think it is pure torture if they do not have something along to listen to. Well, it is nice to listen to things. It helps to keep us awake. However, there is something wrong if we mind being by ourselves and with our own thoughts and consciousness. That would be a subject in itself. Let us not get to the place where we are constantly filling, and where we constantly have something flowing in all the time such that we are never by ourselves. The best of music and the best of preaching tapes are out of place if we must have that kind of thing all the time.

Now, coming to the spirit of man. The spirit of man is the part of man that is God conscious. It is also non material like the soul. I think of a spirit relating to the life principle. That is also related somewhat to the soul, but I think of it as the capacity of the individual to relate to God. It is through which God touches and through which God reaches the man. The spirit is not a separate entity within man. Rather, it is a capacity with which man has been created. It is the part of man that makes it possible for him to exercise faith in what he has no tangible contact with. The spirit of man makes it possible

for him to have faith in something that he has never seen.

Men who try to interpret life and tell it in terms of the material do not understand faith and they ridicule faith. However, God made us so that He can reach us. He has an avenue through which He can touch the soul and it is that avenue, it is that part of us that makes it possible to believe things that we cannot see.

*A few Scriptures.* Ecclesiastes 3:21 first of all. Here a man is separated from the animals again. "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" Also, I would like to notice Job 32:8, "But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." Notice the connection between the spirit and the inspiration that comes from the Almighty. I said the spirit is the avenue through which God reaches the man. This is Elihu speaking. He was listening to the other three friends of Job and he hardly could contain himself anymore because he felt that these men being older should have wisdom and that they should speak first. However, he was dissatisfied with what they said. He said in verse 7, "I said, Days should

speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom” (Job 32:7). “But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” He is saying that because of the spirit of man God is able to teach him some things that is not related to age and experience, but because God is a teacher he knows and understands some things. That is “the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” That relates to the capacity of the individual to relate to God and for God to relate to the individual to touch him.

The other Scripture that I wanted to notice in connection with this is in Proverbs 20:27. It is a more familiar passage of Scripture possibly where it speaks about, “The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.” The spirit of man is, as I said, the channel through which God reaches man. It is the avenue through which God searches the man and works with him and tries to help him. I said that we cannot dissect it entirely. Nevertheless, there are some things we can conclude. I would conclude, especially with a Scripture like this and some other Scriptures that we would put the conscience in the category of the

spirit part of the spirit of man.

We know that the conscience is not infallible, and the conscience can be taught wrong, but God nevertheless does use the conscience. When it is properly taught, properly instructed, God uses the conscience to guide man. Why is it that when we do wrong the conscience smites us? Well, it is God speaking to us. It is God challenging us and making an appeal rather than simply letting us go. There is much that could be shared in relation to the law and the law of the conscience and all that. That is another, whole other subject. Nevertheless, it is good to understand some of that.

IV) *Let us think a little bit about the interdependence of these parts of man.* I already touched on that somewhat, but I said emotions are a part of the soul. Yet, we do know that emotions affect the body. What do we mean when we say “somebody has it on his nerves?” Nerves are physical. They can analyze nerves, and they can repair nerves, and they can fit them back together sometimes and impulses flow from the brain through nerves to the various parts of the body. Yet, usually when we say someone has some nerve problem we are not talking about the physical. We are talk-

ing about the emotional. We are talking about that which is related to the soul. Nevertheless, they are interrelated.

A weakened physical condition can affect the emotions and make the emotions weaker. Emotions that are out of control can certainly affect the body in many ways. I am sure all of us know what it is like to not be hungry because of the way our emotions are affected by some of the events, or some incidents or some news that we have received, or certain times of stress. Therefore, we see that that which is emotion belongs to that which belongs to the body.

We said that the senses are related to the body because we taste with our tongues and we touch with our body. We hear with our ears and we see with our eyes. Those are all physical functions. A familiar Scripture to us while we are thinking about this is the Scripture in Luke 16 where we have the account of the rich man in hell. This is in the intermediate state and there are a lot of things we do not understand about that, but was his body in hell? There is no reason to think that his body was in hell. The rich man's body was buried. It says that "the rich man also died, and was buried" (Luke 16:22). They had a burial for

him. Then, he woke up in the place of torment. His body was put into the ground.

His body was not in the place of torment, but it says in verse 24, "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." I would be inclined to think that he did not have a tongue. Rather, he had the feeling. He had the senses. They were there as a part of the person and related to the person within. Some of that could be debatable and open for discussion but think about that. It is something to simply stretch our minds a bit and think about. That is healthy and good for us.

To me it shows the interrelation and interdependence of the various parts, like the body and the soul here. The Scripture also says that "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11). That is physical. Yet, man the soul was not existing until God brought life to the flesh. Therefore, we see that interrelation. Also, another thing we notice is that the term "flesh" does not refer only to the body. We talk about this flesh and blood. Yet, when the Bible talks about this word flesh it is not always talking about the body. It

is talking about the appetite of the body, the appetites of the person that are expressed through the body, the senses of the flesh.

Another thing that illustrates the interdependence of these parts is when we talk about regeneration, and the person being made alive. We think about that as a spiritual experience, a person being converted. Yet, the Bible also speaks about “the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2), which is not necessarily part of the spirit. The Bible talks about being “born of the Spirit” (John 3:6, 8). Are those things contradictions? No, we are born of the Spirit and we have contact with God in submission to Him and that changes the person, as the person yields to the Lord. His mind is changed. He thinks differently. His spirit comes in contact with the Spirit of God.

That is one thing I should have said earlier when we were talking about the spirit. One thing that we ought to understand is that a person who is spiritually dead has a spirit. Technically, the definition of death is separation. In physical death the soul is separated from the body. Therefore, when we say that a person is spiritually dead that does not mean that he does not have a spirit. Rather, it means that his spirit is

not in touch with God. It is separated from God and he is not spiritually alive. We talk about spiritual needs that a person has. They can be met only by the spiritual. Those are a few things to help us think about that.

*A few observations.* As we think of man being body, soul, and spirit, and as we try to understand what the Bible says about us, I have a few conclusions, observations, and applications. All experiences that stir the emotions are not necessarily spiritual. Sometimes it is hard to evaluate that. Sometimes people come away from an experience they had, maybe a rousing church service or something, and they feel a real lift. They feel good. However, it might not necessarily have been spiritual. It is good for us to analyze that and think about that. What was it that gave me this lift? Was it simply a stirring of my emotions, or was it that I truly worshipped and was in contact with God and that my soul was fed through my spirit? Or, was it simply an emotional stirring?

Did you ever have the experience of telling someone that was a good sermon you heard? You could not remember anything that was said but you knew it was really good? I realize that we forget easily, and I know the feel-

ing. However, when that happens, maybe we ought to stop and take inventory. What really happened when I heard the message? Was there something there, a substance that fed the inner man? Or was it something that simply made me feel good while I was listening to it?

There are a lot of things that are defended for being right and spiritual when they merely stir the emotions. I talked about music earlier. I will not say much on this. This is not a subject on music, but music affects the soul. There is no doubt about it. Music is not strictly spiritual. It affects the soul. It affects the body. It needs to be accompanied with a spiritual message, a Scriptural message for that to be of lasting value.

Another, I talked about (I did not say much about this) but I said that the body is the world consciousness. I talked about God appealing to the soul through the spirit. I did not point out as much that the devil also wants to reach the soul. He wants to reach the inner man, but he does it more through the flesh, through the body. Does Satan always appeal to the person through the body? The Bible talks about sins of the spirit. What are they? What about coldness and complacency in spiritu-

al life? What about pride, envy, and hatred? Those are things that we can do in our minds that the body has no involvement in whatsoever. Satan can appeal to us through that.

Another conclusion, another observation is that we ought to understand that the whole person belongs to God — the whole person — body, soul, and spirit. It is not that we somehow give our spirits to God and let Him have that and then we keep the rest for ourselves, we keep the body for ourselves and that is not related to God. That is not how it is. The whole person belongs to God.

Understanding some things about ourselves and how fearfully and wonderfully we are made ought to cause us to worship the Creator as we consider the marvel of the creature that He has made. The very opposite happens so many times with man. Man “worship[s] and serve[s] the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). This subject applies to something we are facing in our day and that is the emphasis on rights, environmentalism and animal rights. I am not against an emphasis that encourages people to properly treat animals and realize that they have feelings and they can hurt and that we should not be

exploiting animals. There is pressure for more humane treatment of animals. A certain amount of that is not all that bad.

Nevertheless, behind a lot of this is the philosophy that totally ignores God. It has a pantheistic flavour where everything is god and god is everything, and God is not a personal being. People more and more turn to some of the Eastern mystical religions that are full of reincarnation. I know we think right on this, but I would emphasize again that there is a difference between man and the rest of Creation — a vast difference. Somehow putting them all on the same level is not doing what people think it will do.

It is not raising animals to more rights. Rather, it is finally demeaning man and lowering man, and bringing man to a level that will bring him into bondage. We are constantly bombarded by this sort of thing. It is important that we think right and that we stand firmly on the standard of God's Word and the principles of God's Word, and that we are not lifting ourselves up when we say it. It is the way it is. It is the way God made us and we are recognizing God as the Creator. We do not believe that animals live on into the next world like people do. We totally reject reincarnation. That is totally contrary to

anything that the Scriptures teach.

Finally when it all "boils down" it is related to the creature. That is what it is. We worship God, not the creature. Understanding something about the creature ought to turn our minds to the Creator and worship and extol Him. With the psalmist, when we consider how we are, "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14), it ought to cause us to praise the Lord for His wisdom, providence, and His goodness and to be glad that God has seen fit to make us a part of His creation.

Related to what I said about the soul, the whole person belonging to God, and God's interest in the whole person, I would like to conclude with 1 Thessalonians 5:23. I referred to this earlier but did not turn to it. Here is the Scripture where we have the three mentioned in the same verse. Here is God's interest in man. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." I am not sure we can build a lot on this, but my personal opinion is that there is some significance in the order which those are given. "your whole spirit and soul and body be

preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus

Christ.” May that be our desire and may we strive to that end.

## **The “Bishop District” Concept in the Mennonite Church**

The subject — “The Bishop District Concept,” is maybe a bit of a different subject from what we usually have on programs. Nevertheless, it certainly does suggest something about Church government and some things that relate to the leadership of the Church. I certainly agree with the subject. It is good to discuss it. Although, when it comes down to bringing a message on it maybe that is a bit different. We sing a hymn sometimes in which the words are so very important. “Lord of the Church, we humbly pray/ For those who guide us in the way,” — in the Church. How much we need that today, especially in this evil time. We cannot overemphasize the importance of praying for our leaders so that they might do the work of God and the work of the Church in a way that God can bless.

We would not want to imply that there is only one method that God can bless. I want to say that right at the beginning, even though probably my argument would be very strong in favour of the subject. I want to be understood that throughout Church

history one has seen that there have been times when God has seen fit to bless various ways and sometimes things do not always work exactly the way we think maybe they ought to. However, we do look at the Scriptures. We look at History. We look at our experiences today and we look at our frame of reference. We form some conclusions and sometimes we form some rather strong conclusions.

Certainly, the place of indoctrination is very necessary and it is very important. We see that because Satan is every busy trying to sow doubts. He is ever busy trying to mislead those who are faithful, those who are desiring to do what is right. Satan would mislead them. Therefore, we would say that the work of the Church is almost as much in the area of helping those people stay saved who are saved as what it is to help people become saved who are not saved yet. I simply would not know to say which is the most important.

Sometimes we talk about evangelism and we talk about how that we ought to spend more

time at labouring to get the lost people saved. I certainly believe that we do not overdo that. However, we also see that it is equally important to help those people stay saved who are saved, and the nurture of faith and bringing them through. Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). A very large part of the work of the Church is helping people to continue in His Word and to keep on so that they might not lose out. The truth and the warning against apostasy was present even in the Early Church. We see how that has, throughout Church history, brought much havoc among believers and people lost out. Sometimes large segments of believers lost out and drifted away. God only knows finally who was faithful and who was not. However, it many times does not look very good.

Therefore, the importance of indoctrination and teaching "line upon line" and "precept upon precept" (Isaiah 28:10, 13), is certainly important. Special meetings, all day meetings, and meetings like this fill a place and we want to certainly give our support to that. Every congregation, every district, has some of that in a year's time and it is right that we do that.

The theme that we have is this matter of a "bishop district" concept in the Mennonite Church. We, of course, are talking primarily of the Old Mennonite Church and this concept of having bishop districts in a Church and it is where there are several congregations that a certain bishop is responsible and those congregations then form a bishop district. That is what is meant by this concept of a bishop district. I suppose the most effective illustration of that concept has been reflected in Mennonite Church in the Eastern Conferences — the Lancaster Conference, the Franconia Conference, the Washington County Maryland/Franklin County Pennsylvania, and the Virginia Conferences. Those Conferences were the most pronounced that way. There were bishop districts and those lines were kept quite carefully. At least for a long time that was the way it was.

The Mennonites of America were, shall we say, a bit different from the Mennonites in Europe. One reason was because they had the freedom to develop this. In Europe there was so much persecution, so much chasing around, and so much uncertainty that many times it is hard to trace where these groups of people were. Districts would not have

lasted very long because there was a constant shifting, not only because of persecution but also because of apostasy.

*Therefore, when we talk about the bishop district concept in the Mennonite Church that largely turns to American Mennonitism.* Prior to the Mennonites coming to America, we would find that the Mennonites in Holland had largely apostasized already. There was some of that early in the Mennonite history in Holland and in other places where there were bishops responsible for certain congregations and certain districts. An illustration of that is how Leonard Bouwens (or depending on how the name was spelled) according to history had baptized around 10,000 souls. That would be an indication. That was not all in one congregation. Therefore, it was certainly there, some of that, but as I stated before the uncertainty, the persecution, the fluid, and the moving around of the people due to many uncertainties, made that pattern much less rigid than what we find it then in American Mennonitism.

When the Mennonites came to Pennsylvania in 1683, of course, for a good many years not very much developed. Finally however, in the early 1700's and through the first half of the

1700's this concept developed. However, it actually did not take shape quite like we have it today until after the Revolution when there were more congregations and those districts finally formulated. If you read M. G. Weaver's book *Mennonites of Lancaster Conference* you can readily see that all developed and how that became a pattern of Church government. Whether it was considered the best or not for that time that is how it developed. Looking back on it, I suppose, we would say that there probably could not have been a better way to develop than the way it developed. It certainly did serve very well in its time, and it has continued to do that down to the present time.

The Mennonites who came to America in a later period from the 1820's on up until 1900's — the Swiss Mennonites, and the Russian Mennonites — those did not follow the same pattern of the bishop district. Those more followed the same pattern that the Amish followed when they had a bishop or they had a bishop and a minister and deacon for each congregation. Therefore, that brought a different kind of Church government into focus than what you have when you have a bishop district when one bishop is responsible for several

congregations.

That could be argued now, which is the most effective, but that is not our purpose. *We want to look at its development, and that concept, the benefits that we derive from that concept, how that serves us today, and how we believe that it will continue to serve us.* The four histories that bring that out the best are M. G. Weaver's book, John C. Wenger's book *History of the Mennonites of the Franconia Conference*, Daniel R. Lehman's book *Mennonites of the Washington Co., Maryland and Franklin Co., Pennsylvania Conference*, as well as Henry A. Brunk's book *History of Mennonites in Virginia*.

Those give us a good concept as to how this was viewed in relation to Church government and the bishop district, and how that in most cases, or we would say very seldom was there in those circumstances a bishop for only one congregation. That was not simply because it happened that way by accident. Rather, that was the plan and that was the conviction that when a person was called to this work that he was called to a circuit rather than only to one congregation. We will look at some of the reasons for that a bit later. Nevertheless, that does put it into focus and

that concept still continues today.

We might rightly stop at this point as far as that background is concerned and we might remind ourselves how nearly this concept was lost. In the 1950's and into the 1960's when we would say worldliness came into these Conference bodies like a flood, it appeared like nothing would be able to stop it anymore. It did have a profound effect on this type of Church government so much so that this type of Church government was very seriously under attack. It did not begin with saying that we do not want districts anymore. Rather, it worked on the individuals, so that by the time our Church group started it would have been almost as easy to go congregational as to what it was go and continue the practice that we have now. There were many that felt that was about the only way it could be held anymore. We are glad today that it did not go that way, but that we maintained this district concept because of what it provides for us. Sometimes there are those that maybe feel it is not, it has some shortcomings and we will admit that it probably has. Nevertheless, the fact remains when you look at what history records for us, we want to remember that those things are written for our learning and we

ought to learn from them.

*A few things that I would like to note from the Scriptures.* They do not necessarily say that it is in favour of the bishop district concept. However, but we have had various articles in the *Eastern Mennonite Testimony* and our periodicals on the three office ministry, on the work of the bishop, what his responsibility is, and how he should function, and generally if it is not so stated, it is at least assumed that it is much safer when he is not alone responsible or he is not responsible only to one congregation. That is at least implied if it is not stated that way.

In 2 Corinthians 11 the apostle Pauls says as he lists, or enumerates the things that he endured, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28), which would indicate that he had the responsibility of more than one congregation. It was his responsibility to go from congregation to congregation and in this way the congregations were kept united and were kept, shall we say, tied together. That was a care and that was not something that was easy. I suppose it was somewhat like it was some years ago in talking with an individual who belonged to a group that had

now ceased having bishops. When he was asked, "Why did you take that step?" He simply said, "It is too tough. It is simply too tough to be a bishop. Therefore, we decided not to have any more. It is too hard work." Paul could have said that too. Besides him, there comes upon him "the care of all the churches," and so that is a work.

In 1 Timothy 3 Paul wrote to Timothy whom we believe was one of Paul's successors. (He charged him at least). Titus was also one of his successors in administrative work. However, he told Timothy that he writes in these things and he is to pay attention so "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God." (1 Timothy 3:15). "If it goes a while until I come so that you might know how that you ought to conduct yourself and how you ought to behave yourself among the churches."

In 1 Peter 5:4 the apostle Peter tells us about the work of a shepherd, and this could mean a pastor, minister, as well as a bishop, but I think it applies to a bishop. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." The idea is that there is place and a point of responsibility, maybe I will simply read those few vers-

es. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; (3) Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. (4) And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (5) Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:2-5). Then, he continues on and encourages further yet the importance of humility, and how that unless there is true humility the work of God cannot be properly done.

*As we think of this bishop district concept maybe we should simply look at a few of the objections that are offered sometimes.* I think that will put it in the perspective. 1) Sometimes people say, "The bishop is not there all the time, then he hardly knows what is happening." That is probably partly true but that is probably all the more reason why it should be that way. Many times with the local leadership, if a problem develops, it is good for a fresh objective view to come and it is good in relation to solv-

ing problems that way.

The other idea that we look at from that vantage point is that the Scriptures imply this. There are those who are to be those that are responsible for various places so that it might create a greater unity among the believers in various places. As they go from place to place that brings that kind of unity to bear and that unity then does not deteriorate.

2) As we think of the bishop district we always see that it does suggest some development. There are a few things that are implied by this. When we think of the bishop district, and as we think of our church group, it does suggest that it is a group of bishops that are working together toward a common goal. That is implied because there are more congregations in our church group than what would make up one district. Therefore, it is simply understood that there is a group of bishops working together toward one common goal. It seems to me that it is good for bishops to need to strive toward unity among themselves, not only for unity among the congregations but to strive for unity among themselves. That is a personal challenge. It is a sanctifying challenge. Now we do not always achieve that like maybe we ought to, but that is a very

healthy challenge. It does imply a group of bishops working toward a common goal.

3) Also, it does automatically imply that we must have a uniform discipline. Can you imagine what kind of chaos we would have if within our bishop group we would have about that many different disciplines? It would not go long until there would be no discipline. That is about how it would work. In contrast, we have one common discipline that all of the bishop districts subscribe to. There may be a few emphases now and then in one direction or another that are not exactly identical, but we should always strive for unity. That does include a certain amount of uniformity. That is where there is consulting together. As bishops strive for a united position among themselves, it will automatically be reflected then in the congregations and in the entire church group.

4) Also, it does imply that this working unity is only possible when there is yieldedness to each other. That is also a very sanctifying, or at least, it should be a very sanctifying experience. Whenever there is a feeling or attitude which develops among bishops that is anything else than that you can be sure that somewhere along the line there will be

serious trouble. It simply works that way. Therefore, we look at that yieldedness to each other. Finally, when we think of the bishops working together or the bishop's districts, implying that working together of the bishops, it means that there is a yielding to each other. Sometimes that goes really easy. Sometimes that does not go so easy. The real test comes as to whether I am finally willing to yield to my fellow bishops in my own ideas or whether I will seek support from my ministry for my position rather than helping my fellow ministry to also agree that what all the other bishops do this is the right way to do it.

We have seen in the past enough of what happened when that kind of spirit finally gets ripe and prevails. It gives all kinds of havoc. It is a type of work that we might say quietly and stealthily happens but we must ever strive for that. We might say that the bishop district concept does do something for the man. I would go a step further and say that having bishop districts in a sense then determines what kind of bishops you will have. That is about the long and short of it.

5) You might raise the question, "Are you saying then that if we have bishop districts then we have better bishops? Is that what

you are saying?" I would not want to say that, but I really believe that. However, I would not simply want to say that. Bishops that have needed to face the challenge of working together and working through problems and disagree with each other and yet finally coming to unity and being able to forbear with each other probably are better able to forbear with their ministry. They probably are better able to forbear with differences that rise in the congregation. Therefore, I say again that the bishop district concept does in a sense finally determine what kind of bishops we have. For myself that is the kind that I want to work with. That is where I want to identify. Therefore, I very cheerfully speak on this subject. That is what I want for myself, and that is what I want for those I am responsible for.

*There are definitely some strengths that we feel are a part of this approach.* Looking at history again there is a reason why the Conferences in the East held on longer and did not apostasize as quickly as some of the other Mennonite Conferences did. They even produced an Old Order within them, when many others did not. There is a reason for that. 1) I would say that one of the significant reasons is the

fact that they had this kind of bishop district concept. That helped produce that because there was something there that simply did not let things go to pieces as quickly as in some other areas.

The Lancaster Conference had a board of bishops. When they had 16,000 members, they had about sixteen bishops at one point. Now, when they have about a similar amount of members, they have about fifty bishops. Does it make things any better? I would say maybe it goes from one extreme to the other. We are not saying here now how many is practical. When once you do not know your people anymore it is hardly practical. I think we would agree with that. Nevertheless, there was a significant reason why there was some more preserved in this system, than in some other systems. That tells me there is probably some value in it that sometimes was talked down.

2) Also, we believe when we think of the strength of this type of a system, it does help an individual bishop maybe to overcome some of his weaknesses in a way that he would not overcome if he were left to himself. We all have them and we learn from each other. You learn that learn by doing and you learn

from each other. When we think of a disciplined church, I do not know how it would be possible to properly guide the church and to properly bring to bear, shall we say, the discipline of the Word upon a membership and always have the goodwill of everyone. When you do not have it, and there are those that turn against you, that is the time when a bishop needs his fellow bishops to help him through those times, if he did not quite do it right so that it might be done right then. Or, if he is treated unjustly that he has the support that is needed.

Those are strengths that go along with the bishop district concept. 3) We should also keep in mind as we think of a bishop district, not only do the bishops themselves receive some help, but we also find that the congregations receive some help by having that kind of relationship. Maybe sometimes we take that for granted. Would not the members of one congregation in a district feel that there is some benefit in being related to other churches in the same district or to any of the other congregations? Why, of course there is. Even though maybe at the moment you would think, "Well, what is it?" By and large there is. There is some benefit and that is also a benefit not only of what your

bishop benefits but what you yourself benefit.

4) Possibly there is another benefit that we see in it (and this was coming back to the bishop or to the man again) when we think of this approach to a bishop district. We have a uniform discipline. Usually the bishop who is responsible for upholding the "church law," or who is responsible for upholding the church discipline (which is our church law) is not responsible for defending himself. I have often seen that. It makes the biggest difference when a leader is finally obligated to defend himself or whether he is obligated to defend the law. It makes a big difference as to what finally, the outcome is. Look around a little and see what is happening and has happened and you can readily see that.

*To be fair, we need to maybe look at a few of the shortcomings and maybe some of the dangers that are associated with our system and with this bishop district arrangement. 1) There is a danger where you have a bishop that is responsible for four, five six congregations or more that he merely becomes a figure head rather than an influence. In other words, his time is so divided that he is more of a figure head than what he is an influence. That can become a danger.*

In order to avoid conflict he may steer around things and finally he is simply a figure head and is not an influence. That becomes a snare. Whereas, if he has charge of only one congregation, he would only do that in one congregation. However, here is where our uniform discipline again comes in. It does not go long until that becomes obvious why it is happening if that is happening.

2) Another snare, another danger that we need to constantly guard against is the bishop is not merely a moderator among the ministry. The Church of the Brethren call their bishop a moderator and I guess that is what he is. He is only elected for a term and then they can elect someone else again. We are not saying that to be critical, but we do not do it that way, nor do we want to do it that way. The bishop must be more than only being the moderator among the ministry. He must be that influence that God expects him to be so that he might fulfill his calling before God, because he is responsible so that the flock is not misled.

3) Another of the shortcomings that can happen (and sometimes it does) is that is possible to develop maybe a “mini Conference” or sort of a mini Conference within a Conference.

The district sort of develops a mini Conference. “This is what our district does,” and the efforts and the enthusiasm all go into that rather than into the entire church group at large. Usually that does not go long until it becomes obvious that it is not productive. I am simply mentioning those as a few things that could be shortcomings.

As we look at this concept and we look at what has happened, I am glad that this kind of a pattern has been established. I would like to challenge each one of you to read Martin Weaver’s book again, especially chapter 13. In fact you should read the whole thing again. Simply read it again. It is too bad that apostasy has overtaken so many that were affected by it, but on the other hand we can all benefit yet from those things. We can see how God blessed those efforts. It is true that maybe M. G. Weaver did elevate the bishop office a little higher than what we would want. He often refers to “He was elevated to the bishop office.” We do not say that. Jesus said if a person would be a chief he should be a servant (Mark 10:44). I think we know how he meant it, but it is a very good illustration of this kind of a system and how it works and the benefits of it. It is not that he



## **From the Previous Issue:**

### **Preparing For Eternity**

From a devotional by brother Marvin Schwartz  
Tennessee/Kentucky Life Conference Meetings May, 2004

Held at Mt. Carmel Bible Fellowship

**Mennonite Christian Fellowship KY/TN**

**Youth Bible Study**

**Rutherford, TN**

**February 9–11, 2007**

**Theme: Building For the Future**

**Gambling and Slot Machines in Light of Bible Principles —**

**1 Timothy 6:8–10**

From a topic by Joshua Watson

Saturday February 10, 2007

**Book Reprint** (*continued*)

**The Seven Laws of Teaching**

CHAPTER VI (*continued*)

**THE LAW OF THE TEACHING PROCESS**

### **The Self-Active Mind**

22. It follows from all this that only when the mental powers work freely and in their own way can the product be sure or permanent. No one can know exactly what any mind contains, or how it performs, save as that mind imperfectly reveals it by words or acts, or as we conceive it by reflecting upon our own conscious experience. Just as the digestive organs must do their own work, masticating and digesting whatever food they receive, selecting, secreting, assimilating, and so building

bone, muscle, nerve, and all the various tissues and organs of the body, so, too, in the last resort, the mind must perform its function, without external aid, building, as it can, concepts, faith, purposes, and all forms of intelligence and character. As Milton expressed it:

“The mind is its own place, and in itself

Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.”

23. If the fact of the mind’s autocracy is thus emphasized, it is not for the purpose of belittling the work of the teacher,

but only to show more clearly the law which gives to that work all its force and dignity. It is the teacher's mission to stand at the spiritual gateways of his pupils' minds, serving as a herald of science, a guide through nature, to summon the minds to their work, to place before them the facts to be observed and studied, and to guide them into the right paths to be followed. It is his by sympathy, by example, and by every means of influence - by objects for the senses, by facts for the intelligence - to excite the mind of the pupils, to stimulate their thoughts.

24. The cautionary clause of our law which forbids giving too much help to pupils will be needless to the teacher who clearly sees his proper work. Like a skilful engineer who knows the power of his engine, he chooses to stand and watch the play of the splendid machine and marvel at the ease and vigor of its movements. It is only the unskilled teacher who prefers to hear his own voice in endless talk rather than to watch and direct the course of the thoughts of his pupils.

25. There is no disagreement between this law and the first and third, which so strongly insist upon the teacher's knowledge of the subject. Without full and

accurate knowledge of the subject that the pupil is to learn through his self-active efforts, the teacher certainly cannot guide, direct, and test the process of learning. One may as well say that a general need know nothing of a battle-field because he is not to do the actual fighting, as that a teacher may get on with inadequate knowledge because the pupils must do the studying. As we have said, there are exceptions to the rule that the pupil should be told nothing that he can discover for himself. There are some occasions when the teacher may, for a few moments, become a lecturer and, from his own more extensive experience, give his pupils broader, richer, and clearer views of the field of their work. But in such cases he must take care not to substitute mere telling for true teaching, and thus encourage passive listening where he needs to call for earnest work.

26. The most important stimuli used by nature to stir the minds of men have already been noted. They might all be described as the silent but ceaseless questions which the world and the universe are always addressing to man. The eternal questions of childhood are really the echoes of these greater questions. The object or the event

that excites no question will provoke no thought. Questioning is not, therefore, merely one of the devices of teaching, it is really the whole of teaching. It is the excitation of the self-activities to their work of discovering truth. Nature always teaches thus. But it does not follow that every question should be in the interrogative form. The strongest and clearest affirmation may have all the effect of the interrogation, if the mind so receives it. An explanation may be so given as to raise new questions while it answers old ones.

27. The explanation that settles everything and ends all questions, usually ends all thinking also. After a truth is clearly understood, or a fact or principle established, there still remain its consequences, applications, and uses. Each fact and truth thoroughly studied leads to other facts which renew the question-

ing and demand fresh investigation. The alert and scientific mind is one that never ceases to ask questions and seek answers. The scientific spirit is the spirit of tireless inquiry and research. The present time, so far excelling the past in the development of its arts and sciences, is the time of great questions.

28. As with the world, so with the child. His education begins as soon as he begins to ask questions. It is only when the questioning spirit has been fully awakened, and the habit of raising questions has been largely developed, that the teaching process may embody the lecture plan. The truth asks its own questions as soon as the mind is sufficiently awake. The falling apple had the question of gravitation in it for the mind of Newton; and the boiling teakettle propounded to Watt the problem of a steam-engine.

## **Youth Book Reprint** *(continued)*

### **Judith**

#### I

#### HAPPY DAYS OF CHILDHOOD

#### *The Beloved Daughter (continued)*

Nearly every year they had been with their mother at the grandfather's home, sometimes for months at a time. Judith remembered well how frequently

several other rabbis, older than her grandfather, but just as wise and dignified as he, had come to visit. She had noticed that they were in conferences whole days,

sometimes even whole nights. She had heard them argue, sometimes very loudly. Often names like "Moses" and "Yeshua" (Jesus) had been mentioned. In connection with the latter name, strange words had been uttered - "deceiver, impostor" - and other similar expressions. She had been greatly interested to know about whom they were talking, but she had always been afraid to ask her grandfather about it. Judith was especially eager to know who this "Yeshua," the "deceiver," was. But now it would be different. Since her father had given her permission, she would ask him about everything.

So the happy life continued in the home of David Weinberg. Summer came and the girls' school was closed. Summer vacation began, and the family could now leave the dusty cities for the fresh air and beauty of the country.

Shortly after the close of school there was a great commotion in the home of the Weinbergs. Near the front door was the spacious family carriage drawn by two beautiful horses. It was half-filled with boxes, suitcases, and valises of various kinds and sizes. The driver,

accustomed to frequent traveling, was piling up the things so as to leave room for his passengers. Merry laughter rang through the house as the children ran up and down the stairs. One had forgotten where she had put her pet doll. Another did not know what had happened to the package that contained the presents for Grandfather and Grandmother. Everything was topsy-turvy in the rooms. The mother did not know what to do first. The girls were eager to assist her and the maid in packing the things required for the summer. In their eagerness to help, they hindered one another as well as their mother and the servant. Somehow the shoes that had just been polished found their way into the suitcase with the best clothes. Mrs. Weinberg's good new hat had disappeared and was found in the bag, after half an hour's search, with the things they needed for the trip.

Finally Mrs. Weinberg found herself with her daughters in the carriage, tired and worn out. Mr. Weinberg did not go. Business demanded his presence in the city. With a good-bye to his wife and children, he gave the last orders to the driver, and they were off.

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made"

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