



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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Dress and Spiritual Life

I can hardly think about a subject like this without thinking of the testimony of a clerk in a store some years back. They said to one of our sisters when she came to the checkout, "I have been observing you and there is something about your appearance, your modest simple dress that is very impressive to me. Did you make the dress you are wearing?" The sister replied, "Yes." Then the clerk asked, "Now, does

this represent a personal taste of yours, or are you associating with a church or people that give you some guidelines as to how you should dress?" The sister's testimony was, "The way I am dressing is according to my taste. This is the way I want to dress, but the church I am a part of does give us some direction, some guidelines how we should dress." What do you think this clerk said? She said, "Well, that is wonderful.

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The church I am a part of tell us that we should not be like the world but they do not give us any help as to how that it should be. Your church does a lot for you.” Is that the way we feel?

This subject is one of those subjects, which is like other great doctrines and teachings of the Scripture that we frequently address and talk about, without attempting to be exhaustive or say everything that there is to say on a subject like this. We do not

attempt to do that. Again, I want to look at some aspects of this. Part of our whole teaching program as a church addresses issues such as this. We do face this issue of dress today in a way that some others at other times did not face. The writings of the Anabaptists, while there are a number of things that are said about them, we learn more about this aspect of their life from the way others described them, than from their own teachings them-

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selves. One of the reasons for that is that it was not an issue in their society and culture like it is for us today. I want to point out a few.

Today, we face this in a very real way. This issue of dress and attire is as big an issue today as some other issues were to the Anabaptists that are not big issues to us today because of an attitude of society and because of what they were facing. For example, they were facing an outlook and a mentality in their day that thought that the State should regulate the church life of the churches. They said, "No." They faced things like infant baptism, and they faced persecution because of that. It was an issue. However, dress was not an issue as I mentioned. We will look at some reasons why that is.

There is a widespread belief today that there is no relationship between dress and spiritual life. This subject suggests that there is, and there is. There is a very strong feeling on the part of many that dress is outward and tangible whereas spiritual life is inward and that is true. However, they go on to conclude that since it is that way there is no connection. That is where they go wrong.

For the sincere Christian everything we do affects us and

our spiritual life. Our spiritual life in turn affects everything that we do. There is not anything, or any part of our life that is not affected by our spiritual life, and there is not anything that we do that in turn does not have an impact on us. It goes both directions. We believe that dress is definitely an indicator of a person's spiritual life.

There is one thing that I would like to get across that I will say now. I will repeat it some other times probably throughout the message. The truth is that the same Bible which teaches atonement by the blood of Jesus is the same Bible that teaches the virgin birth, is the same Bible that teaches the inerrancy of Scripture, is the same Bible that teaches that God created the heavens and the earth, is the same Bible that teaches the truths related to the Church — Jesus Christ being the Head of the Church and the Church being His body, is the same Bible that teaches us about the return of Jesus Christ and it also speaks about our personal appearance, and about dress. If there is anything we will need to remember it is that.

We live in a time when people tend to pick and choose what they would like to take from the Scriptures. The things that are

less appealing are dropped off and the things that are more appealing are emphasized. We really do not have that option because we attempt to take the entire Bible seriously. If we begin to cut out some things from the Bible that we do not like, then there is no basis to keep the things in that we do like. We have rejected the Scripture and we are an unbeliever essentially. Therefore, we do not believe that we have the option of taking part of the Scripture and living by that, choosing to believe that, and make a lot of that, while we at the same time push apart other parts of the Scripture. We do not have that option.

There are certain things which go together in the Scriptures which we tend not to be able to hold as an isolated truth, or an isolated doctrine. You have often heard it said (probably) that non-resistance and nonconformity are two pillars. If you take either of them out the other one eventually goes. Well, that is very true. We cannot hold to the one without losing the other.

I want to illustrate that with an illustration from an individual whom I learned to know in Massachusetts. He was attending at the Mendon Church. He had a really strong appreciation for some things, but because of his

appreciation for plain attire, his wife was did not appreciate that. I am sure there were some other things that were also connected to it, but she made it clear that she would not tolerate this interest in plain dress, that if he persisted in it, she would leave him, and so she did. He continued to dress plain and associate with plain people. In the process of time he became interested in getting married again and one day he raised this subject. I was with him and he said, "I think there simply has to be a way for me to get married again. I am lonely and I think there has to be a way. I intend to find a plain church that accepts divorce and remarriage." What chances are there? If he would have told you that, where would you send him? What would you suggest? I told him, "You will not find that." "Yes," he said, "I think I will." "No," I said, "I do not think you will because there are certain things that go together. A Bible stand on divorce and remarriage goes along with other things. A church that does not believe in that, if they have not already lost it, they will lose plain dress. They will lose separation. They will lose applying Biblical principles in attire, like they will lose nonresistance. That is also one of them. There are certain doc-

trines like that which we cannot hold in isolation. It always is that way.” Eventually our ways parted. We did not see each other again for a number of years. Then, I was looking through a book on MDS [Mennonite Disaster Service] that I saw in a home we were visiting. It was a recent book that was made on the history of MDS in pictures. He had been deeply involved with that and in it there was his picture with his new wife in this book. He still looked plain but she was completely worldly. It mentioned where they go to church and it was a Mennonite church but it was a worldly Mennonite church. He did not find it, and he will not find it. That is simply an illustration of what I want you to understand. Dress and Scriptural, spiritual life, Scriptural church life, are very related in that we cannot hold these doctrines of the Scripture in isolation from other sound doctrine. They go together, in a very definite, real way.

I would like to also, by way of introduction, turn to Isaiah 3 and then I would like to look at a few points related to the message. In Isaiah 3, we have God’s denunciation of the daughters of Zion. I would like to point out that God did not, as He talked about them, make a big issue about how their

hearts appeared to them. Rather, He described them as people who would see them from the things that indicated what they were — the outward evidence of what they were. “Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, The rings, and nose jewels, The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils” (Isaiah 3:16–23), and so on. It is all evidence of what they were. God saw that as an evidence of their pride. Therefore, is it unimportant to God? I think that the answer to that is that *dress and how we appear is not unimportant to God*. Not at all. Rather, it

is a part of Scripture which must be applied.

Now, I would like to look at a few areas. 1) *The premise, or the basis on which we link dress and spiritual life.* I will repeat a few things which I have said in the opening. I would like to begin with the thought that A) *The Scriptures do give specific teaching, which must be applied.* We cannot accept the Scriptures in part. They always stand together with other Scriptures. Along with that, dress is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures, and there is specific Bible teaching that gives direction on dress and things that impact our dress. There are principles of Scripture that do bear on it. Therefore, we approach this, not as something that has to do with tangible issues that are unrelated to spiritual life, but as something that is related to spiritual life, because the Bible speaks about it. “Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” (Matthew 6:31) is one of the major questions and concerns of the world around us today. The Scriptures are very clear on that. Therefore, we are not approaching a subject here that is unspiritual. The subject on dress and spiritual life suggests a link between the two, and there is a link between the two because of what the Bible says about it.

B) *There are however, a number of problems associated with this subject.* That is the next thing I want to make a few comments on. We live in a time when there are a lot of negative views on the subject of nonconformity, especially on the part of those who have been involved in the great apostasy of our times. We know that in the last number of years there has been a tremendous shift, and change in the outlook toward church regulation. We have illustrations from real life of the fact that there is value. It not only is our own conviction, but we have a church that helps us to know how to apply principles of Scripture. However, there are a lot of negative views on that idea from the anti-regulation society in which we live.

i) *There is the idea that it is not spiritual.* It has been a constant struggle for groups to hold a stable standard when it comes to dress. Much has been written about this subject, for example, of how it was that the Brethren church lost plainness in attire, and how the Mennonite church in recent years lost it. It has been difficult to hold it. If you read works like the old *Sword and Trumpet* bound volume from the 1930's you will soon discover that the Mennonite church as a whole did not lose it because

there was nothing said about it. Very much was said about it. There was effort made to hold it. There was a lot of effort put into it, but they did not hold it. George R. Brunk I, in one of his writings said that one of the reasons for that is that people are trying to hold it by what they are saying about it rather than by having a definite church standard and then administrating it. However, the church he was involved with did not hold it either. It has been a constant struggle for groups to hold it. It has a way of changing with the slightest increments. Somehow we get accustomed to things. Those are some problems associated with it. There is the difficulty and the fact that many people think that this is not spiritual. I already addressed that by saying that the Bible does speak about it.

C) *I would like to look a little bit now at the historical perspective on this.* I would like to pick up a few things from the past that point out the fact that this was an issue in the past. We do not have evidence that in the earliest days of the Anabaptist movement there was a lot said about it. I mentioned that there was quite a bit that was said about the Anabaptists by their opponents. The reason is not because they were not concerned, but rather

because they were not facing the issues.

I would like to read a few quotes from the booklet, *Christianity and Dress* by J. C. Wenger (Pages 14–16). He collected quite a number of things including evidences from Church history and from the Anabaptist time that indicate that there was a relationship between what they stood for and the way they appeared. In the first place I would like to read two points from the Strasbourg Conference of 1568. To put it in perspective, 1568 was almost a century before the Dortrecht Confession of Faith. 1568 was not that many years after the movement started. Here is what was said in one of the articles that came out of the Strasbourg Conference of 1568. “Tailors and seamstresses shall hold to the plain and simple style and shall make nothing at all for pride’s sake.”

I said they did not have any specific regulations that were evident, except there were some like this. Another one was in the same Confession. “Brethren and sisters shall stay by the present form of our regulation concerning apparel and make nothing for pride’s sake.”

There was concern. It was addressed.

Then, there are some illustra-

tions from their opponents. “In the year 1617 a case is cited of a son named Christopher Reichlin who became an Anabaptist. He often wrote to his parents, trying to mislead them. Last Candlemas Day he came home IN ANABAPTIST CLOTHES.” What were Anabaptist clothes? He was identified by that. Another illustration: “A certain man came from the land of Moravia in the year 1608. He was not regarded as an Anabaptist for neither his CLOTHING nor his speech were Anabaptist.” There was a relationship and a connection.

Another one: “In the year 1598 a certain man named Konrad Wertz was still an Anabaptist for he still WORE THEIR CLOTHING (p. 741). In the year 1598, less than seventy-five years after the Swiss Brethren organized their first congregation, a certain man named Matthew Kappel was regarded by another party as an Anabaptist ON ACCOUNT OF HIS CLOTHING.” Another Swiss writer who was not in favour of the Anabaptists wrote about them. He was not an Anabaptist. “The Anabaptists avoided costly clothing, wore coarse cloth, wore broad felt hats and carried no weapons.” These are testimonies that they saw that a Biblical way of life involved

applying the principles of Scripture that related to how they appear. That makes it very clear.

Here is one thing that Menno Simons wrote. He was speaking about individuals who were worldly in their appearance. “They say that they believe, and yet there are no limits nor bounds to their accursed wantonness, foolish pomp, show of silks, velvet, costly clothes, gold rings, chains, silver belts, pins, buttons, curiously adorned shirts, handkerchiefs, collars, veils, aprons, velvet shoes, slippers and such like foolish finery.” Then he goes on and says, “Peter and Paul, have in plain and express words forbidden this to all Christian women. If this is forbidden to women how much more then should men abstain from it, who are the leaders and heads of their women. Notwithstanding all this they still want to be called the Christian Church.”

That is quite clear that it was an issue to them. I would like to also read another quote that some of you are familiar with from the book *Why Do They Dress That Way?* He comments on the fact that there were changes in society that made it necessary for the Church to draw some more definite lines on dress to protect the spiritual life of their people. These were some lines in more

detailed ways that did not need to be drawn earlier.

“When stylish, ready-made clothing became cheap and easily available in the 19th century, most country people stepped aboard the constantly revolving fashion merry-go-round which heretofore was only accessible to wealthy riders. The plain people saw a danger in letting the whims of worldly fashion dictate what they as Christians should wear. Even though they could have afforded to do otherwise, they continued to observe the time-honored simple dress which had become a symbol of humility.” (P. 21)

He goes on to say that some of these articles of clothing that they simply did not change took some years of time to become fixed. I will read a little more.

“It took several hundred years for the various symbols of non-conformity to become fixed. Some of these symbols have a much longer history than others. Each item of plain dress became established by a very slow process of group consensus. For the most part every generation regarded the prayerful decisions of their forefathers as binding. Accommodation to current fashions was kept minimal. . . . The plain people have sought to control cultural influences rather

than be controlled by them. So what has resulted is their own kind of counterculture, rooted in Christian understanding. Their intent is to create a system for living, including dress, that is faithful to their beliefs and serves as an effective hedge against assimilation into the world.” (p. 21, 22)

I think that is well said. There was the increasing availability of fashionable clothes at relatively cheap prices. They did not need to make them in the labourious hand weaving like they did earlier with factory made, inexpensive clothing. As it was mentioned here, the common person was able to get aboard the “fashion merry-go-round,” and many did. At that point the plain churches, in an effort to keep from moving that direction, gradually settled on some practices that were simply maintained, and held, and did not change. I believe that has been a blessing.

D) *I would like to review a few of the Bible principles at this point that do touch dress issues.* I made the comment a number of times that the Bible does speak about it, and speaks about it frequently. They are Bible principles which are as binding as other Bible principles. In our time, some of us have grown up in settings where there was a fair-

ly rapid movement away from Biblical dress patterns. We can remember so well how dress was downplayed while certain other things were really “played up,” for example, love. I remember in youth class years back in the setting that we were in before in the Conference, when the teacher was talking about love. I do not know what the subject was but it was not about love. He spent the morning in class talking about love and he said this, (I remember a few things he said) “The essence of everything that the Bible teaches is love. So, if we have love, these other things do not matter.” That is not true. We know that. He was basically discounting all the detailed teaching of Scripture, if you have love. We heard a lot of that.

Sometime back, someone gave me a book on divorce and remarriage written by a contemporary Mennonite author. This person used a book length argument to make the point that we must decide matters like this on the basis of love because love is the overriding principle and teaching of Scripture. Therefore, we must make decisions on divorce and remarriage on the basis of compassion and love and not on the basis of the letter of Scripture. The same Bible that teaches us we should love also has

Scriptures like the ones we want to look at here.

There is no other place where we discover truth about God but in the Bible. Where else do we know that has everything we know about God, the fact that there is a Church, and the birth of the Church? Where else do we know anything about Creation? Why, it is through the Scripture. However, the same Bible, brethren and sisters, teaches and gives us some direction related to matters as detailed as how we dress. There is tremendous truth in that. We cannot discount it by saying we take the overall idea and we brush all the teaching of it aside. We cannot do that.

i) Romans 12:2 is a common Scripture that is used. I would like to point out again a few different words here that really do focus in on the issue of nonconformity. In fact, this is where we get our word nonconformity. “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” I would just like to point out again that the same Greek word from which the word “be not conformed” to the world comes from is the same word as is used in 1 Peter 1:14 when he says, “As obedient children, not

fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.” Bible scholars, including Adam Clarke (if you need at least one from generations back, who is a respected Greek expositor) says that this word “not conformed,” and “fashioning,” in 1 Peter 1:14 is never used in any other context other than outward appearance. It is never used in any other way but what we see on the outside. It is never used to refer to an inside experience. It has to do with how we appear. Therefore, in 1 Peter 1:14 when he says, “not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance,” he is saying “not living in fashion,” “not living in a fashionable way, outwardly like you used to.” That is what he is referring to. In Romans 12:2, “And be not conformed to this world,” he is referring to being conformed in appearance.

“But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” That word “prove” has the idea of “demonstrate.” How do we demonstrate the renewed mind? We demonstrate the renewed mind the same way that we demonstrate other principles of Scripture. Let me back up a little bit. How do we demon-

strate the renewed mind in the area of submission? It is not by having it as a mental attitude. It is by being submissive. Submission does not exist apart from its practice — from doing it. A person can say, “I want to be submissive.” Sometimes children can give that idea. They want to be . . . so, they want to listen but they do not want to listen. Submission is when we do, whether we want to or not. Therefore, submission does not exist apart from its practice. It is like love. We talked about love in Sunday School. Love does not exist apart from its expression. There is no such thing as Biblical love that does act in a loving way. Biblical love, is love that expresses itself in an outward way.

Using that same line of thought, how do we know a person has a renewed mind? It is by what we can see about him. According to this Scripture, part of that expression is his conformity to the Scriptures rather than to conformity to the world. That is how we know a person has a renewed mind. That is why Menno Simons, in that quote that I read, said rightly that a person who has renewed mind, or who say that they are Christians, and are a part of the Church of God, but yet they appear this way, and

this way, and this way, that it is an inconsistency which we cannot bring together. That is a paradox. It does not work. There is something wrong. That is exactly what this Scripture is teaching. “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove,” (or demonstrate) “what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” How can people know what God’s will is? Part of the way that they know what God’s will is, is by what we do. That is true of many areas of life. So this is certainly a part of it.

ii) 1 Timothy 2 is another Scripture that we know bears on it. We cannot claim to be more spiritual than we are Scriptural. We cannot be more spiritual than we are Scriptural. If we minimize Scripture, any Scripture, then we are not spiritual. That is an evidence of a lack of spirituality. It cannot be that. That is why we are looking at some of these here. 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 says, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

The Greek word here for mod-

esty again I will refer back to Adam Clarke in his explanation of this particular word. When it says, “that women adorn themselves in modest apparel.” The Greeks had a word, in fact I will read from another in the booklet *Personal Appearance in the light of God’s Word* by Hartzler. That might be the most efficient way to give it. “Adam Clark, the Methodist commentator enlightens us further, concerning the word *apparel* in 1 Timothy 2:9. In the Greek it is the compound word, *katastola*. According to Clarke, the *stola* was a Greek dress, a long piece of cloth which hung down to the feet in front and behind, girded with a belt. The *katastola* was an additional piece of cloth which hung down to the waist loosely over the *stola*. Commenting further Clarke says, ‘A more modest and becoming dress than the Grecian was never invented; it was, in a great measure, revived in England about the year 1805, and in it, simplicity, decency, and elegance were united; but it soon gave place to another mode, in which frippery and nonsense once more prevailed. It was too rational to last long; and too much like religious simplicity to be suffered in a land of shadows, and a world of painted outsides.’ Nothing was ever more becom-

ing than the Grecian *stola*, *katas-tola* and belt. The additional piece of cloth continuing, and known as the cape today, serves to more adequately conceal the contour of the body which corrupt women desire to display.” I think that is well said. I enjoy that. I like to tell people that the pattern of cape dress that we have actually grows out of the very word meaning of the Scripture.

I will give another practice of ours simply as an illustration which is somewhat related, but not altogether related to this one — the Christian woman’s veiling. Our veiling practice grows out of the use of a Greek word in 1 Corinthians 11:15 when Paul says, “her hair is given her for a covering.” The word from which that word “covering” in verse 15, is the only time that word is used in the discussion of the veiling. The previous times, when the word *covered*, or *covering* is used it is a different Greek word. The Greek word that is used in 1 Corinthians 11:15 means, “wrap around.” Paul had made the case for uncut, long hair for women. In the latter part of that it says her hair is given her for a “wrap around” to be put up and covered. That is also a very clear, direct outworking of Scripture. I think we can appreciate those established patterns even before

our time. Brethren were concerned about that. People come along sometimes and have other ideas — a hanging hair with a veil on top, or a sign veil only — a little thing on top and various other things. However, that Scripture clearly teaches her hair is to be wrapped around, covered, and unadorned. That is an example, which is in the same category as the cape dress — growing out of a definite Greek word.

iii) We have mention of the non-ornamentation in 1 Peter 3:3, which is a similar Scripture to 1 Timothy 2:3, “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” I cannot help but comment on something here. This thing of plaiting the hair. We usually think of that in terms that they put up their hair in a certain way that used adornment with it. I came across a rendering of that word plaiting recently, not from any Anabaptist related context or background that referred to it as curling. I thought that was interesting. “Not the outward adorning of curling the hair.” I felt that

catches the idea of what was meant here. I think that is quite good. It was the first time I came across it. He emphasizes here, the fact that the adornment is not to be the outward adorning of putting on of gold or of putting on of apparel. In other words there was not to be a fashion and a show.

We could go on with other passages. There is a lot of teaching in the Scripture where clothing is given as a description of a particular person like the harlot of Revelation, clothed in red and scarlet, and there are other principles that we could come through on that.

E) *Traditional applications and church standards related to dress and spiritual life.* There are not many churches anymore that have maintained standards that are really expected to be obeyed. They are mostly in the category of the Baptist preacher near us who, in frustration, told one of our brethren that he “preaches, and preaches, and preaches about needing . . . and that they should not run to the beach so much in the summer time. It is not a good place to be and they miss, they do not have church because they only have a third of their church people on Sundays, during the week, or during the summer because everybody is running to

the beach.” He said, “I preach against it and they do not listen to me.” That is mostly the way it is. One person said that he does not feel right about going to church if does not get his toes stepped on. Someone asked him, why he then does not do it? He got a little huffy about it and said, “Well, he does not tell me what to do.” He liked to hear it, but he did not expect to do it. That is the difference, where those who have held to plain dress and the plain groups who have expected that the things that we stand for are a part of all our people. We have church standards and principles of application. Biblical principles in relation to dress have only been held by groups that have moved together and have done it together.

I would like to read another quote from *Worldly Conformity in Dress* by John Horsch. John Horsch says it like this, “The claim to stand for the simple life and for nonconformity to the world has a real meaning only where definite restrictions are observed and transgression is made an occasion for discipline. *In the absence of such restrictions it is impossible for a church to handle this question according to Scriptural requirements.*” He is talking about dress when he says that. The only way to main-

tain it is by doing it together and expecting that we hold it, and making an issue of discipline to hold it. That is because we see it as part of Biblical obedience and it is the contribution of the spiritual lives of all of us when we fulfill those principles. It is part of maintaining spiritual life and safeguarding spiritual life.

J. L. Stauffer in a two-part article in the old *Sword and Trumpet* bound volume made the statement, "The shores of Mennonite history are littered with the spiritual wrecks of those who have claimed to be able to maintain the principles of Scripture without uniformity in the area of dress." Think that through. We have that today yet. We have this idea of following a Bible principle, but each person makes an application. Well, we know that has been tried over, and over, and over again.

I remember it so well, back in the '50's when an uncle and aunt of mine were in the process of leaving the Mennonite church and joining a holiness group of some kind. They felt the Mennonite church was not spiritual enough and they needed to find a more spiritual church. They made it very clear that they were planning to maintain the clear teaching of Scripture. Certainly, one of those clear

teachings of Scripture was the veiling and modesty in dress. They said that they do not intend to give them up. As a little boy, I remember overhearing quite an animated discussion between my father and my uncle as they discussed this. My father said, "But, you will not do it. It will not happen." "Yes, but we will because the Bible clearly teaches it." "But, he said you will not do it if you are not linked with a group that does it, and holds to it, and teaches it. You will not do it." We know what happens with those kinds of things, and we know what happened with them. They eventually did lose it and they became completely worldly. Today, in their family, there is divorce and remarriage and all kinds of other problems. It goes together.

It is like another individual who told one of our brethren (who was again in the process of leaving the plain churches). He said, "I am in favour of all of the principles of Scripture and I intend to hold but I do not believe it is right for the church to say how it must be done. It is the spiritual birthright of every believer to be free to make his own applications to the principles of spirit as he himself is enlightened by the Holy Spirit." That was quite a position they

took on that. One of our brethren said, "I would predict that you will not maintain it because unless you do it together it will not happen." "Oh, it definitely will." Then this brother did relent and say, "Well, maybe you will maintain it, but I doubt if your children will." Well, they did not. That was thirty years ago in 1975. There were two families that were involved in that break-off at that time and today they do not even take a position on nonresistance or non-participation in the military. They are satisfied to live with that. Even the parents that grew up in plain settings have gone to that point.

The Scriptures are clear, if we will maintain the principles of Scripture in the kind of world in which we live, we need to do as the apostle Paul tells us to do, in Philippians 3:16, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." I remember a preacher years back saying that means that we are to believe the same thing, and we are to practice the same thing. That is what that means. Doctrine and practice. "walk by the same rule . . . mind the same thing." It is to maintain spiritual life, because when we finally get to the place where we become

careless (and we will get there) in applying the principles of Scripture, we have lost spiritual life. And, we will get there unless we stand together.

There are people who cannot stand with anyone else. They may be alone, and I believe the Lord gives special grace. We have a member in one of our congregations who is a prisoner and has been a member for some years. He has been in prison for many years, and has been faithful. As far as we know he has left a testimony for the Lord, but if he would get out of prison and would then not associate with God's people I believe that would be a different story. In that circumstance, he is facing some things by himself. Sure we visit often and so on and try to keep him in touch with the activities of the church. Incidentally, he knows more about things that are written in *The Testimony* than the average person among us. He traces and knows where people are that he knew about and knows subjects that are preached here and there. There is special grace in that situation. However, God's plan is that we are a part of each other in the context of a Biblical church where there are some definite things that are required.

I think many of you are famil-

iar with the quote by John Wesley quoted in the book *Separated Unto God* by J. C. Wenger. At the back, there is an entire sermon by John Wesley on dress written out there. Then, there are a few excerpts from a few of his others. One of those excerpts is where John Wesley says that he wishes that earlier as Methodists they could have drawn the line on matters of dress like the Quakers did and said, “This is where we stand. If you join us, join us on this basis. You do not need to join us, but if you join us, then you do like we do. Alas, that day is past when I could do that.” He said, “Today, our people are already worldly and have no appreciation for those things.” That is simply saying that doing it together, and maintaining it, helps to protect our attitude toward the Scripture and what the Bible says, and protects spiritual life. Is there any connection? Why certainly there is a connection.

In conclusion, there are a few areas that I think of as issues that we face today related to the dress question, and that are an indication of dress and spiritual life. I will begin with one that we do talk about sometimes. It is one that I recently encountered in working with a situation not directly related to our group, but

it was a situation where this was involved. It is this thing of the cape dress with the belt. I mentioned, when I quoted from Adam Clarke about the connection of the belt to that long dress with a second piece over top and kept together with the belt. Someone got the idea that it is more modest not to wear a belt with a cape dress. That, of course, I suppose in some ways was for that person a matter of opinion. One comment that was mentioned to them was that number one, we do not make some of those decisions on our own.

Number two, sometimes the supposed convictions we have, have origins other than Bible principles. This thing of not wearing the belt especially becomes suspicious because of who drops the belt. In the groups (what we would call the modified conservative groups around us) the belt has been lost. Along with dropping that, there have been other modifications that were not going toward a more conservative position but toward a less conservative position. They are sort of in the wrong, or in bad company. That is one thing.

The other thing is that we, as a church, have resisted the modifications to the cape dress that have come along. We remember

the time when someone got the idea (this was during my youth) and this swept at LMS [Lancaster Mennonite School] for a little bit. Why have a cape that is in the back and in the front? Why not sew the cape in the seam up on the shoulder and have a cape for the front only. Thus, some individuals picked it up. Who picked it up? Why, it was the ones that soon dropped the cape altogether. That is who picked it up. It is part of a process. We do not let those kinds of processes to the discretion of every person. Those are church issues. Maintaining the cape and the patterns, including the belt, is a part of that. That is one that I thought of that I did not actually have written down here. It is part of some of the issues that we face.

One of the issues, of course, that we face today is the casual clothes trend. People sometimes say, "What is actually wrong with that?" It is very simple, I think, and that is, it avoids identification with the church and it is affected and regulated by the fads and the fashions of the world not by the church. It is very simple. Those are some issues that we face, the baggy shirts, the baggy pants, the stripes in the shirts and so on. We want to maintain the kind of white and blue shirts that are traditional which we have in

our worship services. It is those little areas where we face deviations — the non wearing of the coat. There are a lot of groups around that require plain coats, but we might as well say basically what they require is not to wear the lapel coat because they do not wear their plain coats anyway. They get a plain coat and own one, but they do not wear it in summer or winter. They do not wear it. I think it indicates an attitude toward it — the non wearing of the plain coat by those that claim to have it. You say, "The plain coat, well that is not a modesty issue." Maybe that is a dress issue and should be addressed. Do you know why we wear a plain coat? One of the reasons is that this is a coat that stands by itself. It is one reason it came in without the use of a necktie, without the use of a bow tie. It was a simple pattern that was retained. When the world went to what is high fashion in men's dress up wear, why it is a coat with a necktie. This became established as a traditional pattern that has helped us to maintain conviction against fashionable dress up attire and the use of the necktie and the bow tie.

There was a period of time in the process of Mennonites losing this practice when they would wear a necktie underneath a plain

coat, or a bow tie underneath a plain coat but it did not fit. I went to church with a man that always wore a bow tie. He never could shut his top button. He always had to have it open to make room for the bow tie. Some of you would have known Ori O. Miller who was well known as the Secretary of the MCC for a number of years. I remember Ori Miller on numerous occasions by going to visit at Ephrata church where he went to church. I remember being shocked one time when (and there may have been others like it but I only remember him) he had his plain coat on (I always knew he wore a necktie under his plain coat and it did not look too bad because his coat covered it). I remember one day he took his coat off and he had a short sleeve white shirt on with his necktie. Suddenly he was transformed into a very worldly looking person. That made an impression on me as a young man.

The plain coat is not designed to go with the necktie. That is the point. It is a simple, unadorned plain approach that keeps us from going the route of becoming fashionable in men's wear. It does not fit with those wide striped shirts and other kinds of shirts that are not really becoming to plain people.

Rightly so, because it is a part of plain dress.

Children's dress is really important in maintaining a concept of the connection of dress to spiritual life. Recently, someone who did not come from Mennonite background was commenting on the struggle to maintain a connection to some things that many people naturally keep a connection to. One of those was dress and the connection of certain dress patterns to maintaining simplicity. This person went on to say that there are some things that seem wrong to people that have always been dressed right that do not seem near as wrong to people who have not. That is right. It shows the importance of dressing our children from little on up so that they have a concept of what is proper, how it is proper to be dressed, and makes them feel out of place when they are not dressed that way. Sometimes it does take a generation to get that established but hopefully that can happen because we dress our children so that there is not a big bump when it comes to later dressing and meeting the standards of the church.

We could mention a number of other issues that we face today. One is the issue of shoes. Again, I think as churches we have

addressed that — the multi-coloured shoes — where jogging shoes and casual clothes have become the dress up wear for many people. That is what they go to church in. Back a little from that it has started coming into schools and school boards needed to give direction on the kind of shoes that could be worn at school because somewhere there has to be a line. Sometimes people belittle that and say, “Why are you so detailed — trying to define such small details?” Someone asked that recently and I said, “Do you agree that somewhere there must be a line?” “Well, sure somewhere there must be a line.” I then said, “The place we disagree on is where that line should be. Do we understand that?” They sup-

posed that was about the way it was. “How do we decide whether you are right and I am wrong, or whether I am right and you are wrong. How do we decide that?” I said, “Neither you or I will decide that. That is decided on a broader level.” It leaves me with no room for movement, and it leaves me with an absolute obligation to where we as a brotherhood stand. That gives a stable line and security and protects spiritual lives. May the Lord bless us as we continue to believe and teach this. I do not believe that I said anything or taught anything that most of you do not believe and practice and teach. We do need to sometimes reaffirm these things so that we do not lose. The Lord bless us.

Scripture References

Isaiah	12:2	210	2:3	213
3:16–23	205	1 Corinthians	2:9, 10	212
Matthew	11:15	213	1 Peter	
6:31	206	Philippians	1:14	210
Romans	3:16	216	3:3	213
		1 Timothy		

From the Previous Issue:

Understanding the Influence of Pietism

From a message by James Burkholder

Sunday, January 07, 2001

Richland Mennonite Church

Book Reprint (Continued)
One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study
New Testament

LESSON 1.

The Advent of our Saviour.

[For prophecies relating to this subject, see Lesson 47 (O. T.)]

I. The general expectation of the Messiah — Luke 2:25, 26, 38; Mark 15:43.

II. The annunciation.

1. To Mary. — Luke 1:26–28.
2. To Joseph. — Matthew 1:18–24.
3. To Simeon. — Luke 2:25–27.
4. To the Shepherds. — Luke 2:8–14.
5. To the Magi. — Matthew 2:2.

NOTE. — This is an array of witnesses which ought to establish the fact of the Advent and the divinity of Christ in the hearts of everybody.

III. The purpose of His coming.

1. To minister. — Matthew 20:28.
2. To give His life a ransom for many. — Matthew 20:28.
3. To save His people from their sins. — Matthew 1:21.
4. To bring salvation to believers. — John 3:16, 17; Luke 19:10; 1 John 4:9.
5. To bring light into the world. — John 1:1–5; 3:19; 8:12.
6. To give life. — John 10:10.
7. To remove the partition wall between Jew and Gentile. — Ephesians 2:14.

IV. The birth of Jesus. — Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 2:1–7.

NOTE. — In this narrative we notice, (1) the divine nature of Christ, (2) the human nature of Christ, (3) the poverty of Joseph and Mary, (4) royal blood and extreme poverty and humility uniting in the same body as the Saviour of the world. With no help but parents and a few humble friends, and the power of God, this helpless infant was des-

tinged to triumph over the combined forces of earth and hell, and accomplish what only the immaculate Son of God could do.

V. How the news of His Advent was received.

1. By the Magi. — Matthew 2:1, 2, 9–12.
2. By Herod. — Matthew 2:3–8, 16.

NOTE. — The same event which brought joy to the hearts of the wise men from the East, carried consternation to the heart of Herod. The explanation is to be found, not in the nature of the event, but in the condition of the heart. To the righteous the word salvation is a joyous song. To the unrighteous it is a reminder of fearful punishment.

3. By Simeon and Anna. — Luke 2:25–38.
4. By the shepherds. — Luke 2:8–11, 15–20.
5. By the heavenly hosts. — Luke 2:13, 14.

1. Why was Herod troubled when he heard of the birth of Jesus?

2. Who were the Magi?

3. Give proof that the “shepherds” and the “wise men” were not the same.

4. Describe the place where Jesus was born.

5. Locate the places mentioned in this lesson.

FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

14. **Only they who accept God’s plan of redemption can be saved.**

We are speaking of responsible beings. Of children in their childhood innocence it is said, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven.” But of those who have arrived at an accountable age and intelligence it is said, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” While salvation is a “free gift,” and it is by grace and not by works

(Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:3-7) that man is saved, we are just as emphatically taught that faith, repentance, obedience., and loyal service are essential to acceptable standing before God. “Without faith it is impossible to please him” (Hebrews 11:6). “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5). “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar” (1 John 2:4). Salvation is free to all people — on condi-

tion that we accept God's plan for securing it. It is forced on no unwilling people.

15. Real salvation is made evident in a consecrated Christian life.

Salvation, as we have often been reminded, is twofold: (1) salvation from sin in time; (2) salvation from the results of sin in eternity. James reminds us that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20, 26). Paul, after enumerating the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21), adds, "They which do, such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Out of the heart "are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). It is not only true that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," but this same rule holds good in every walk in life. "As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Where this "newness of life" exists in the heart, it becomes manifest in the daily walk, so far as the individual has the Gospel light. Saved from sin, means salvation from the pollution attendant to a life of sinful living. Where the heart is filled with "pure religion" (James 1:27), the daily conduct may appropriately be described as being "unspotted from the

world."

16. God set apart one day out of seven as a day of rest and worship.

The completion of the work of creation is thus described in the language of inspiration: "On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:2, 3). We have evidence that this day was kept holy by the people of God, even, before the Law was given on Mt. Sinai. Exodus 16:16-26. Under the Law, this was the standard: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work" (Exodus 20:8, 9). Similar standards were maintained by the apostolic Church under the Gospel, when the people met together on this day to worship God. It is a standard established by God Himself, not merely by the ceremonial Law nor by Sabbatarians of any other age, that all our secular labors should be taken care of during the six working days of the week, while the seventh day should be devoted to rest for the body and exercise for the soul. The Christian Church should adjust itself to God's program in this respect, and educate all Christ-



professing people to hallow and adhere to this program of God for the welfare of His people and His Cause. The history of nations

tells the story of lapses into heathenism whenever and wherever this holy day is disregarded.

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