

# 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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## **Casual Appearance and Its Influence**

The Counsel Service is a time of self-examination in preparation for communion that brings into focus, primarily, two related things, our relationship with God and our relationship with the church. Finally, we cannot separate those. The question is whether or not we have peace with God and our fellow man. I think we should understand having peace with our fellow man. It is not only relating to whether or

not we have had any run-ins or whether there have been any personal offenses that we are holding something against a brother. In order to say that we are at peace, and that we are willing to work with the standards of the church, I think also involves the fact that we are open to what our brethren consider to be acceptable conduct. It does not mean that we need to follow every concern that comes, but I think a lot

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of the concerns that come into the counsel room at times is nearly the consensus of the group in general, and we should give some attention to that.

It is a time to share some concerns, having an openness to those when we come together in counsel, and to have an interest in understanding what our brethren see, and to receive help from that. I think that is all a part of working with our church standard and being at peace with our

fellow man.

There are constantly trends in society that tend to affect the Church and rub off on the Church. The Church needs to address fads, practices, and innovations that may not necessarily be spelled out in the discipline but nevertheless are a violation of the spirit of the discipline, and will militate against it. We have, over the years, in my experience in the ministry, at various times, addressed things which we did

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not specifically mention in the standard. I remember someone telling me one time, “You know, you make the standards as you go. If the ministry decides that they do not like something why, they make an issue of it.” That was somewhat his view and of course he did not continue with us very long.

It could be looked at that way, but I think rather it ought to be seen that the ministry, in their interest in maintaining a right kind of church life, are seeing things that are threats to that. While they may be fleeting and passing, and do not need to be incorporated into a standard in a lot of detail, they nevertheless need to be addressed because they militate against the things that we do speak on, and militate against maintaining a plain, separated church.

The Bible teaches us to be separate from the world. There are classic well-worn Scriptures which we turn to. For instance, “And be not conformed to this world.” (Romans 12:2) That especially speaks of appearance because the word “conformed” is related to the word “fashion.” Then, we have other Scriptures like 2 Corinthians 6:17, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the

unclean thing; and I will receive you.” Then, we might think of the familiar Scripture in 1 John 2:15, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Those are familiar Scriptures to us. In fact, probably many of us could quote those verses by memory. We have heard those emphasized again and again.

There is no disagreement about what the Bible says. That is plain. I think we will all agree, yes, the Bible teaches us to be separate from the world, but what is worldliness? What are things that identify us with the world? Where does one draw the line? We know that there are various places where lines are drawn in various church groups. We do not all draw the line at exactly the same place. I suppose that has been somewhat of a perennial question as to how tightly we need to draw the lines, and what worldliness really is.

I am not trying to imply that no one can really say, or that no one knows what it is, and that it is for each individual to decide. I do not mean that. I was with a group that visited Bolivia and we visited what is called the “Central Menno,” the MCC place in Santa Cruz, and we met the

director who was from Manitoba. In our minds he was a liberal man and somewhat worldly, but he reminded us that there are groups in Bolivia who would consider us to be quite worldly because we have automobiles, electricity, and things like that.

There are various places that people have drawn lines in an attempt to put into practical expression what worldliness is and what needs to be done to be separate from the world. I am not ridiculing the places where others have drawn the line when I say that. There are sincere attempts to find where that line is.

Does the world ever introduce things that are neutral? There are changes in styles and fashions. I am not only talking about appearance, but the things that we do and all of that. Is any of that neutral — neither right nor wrong? Perhaps. I believe there are some things like that. I think that what can make it wrong are our motives and our willingness to identify with what the world happens to be doing at the time. There are things that are neither right nor wrong in themselves. They become wrong because they are an expression of an identification that we ought not to be making. Are there subtle ways that we can be influenced to do

things that seem neutral — neither right nor wrong — but are actually used by the Devil to lead us away from the truth? I think there are things like that.

For some time, I have had a concern about the trend that I see among us to become more and more casual. This is not so much in our church going apparel as in our other areas of activities and other areas of dress. I know that young people do not think that someone who can remember back forty years is very young anymore. I still consider myself that way. I have seen in my short lifetime, changes in society in this amount of time — a lot of changes about the way people do things, and what is accepted and what is not accepted. There are a lot of things which are acceptable today in general society which were not when I was a boy. Did those things simply happen? Or, was there some force sweeping the culture that caused these things to happen, and that there was actually a plan behind it (maybe no plan that one person had, but that the Devil himself had).

Most things do not simply happen. I know that for inspiration in a spiritual way, it is good to take a passage of Scripture, or take the Scriptures and develop that. I have chosen to not do as

much of that in this message. I want you to know that this is an exception, but I think there is a place sometimes to do that. I am not really choosing a text. However, if I would choose a Scripture to base this on, I would like to draw attention to two Scriptures (actually the same incident in the teaching of Jesus but given two different ways).

This matter of casual clothes and casualness in general, we have touched on at various times in messages and we make some applications. We hit at it every once and a while and concerns are shared about it in somewhat of a general way. I thought there would be a place to perhaps give a little more time, and think about some more details and maybe some underlying reasons or forces that are behind it. Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:13, 14)

This teaching of Jesus is really not that hard to understand. It is rather clear. Where exactly the line is between the broad and the narrow, may be controversial or may be discussed. However,

Jesus made it clear that the way to heaven is a narrow way, and there are few people that find it. It is too difficult for the flesh to walk this narrow way. The word "strait," is an archaic term, which we do not use much in this way anymore. It also means narrow. I think it actually has a more intense meaning, or maybe a more narrow meaning than the word narrow because it can mean, "tight," or something that we can hardly get through. The gate that leads to life is a very narrow, strait, tight gate, and the way is narrow in contrast to the way that leads to destruction. The way that leads to destruction is a way that is broad. It is easy to get on that road. In fact, we do not have to do anything to get onto that road. It accommodates the flesh. It is according to our natural inclination. Therefore, the broad road is an easy road, but the narrow road is a difficult road. In fact, we cannot walk it ourselves, and we cannot take the things of the flesh along.

That which is easy is natural to the flesh. Many are finding their way there, but the strait is the opposite. This should impress upon us the seriousness of life and life's choices because we are choosing an eternity. The way to heaven is a narrow way and not many people are finding it. In

Luke's account in 13:24 Jesus said in answer to their question of verse 23, "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." We do not simply happen to stumble through the strait gate and on to the narrow way. It does not work that way. It is something we choose to do and it something that we strive to enter into, because Jesus says, a lot of people who want to go that way will not be able to.

I will not make more comments on the Scripture, but I would like for us to keep this in mind. We could also think of other well worn Scriptures used by those who have a background in the plain church and Scriptures that our forefathers used many times. One other one that I am thinking of is, "for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15) As I think of where we are today and some of the things that we see in society around us, I would like to spend a little time thinking of some history and some background to this.

Tremendous social upheavals took place in Western Society. When I say Western Society, I am

thinking especially of the United States, Canada and Western Europe. In the decade of the 1960's, these social upheavals took place. Some of us lived through the 60's and did not realize all that was happening at the time because we were children. I turned thirteen in 1960 and, of course, then I was in my early twenties by the time we entered the 70's. What happened in the 60's actually began in the 50's and continued on into the 70's. Some of those things are still continuing today. Some of the expressions we do not see as much, but the results of it we are still feeling today in many ways.

Now, some may ask, "Is that simply your idea?" The 60's, as a time of major social change, foment, and upheaval, is recognized by both social scientists and historians. One author compared the 60's to the radical reconstruction of the South following the Civil War. He wrote, "This time, the reconstruction did not only affect the south, it included the whole nation." Another book which I had access to is a 400-page book that talks only, or primarily about, the American history during the 1960's. It is a ten-year period, and the title of the book is *Coming Apart*. This tells us something about what some his-

torians think about, that happened during the 1960's. In fact the 60's have sometimes been compared to the "Roaring 20's."

The Roaring 20's were a time of economic progress and also a time of a lowering of moral standards. This was greatly increased in the 60's, but the '20's gave American and Western Society cut hair for women, and things like that. I am not certain when divorce became more common. That was certainly not the first case of divorce, but bobbed or cut hair for women and styles related to that were introduced during the roaring 20's along with other social changes.

It is rather difficult to say when something like this, that we are talking about really starts because everything usually follows something else, and everything usually has some roots behind them. Therefore, to say that this started in the 50's and we see it coming into a culmination on the 60's, is maybe a bit narrow or a bit naïve. Many people however, do look back to World War II (both World Wars but especially World War II) as a time when tremendous social changes were brought to bear in this nation. It related a lot to the fact that there were US servicemen with a much broader exposure than we ever had before

because they were in Europe, the Far East, the Pacific theatre and so on. Also, women were entering the labour force. That was something new in World War II. The men were gone. Therefore, the women worked in factories to produce what the war needed and other things as well.

Thus, social scientists think of World War II as having been a time of tremendous change. However, when one comes into the late 40's and 50's, one writer said that the intellectuals and the liberals considered the 50's to be a very dull time. However, there were things that happened in the 50's that laid the groundwork for what we see then, coming to full fruit (we might say) in the 60's. There are four things that I will mention from the 50's. 1) One was the coming of television. According to the statistics that I saw, in 1947, in the US, there were 10,000 television sets. That sounds like a lot to us, but ten years later, in 1957, there were 40 million. Really, by the mid to late 50's nearly every home had a television. When I went to school the only people who did not have televisions were the people who came from homes of plain churches — Mennonites and related groups. It was commonly accepted and had a tremendous influence on

American society.

2) Another thing that I was not aware of as much was during the administration of Chief Justice Earl Warren in the 50's that the Supreme Court became much more activist. It began handing down decisions that really were the responsibility of the Legislature rather than the courts. He was appointed by President Eisenhower, supposedly as a conservative but in the end he introduced, or developed, a very activist court. This has increased to our day.

3) Another thing that we might mention is the introduction of "Rock and Roll" music and Elvis Presley as an Icon or as a symbol of Rock and Roll. Certainly, it is worse today, but that comes from the 50's. 4) Another thing was the consolidation of the school systems. Some of those came in the early '60's in parts of the country like Pennsylvania because they were more conservative, but in a lot of places it took place earlier.

As I said, the '60's were a time of reconstruction. I will define what that is. One source is a history of the US, and this volume addresses especially the time from 1929 – 1985. It is entitled *The Welfare State*. He says, "A new reconstruction swept over the United States in the '60's and

the early '70's. Its antecedents go back at least into the 1950's though America seemed placid enough at that time. . . It may be called a reconstruction because its thrust was to make over, change, and transform the country. It might also be thought of as revolutionary in intent, though technically no revolution took place." Then, he goes on to say how "this resembled in many ways the reconstruction of the South in the late 1800's"

What was it that changed in the '60's? 1) There was a strong thrust for equal rights, especially coming from the African American sector. "Civil rights," was the word that was used. Many of the early African American leaders were promoting non violent change and non violent attention brought to their plight. They did not have equal acceptance in society with the white people. In the '50's there were many restaurants in the south who did not serve African American people. There were public places where they had segregated rest room facilities for both races separately and all sorts of things like that. These are things that our younger generation does not know anything about, or does not remember anything of. There was a strong push among their community for

equal rights. Men like Martin Luther King, Jr. (who was actually trained as a minister) actually became a civil rights activist although he promoted the non violent approach to it. Included in that, the courts integrated the schools. I talked about the consolidation of schools, now what I am talking about is the integration of schools where they actually bussed people from one community to another so that both races would go to school together. This was supposed to be a major social improvement which really and finally did not work.

There were the racial riots. Some of us remember reading about that in the newspaper. Some of us remember being in cities where riots took place during our 1W days. The young people might ask, "What do you mean by riots?" We are talking about the throwing of stones at vehicles, smashing and breaking windows in stores, going in and looting (that means helping yourself to whatever was in the store), a general rising up against order and law enforcement, and there was the burning of buildings. Some of these things became so serious that government leaders called in the National Guard to put down the disturbance. All those things happened in my life-

time.

Another thing that happened in the '60's was the rising up of college and university students against the authority in the schools, and wanting to have a lot more say in the way the schools were run and even taking over sometimes. They would object to certain rules and they would have "sit-ins." Quite a few students would go and sit in the principal's office for instance, or the president's office of the university and stay there and not move until their demands were met. These became so serious at times that the police and sometimes the military needed to be called in to restore order. One writer said that in the '50's students were not politically involved and had no strong feelings politically, that however changed in the 1960's.

One of the things that was a reason for venting these strong feelings by students was the Vietnam War. There was a lot of opposition to the Vietnam War. There were peace demonstrations, peace marches and people carried signs telling the US to get out of Vietnam (and they were promoting peace supposedly).

I would like to notice what this author again says about this activism of the students. It was a rebellion against the system. "It

was a general revolt as [one] professor called it. A general revolt got underway at Berkeley [in California] in 1964. A revolt of the younger against the older, of the sons against their fathers, a revolt against the system. They revolted against all inherited authority.” One of its characteristics, as this professor noted, was the will to demonstrate, to be disobedient, to bring the system to a grinding halt, or to lay one’s body on the line. They really borrowed a lot of these things from the African American society. I failed to say in discussing that, that it did become increasingly violent. There were leaders who were calling for violence and saying the only way African Americans would be equal or ever be free was if they cause war. There was a lot of violence in relation to that.

It was a rebellion against the system. People were disillusioned with the “establishment,” as they called it. Established institutions were looked down on rather than looked up to as they had been in the past. There were many clashes with the police in these student uprisings. There was such a strong anti-police and anti law enforcement feeling that people revelled in the idea of getting in trouble with the police, and the police were called pigs.

Some of you may remember seeing those things in the newspaper. Obscenities were shouted at police when they came to quell demonstrations and to try to restore order. In the late ‘60’s there was an incident that received worldwide attention. At Kent State University in Ohio, students were colliding with police and the police were trying to drive them back and they came back against them again. Finally, four men turned and fired into the group of students and four students were killed. There was a large outcry against that and it seemed like, through that whole time, the focus of the media was more on the police and showing police brutality than on the insurrection of the young people.

Along with this was the “hippie movement” — the drug culture. There was a man by the name of Timothy Leary who actually promoted LSD (sometimes known as “acid”) as a way for a person’s mind to be expanded. It was seen as a good thing — it “liberated” a person. That was the watch word. Incidentally, these things were happening while a lot of communist inspired movements were occurring elsewhere in the world in numerous places. This Timothy Leary was quite an evil influence. It says here, “He

became some sort of a guru for a time for his advocacy of his use of drugs, most notably acid, to obtain mind expansion. The revolt against authority spread far beyond campus into countless homes where children defied their parents and countless rending breaks between parents and children occurred. The hippies came sporting long hair.”

I talked about Elvis Presley and Rock and Roll. There were a lot of things that we do not have time to go into. However, one group I remember in the early to mid ‘60’s was *The Beatles*. They were a singing group of four young men from England who sported collar length hair, which was very unusual for that time, and they were promoting all sorts of strange ideas with their music. They were tremendously popular. Places where they performed were sold out many times over and their records made them extremely wealthy. They really did not entertain all that long because they became extremely wealthy. There was the “hippie” culture, as I referred to earlier, with their long hair, and unkempt slovenly appearance. They were young people like this gathering together for what they called “love-ins.” They somehow confused peace and appreciating a brother with immorality. The

term, “the new morality,” and the “morals revolution,” became common terms during that time. As a youth, I remember ministers saying that the new morality is nothing but the old immorality. It is not new.

Social moors changed and people were pressing for public acceptance of and public use of obscenities and profanity. They came into television and the films. Moral standards changed drastically. Along with this fashions changed. The thing that happened in the ‘60’s that was new was that people could go to extremes in fashion and still be in fashion. It is like one writer said, “You could wear a mini skirt or you could wear a skirt to the ankle and still be in fashion.” Everything was acceptable. Everything went. This is still much the same today.

There were also the social programs in the ‘60’s. The social programs we think of starting with *The New Deal* under F. D. Roosevelt in answer to the Great Depression, but some may remember president Lyndon Johnson, coming to office. He was installed as President, having been John F. Kennedy’s Vice President. His great cry was the war on poverty. We read that in the news — the war on poverty, and the great society. Somehow,

with social programs they were planning to redistribute the money and eliminate all poverty in the US. That is still with us more than thirty years later. That was President Johnson's work. He ran for election in '64 and was reelected but did not run in '68. Incidentally, some historians see Richard Nixon's election in '68 as actually a conservative protest to all that was happening in society at that time.

Another thing that shows the tremendous upheaval and the rebellion against authority — the disillusionment of people who attacked public figures — was that there were three assassinations during the 1960's. President John F. Kennedy, in 1963, sometime later and his brother Robert in 1968, who was campaigning for the presidential primaries were assassinated. Then also in 1968 there was the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights activist and leader. That actually stirred a lot of racial riots and that is when we saw the riots, living in Wilmington in April of 1968. On the day before and the day of Martin Luther King's funeral there were a lot of burnings in the city. They called in the National Guard and we did not know exactly what would happen during that time. It was a time of a

lot of soul searching and wondering where things were going. However, order was restored and there were a number of blocks that had been completely obliterated in the ghetto section of the city where buildings had been burned down and a lot of looting had taken place.

There are more things that could be said but those are some of the things related to the upheavals of the '60's. *That anti-establishment, anti-system, anti-authority expression that swept the nation at that time, has never really left us.* I thought about it already when we go over our discipline when we say our people are not allowed to be involved in so-called peace movements. That is not an issue today. We are not facing that, and other things like that. We do not hear much about riots. There were serious racial riots. The Watts area of San Francisco was one of the worst in the mid to late '60's.

You might say, "What all does that have to do with what you said you want to talk about?" This social upheaval that took place in the '60's resulted in people being anti-establishment. We see today, what would at one time have been considered sloppy and something respectable people did not do, those things are now acceptable today even by

people who consider themselves conservative.

I will mention a few things. *I will say a little bit about what I have seen take place in appearance and dress in our society in general.* The younger generation does not know any of it, but I think some of these things you ought to know and be interested in. We forbid the wearing of the tie. We feel that it is adornment that is unnecessary. On the other hand, for people who do not believe like we do about separated and simple dress, the doing away with dressing up for important occasions, is not necessarily a good sign. It is not necessarily showing that people are now returning to Biblical simplicity. Rather, it shows what they have been influenced by. When I was a boy, you never saw a man working in a bank without a tie and usually a coat. You did not see people in short sleeves and open shirt collar working in a place like that when I was a boy. I often thought about it, while we did not wear coats to church in the summer time, when we drove through town to church, the people who went to those kind of churches — the men always wore suit coats in the hottest summer. That was considered a part of proper dress. It was considered improper to go to a worship serv-

ice not fully dressed. Therefore, the way we appear in our day is already somewhat casual, depending what we compare it with. The same thing is happening today among the attorneys — the lawyer profession, and a whole host of things like that. The work place area in offices where people at one time dressed up — many people are objecting to that. It is called “the dressing down of America.”

There are some interesting insights in that. You may ask, “Is that one of the neutral things that I was talking about?” It may seem neutral to us, but it really is not. I came across an article recently, entitled, “Casual Business Attire Does Not Suit All.” I do not want to read a lot of this but there is a Mr. Johnston, who is a professor of Law at the University of Virginia and he is distressed at what is happening in the Law profession in this very area. He takes “issue with society’s changing standards for appropriate dress. Those casual standards,” He believes, “Are inextricably intertwined with a larger issue, the destruction of morals and objective values.” This is not a Mennonite man saying this. This is a college professor. People see what is happening. They understand what is behind some of

these things. Further, he says, “It is a sign of decadence and the legal profession is going along with it.” Another individual is referred to, a Jeffrey McGee who heads an executive training company in Tulsa, OK. He told the *Los Angeles Times* that his 1997 study of five hundred companies, “found that casual workplace attire could lead to a decline in ethics, morality, and productivity as well as an increase in what he described as ‘gutter language.’” He saw, in studying five hundred companies, a direct connection with a casual approach to workplace attire and a loss of morals and productivity in those companies.

Then, there is a reference to an individual who is a lawyer in a large firm in Washington, D.C. This firm has gone to the casual way of dressing, but he got himself into trouble one time. It says, “One day I got a call from a Congressman who wanted me to come up to the hill [that means the Capitol] and he said, ‘I told him I do not have a suit on.’” This is what Mr. Remington said, “But the lawmaker was not dissuaded, he wanted him to come. When Mr. Remington arrived, the legislator acted surprised even though he had been warned.” Then, he continues, “I felt a little uncomfortable going

to see a Congressman in a golf shirt.”

These are things that people in our society are saying and noticing. I think that it should say something to us. What are some areas which we see today where we tend to become more and more casual? One area is that perhaps we sometimes make too much difference between what we wear to go to church and what we wear other times. I am not suggesting that we always need to be dressed up. When we work, we do not put our Sunday clothes on. I realize that. My concern is more related to the “in between” area. Sometimes one sees some of our own brethren at a shopping place, a store, a shopping mall, a large store, any place for that matter, with short sleeve shirts, or denim jeans and they do not really fit with a wife who has a cape dress on and a covering. It does not go together.

For myself brethren, I never felt that I wanted to need to depend on my wife for my identification. However, some of our brethren nearly need that. Then, if you add to that some kind of casual shoes, a running shoe type of thing or some type of sneaker, it really does not quite fit. My own feeling is, and I know that we have not administrated this, but brethren when we go shop-

ping or when we go to sales (maybe if it is a farm sale in your good everyday clothes it is a little different) but in various places like that, or when we take our families to points of interest, why would we not wear plain coloured, long sleeved shirts? This concern has arisen with our brethren related to work in Guatemala. Sometimes when people travel on the airplane, they are very casual and again the same type of dress. Why would we not appear in a nonconformed way that identifies us as a separate plain people? If the weather is at all favourable, when we travel by air and that type of thing, we ought to be wearing our suits brethren. It does not matter if it is during the week or when it is, but we should not travel on Sunday. We ought to wear our suit coats. We do not consider anything else when we travel to the mission field. We take our coats off sometimes if it is warm, but really I do not think we need so many clothes that are in between.

For in between, and casual wear, or what we used to call "knockabout," in the past when I was growing up a lot of people wore either, Sunday clothes that were not quite good enough for church anymore or else work clothes that were new and were

not being used for work yet. I am not saying that we need to dress up and be really formal. On one hand, Mennonites have always been known to be a common people, but this trend toward casualness and looseness is something that bothers me. Brethren and sisters if we do not gain a little more conviction on this, it will undermine our separated attire. That is what it will do. Maybe it will take a generation, but it will do that. We cannot have our brethren going the way I was describing and expect that our sisters will maintain our standards. We ought to, as men, be examples to our companions, to our daughters, and to our sisters in the congregation.

The other thing which concerns me is the difficulty that some seem to have to button up for worship services. I am glad that we have what we have, however, I would like to raise this question, "Do we think it would do anything to the atmosphere of our worship services, if the brethren would be sitting here (some of us) in short sleeve shirts and most of us with our shirt collars open?" Would that do something to the atmosphere? Sure it would. We might say, "Oh, it does not matter." Yes, it does matter. Worship is something important. Worship is one of the

most important things that we do and we ought to dress appropriately for it. A certain amount of formality will keep an atmosphere of worship that we will not have if we go the casual route.

For some, it seems they can hardly get outside the door until they must unbutton. I think we ought to at least wait until we are away from the church somewhere if we will unbutton. I think the best is to wait until we get home to do that. Then, we do not need to. We can stay buttoned up at home. Another area which concerns me, while I am on this subject is how ready many of our young brethren are to unbutton at wedding receptions. I do not like to see that. I think it is making our receptions too casual. A certain amount of formality ought to be maintained therefore, because it has such a close connection to the observance of a church ordinance. Sure, it is more comfortable, but I am suspicious sometimes if it is not only a matter of comfort. People prefer the way it looks. I prefer mine open when it comes to comfort, but I prefer it closed as far as how looks are concerned. I prefer the way it looks with it closed. I think it looks better. However, some people like it the other way because they like the way it looks better. I

wish we could get to the place that we would have an understanding that our brethren would simply keep their shirt collars buttoned at wedding receptions. I would like to leave that challenge with you brethren. In other places, like when we meet in each other's homes for Sunday dinners, staying a little more formal would have its advantages.

Another area is that I think our brethren are too ready to take off their coats in the spring time. I remember when sometimes the plain hat was promoted. People would say, "Oh, you mean for church, or you mean for weather protection?" How long will it go until we say that about the plain suit? "Oh, you mean for weather protection?" Our suits are part of our dressing up, and dressing up for church occasions. We do not only wear them to keep warm. In fact, that is not the primary reason for a suit jacket. It is a part of dressing up. Some people, it seems, have the mentality that they will go without it if they can stand it without it. It ought to be the mentality that we will wear it as long as we can stand to wear it. I am not suggesting that we make ourselves really uncomfortable, but it bothers me when from the beginning of April until November, our brethren are not wearing their suit coats. Why is

that? Or, when we do wear them, we open them and leave them open all the time. That is not only for comfort and because it is too warm sometimes. Sometimes it is because people prefer the way it looks. I am not saying that it is always wrong to do that. If it is tight or if it is especially warm and we open up our coat that is not a sinful thing. However, I have seen people standing outside talking in groups after church and it was cold, I mean really cold and their suit coats were open, because that is the way they looked and it said something. That is the thing that we are concerned about. It is not that it is a matter of sin or not, but it is what it says, what it represents, and what it symbolizes in this casualness that we all have a concern about as a ministry.

Another thing we are facing today (not in our church services) is that I see brethren sometimes in everyday situations (I have not seen much of this) and sometimes young boys go without belts. Today it is very much the thing for men to do. I would say that if you do not want to wear a belt then wear suspenders. This is one thing I understand from my own standpoint. We have not had a lot of discussion on this. My mentality is that we do not allow in the church for our

brethren, even in everyday situations to go without belts. It is part of that sloppiness or casualness. Sometimes I see people (some relatives) who are not part of our group but groups which are not that far from us, but yet call themselves conservative. I see them at reunions — young madmen with faded jeans, denim jeans, no belts, casual shoes, short sleeve, bold stripe shirts. Where will that finally lead? Do we think that we can maintain and be a separated plain people when we do those things other times, even if we do not do them for church? That will undermine the very thing we are trying to maintain, and we will not continue being a plain people if we go that route.

Recently, we were at a reunion. My wife said, “These people look like they are ready to go to the barn.” That is the kind of thing that was not done twenty years ago. It simply was not done, and it is not a good sign. It is not a good direction and trend, and we ought to wake up to it. *There is the feeling that church standards are only for church or primarily for church when it comes to everyday attire.* This can be seen in sleeve length for sisters and the feeling that as long as we are not in church we can push them up. There are

times when it is appropriate to push them up, but we have faced some tests on our sleeve standard for dresses. I would also share as a concern about puffy and baggy sleeves. We have the baggy look today. It is more modest in that it is not form fitting, but it is not. It is showy. It can even border on the flamboyant, which does not fit for a plain people.

Sisters going without cape belts will militate against dressing up and even against maintaining the cape. Our discipline says that the cape dress is to be worn in all areas of public life. That includes the belt that is a part of the cape, even though it may separated and not attached. I see sometimes sisters comb their hair so loose. It is something that ten, fifteen or twenty years ago would have been considered sloppy, and people would have been looked down on for doing it. However, now that is the way it is “done.” It is the casual, easy, it does not matter type of mentality with loose hair around the back, sides and so on. That is a part of this casualness.

Another area we face is sisters coming to church with jackets instead of dress coats and the kind of colours that we wear. Is that really the route we want to go? Our coat racks really should not have the light-coloured jack-

ets and coats on them. As far as I am concerned, going to church is not a time to wear a jacket. We ought to dress up a little more than that when we go to church, and to church functions. Then I see some people sometimes out in public and in stores, and so on, with very bright coloured wind breakers (jackets that do not fit with plain people) almost fluorescent colours, and very bright light greens and that type of thing. Does that really fit with our church standard? We do not say anything about that. Shoes are another area. Casual shoes have made their appearance.

There is one more thing that I wanted to mention. While we probably would not consider coming to church with denim jeans, there was a time when we had to work with the dress jeans. I really do not know any occasion when I would find it appropriate to wear dress jeans. In fact, I do not wear jeans. I think it is better not to. They are usually more form fitting and the type of pockets they have . . . I really think that we ought to develop some more conviction on that.

The other thing that I was thinking about and I do not know what these kind of shirts are called that I will talk about. I am not talking about the wrinkle-free, which are a little heavier. I

wanted to find the right description for them. I think you will know what I mean. They may be white but they look wrinkly and a little more baggy. Often they are and they have brown buttons and that kind of thing. They are made of a different kind of material and they do not look like a dress shirt. I have seen some of those in our circles recently — a few here and there — and I feel again that is something that we simply should not allow. Somewhere, somehow, we must draw a line and not go down that route.

Maybe there are some areas that I ought to be thinking of that have slipped my mind. Gradually we become accustomed to things. One generation does something different, then the next generation does something else.

There are some churches that are struggling with keeping their men's shirt collars closed for church services. I know of a place where I was told that the superintendent was about to go up and the man sitting behind him reminded him to button up before he gets up front. If our line gets to that place then we have nearly lost it and we will go the casual route.

Another thing would be hair arrangements. It used to be the

long hair. Now it is the short maintenance free haircuts. Those same people want their hair really short because that is the fad. I know I mentioned a lot of practical things, but brethren and sisters, sometimes, we need to look at these things and think about them. We cannot simply do what others do and say, "Well, everybody else does it." Let us not use that as our criteria. Why do we change? Why do we not simply keep on doing the same way we always have done it regardless? Let the fads of the world come and go, they should not influence us, or should they? Whom do we want to identify with?

The Lord has given us something in our day, by providing a remnant group of conservative churches. This generation now faces the challenge of maintaining that and continuing the conviction that produced this in the first place. In some of these areas we will need to gain a little more conviction if the right things will continue to happen. I do not mean to be scolding but I would like to make an appeal, strong appeal to us that we appreciate what we have and that we do something to maintain it for the next generation. That is my burden. You may ask, "How does this relate to what you said first?" To me, the connection is very

clear. We have seen tremendous changes take place. Some of the things that I have been talking

about in a practical way, are the results of that and we ought not to fall into that.

## Scripture References

<b>Matthew</b>		<b>Romans</b>		<b>2 Corinthians</b>	
7:13, 14	149	12:2	147	6:17	147
<b>Luke</b>				<b>1 John</b>	
13:24	150			2:15	147
16:15	150				

## From the Previous Issue:

### Sober-Minded Youth

From a sermon by Wendell Miller

Sunday, November 14, 2004

Latimore Mennonite Church

### Book Reprint (Continued)

## One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

### LESSON 26.

## Levitical Ceremonies.— Sacrifices.

#### I. Offerings.

##### 1. Burnt-Offering.

a. A continual sacrifice. — Exodus 29:38–42.

b. The fire on the altar never to be extinguished. —

Leviticus 6:8–13.

c. The ceremony. — Leviticus 1.

i. The offering to be a male without blemish.

ii. Slaying of the beast.

iii. Sprinkling of the blood.

iv. Burning of the sacrifice.

2. Meat-Offering. — Leviticus 2.

NOTE. — Also called “meal offering” in study helps.

- a. Ingredients. — Flour, oil, frankincense, first fruits.
- b. The burning upon the altar.
- 3. Peace-Offering. — Leviticus 3.
  - a. Sacrifice must be without blemish.
  - b. Killed before the tabernacle of the congregation.
  - c. Sprinkling of blood upon the altar.
  - d. Burning upon the altar.
  - e. Purposes for which the offering may be made. —

Leviticus 7:11–16.

f. Directions for disposing of the meat. — Leviticus 7:17–21.

- 4. Sin-Offering. — Leviticus 4.
  - a. For sin, through ignorance.
  - b. For the priest.
  - c. For the congregation.
  - d. For a ruler.
- 5. Trespass-Offering.
  - a. For committing Sin unwittingly. — Leviticus 5.
  - b. For willful sin. — Leviticus 6.

NOTES. — 1. Some authors make no distinction between Sin-Offerings and Trespass-Offerings. 2. The ceremonies were similar to those outlined in the first three Offerings.

- 6. Jewish and Christian sacrifices compared.
  - a. The children of Israel offered sacrifices that their sins might be remitted. Christians offer sacrifices because of the remission of sins.
  - b. Their sacrifices, to be acceptable, had to be without blemish. In our dispensation, they that worship the Father, “must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24)
  - c. The nature of their sacrifices depended upon the person who committed the transgression, and the circumstances under which the sin was committed. That law has never been changed.
  - d. The children of Israel furnished the sacrifices which atoned for their own sins. God has graciously furnished us the sacrifice “which perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:14)

1. What interest had the children of Israel in the great Sacrifice on the Cross ?

2. What did each distinct offering represent?

3. Were all these fulfilled in Christ?
4. What lesson for the Christian from the grades of value in the Jewish sacrifices?
5. What was the essential part of the sin-offering and burnt-offering?

### **Book Excerpts**

“It is inconceivable that our Lord’s first miracle after the reception of the Spirit should have been to make intoxicants, ever the great opponent of the life of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), or that the wine He prepared for the feast was fermented, that is, decayed.”

From: Christ, The Apostles and Wine

“This compelled me, thus early, to study the Bible patiently and carefully, to know for myself its exact teachings. I collated every passage, and found that

they would range under three heads: 1. Where wine was mentioned with nothing to denote its character; 2. Where it was spoken of as the cause of misery, and as the emblem of punishment and of eternal wrath; 3. Where it was mentioned as a blessing, with corn and bread and oil — as the emblem of spiritual mercies and of eternal happiness. These results deeply impressed me, and forced upon me the question, *Must there not have been two kinds of wine?*”

From: Bible Wines: Laws of Fermentation

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A Christian Wedding  
 A Commitment Worth Keeping  
 A Living Faith  
 A Lover of Hospitality  
 A Useful Conscience  
 Abraham, The Friend of God  
 Alphabetical Positives of  
 Christian Living  
 Angels Unawares  
 Are You Singing?  
 Be Clothed With Humility -- 1  
 Peter 5:5

Bearing the Burden and Heat of  
 the Day  
 Being Kept From Evil  
 Beware That Thou Forget Not  
 the Lord Thy God  
 Biblical Principles for Business  
 Life  
 Blessing of Faithful Youth, The  
 Books of Heaven  
 Built for Flight -- Isaiah 40:31  
 Calling Men From a State of  
 Uselessness to a Place of Usefulness

for God -- Ezekiel 37:1-14  
 Confidence  
 Congregation's Anticipation for  
 an Ordination  
 Day of the Lord, The -- Joel  
 1:15  
 Destructive Power of Wrong  
 Attitudes, The  
 Divine Guidance  
 Duties of a Father  
 Fear of God, The  
 Full of Good Fruits  
 Future Relating in the Lives of  
 the Rich Man and Lazarus  
 God's Enabling Grace  
 God's Providential Care  
 God's Road Map  
 God's Will and My Life  
 Having the Keys of the  
 Kingdom  
 He Departed thence to . . .  
 Preach -- Matthew 11:1  
 He Was Called the Friend of  
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 Helping Our Children Choose  
 Biblical Conservatism  
 His Great Love  
 Holy Spirit, The  
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 Houses of Worship  
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 Price of Peace, The  
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 Promises of God Are Yea and  
 Amen  
 Proper Communication Within  
 the Home  
 Realities of Eternity, The  
 Reality of an Eternal Destiny,  
 The  
 Reality of Death, The  
 Receiving Counsel and  
 Correction  
 Respect and Reverence in the  
 House of the Lord  
 Restitution and Its Healing  
 Effects  
 Right Way, The  
 Salvation  
 Scriptural Forgiveness  
 Sin of Questioning God, The  
 Sin, An Abomination to the  
 Lord -- Joshua 6:18, 19; 7  
 Sound Doctrine  
 Stewardship Responsibilities  
 Submission -- Vital to



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Uniformity as a Product of

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Victory Will Triumph --

Zechariah 12:8

What Think Ye?  
When Christ Makes us Free  
Whose Shall Those Things Be?

-- Luke 12:13-21

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Witness of the Harvest, The  
Wonderful Words of Life  
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