



## 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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### **Thought Patterns That Gave Rise to Liberalism and Pietism**

As an introduction to this subject one ought to say a little bit on why thought patterns. We know that every action is preceded by a thought. “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts” (Matthew 15:19), is the first thing mentioned. It is true that as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). Therefore, it is fairly established that thought patterns precede what men will

do. A subject like this is intended to help us have the right kind of thinking so we will not give rise to some of these things.

How Pietism and Liberalism are related to each other is best understood if we understand the nature of Pietism. I will give a little introduction to the issue at consideration. I have listed nine thought patterns that will lead to Pietism and Liberalism. Pietism

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**Thought Patterns That Gave Rise to Liberalism and Pietism**

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is an imbalance of piety. We believe in being pious and having piety. It is an imbalance that is related to a heart felt religion associated with a self analysis. That is a definition that you would find in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* which has quite a large description and history of Pietism. It is based on a personal, emotionally experienced conversion. The emphasis is on the experience.

Pietism, as it is called so-

called, developed during the late 1600's. 1669 is the time when the term was coined. The early leaders were the Dutch Reformed leader Tergestein and Frank and then Philip Spener who was a Lutheran in Germany. There were the *Collegiants* in Holland who were outstanding Pietists. They were called *Collegiants* because they grouped together from among the Dutch Reformed Churches to express and unify their thrust of Pietism. It began

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with the clergy. Before even this, Luther was frustrated with the conduct of his members. He said in essence, “he would wish to have people like the Anabaptists represent in their conduct, but if we would discipline, they would certainly have no people.”

People like Spenser (who was a Lutheran clergyman) were greatly dissatisfied with the card playing, drinking, and the dancing their people were involved in. Therefore, I would call it, “manufactured” the idea of a shortcut to address that. The idea was to get people more spiritual by having house meetings, getting together to study the Bible and pray, which is certainly noble. However, it did not have the rest of Church administration associated with it. They emphasized it. It was not a revival movement. It was a private movement from house to house and home to home and section to section. Then, Count Zinzendorf (who was somewhat of a contemporary of them) the leader of the Moravian movement, gave Pietism a more emotional emphasis. That is where the emotional aspect was developed as related to Pietism.

The Pietistic movement, especially through the influence of Zinzendorf, gave rise to the Pietistic revivalism which invad-

ed America in the latter part of the 1700’s. Martin Boehm would have succumbed to that. The Moravian’s, like Zinzendorf, felt that he would like to unite all the Protestant churches in North America under one umbrella of Pietism. Zinzendorf failed to be able to do that, but he had gathered many people together from different churches in big meetings and started the Moravian movement in America. He had what was called the *Herrnhut* (the “Lord’s gathering”) in Europe which is a development of the Moravians. With Moravians we can see what the fruit of, or the stream of that fountain is. The Moravians are among us today. Their base is in Allentown and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and there is a big college at Lititz. They had a tremendous influence on the Anabaptists in Europe and in America.

Apostasy was already developing in Europe. Some of our forefathers who came to America did so because of the influence of Pietism that was brought to bear on the rising generation and on their own people. They came to get away from that influence, but of course coming to America did not solve the problem. John Oberholtzer, the founder of General Conference Mennonites

was greatly affected by that revival movement. He was more Pietistic. He was sure they could hold to all the basic principles of the Mennonite church and not have a standard or a discipline but do it with preaching. That story is told also.

The Midwestern prairie provinces and states both in Canada and in the United States represents a Pietistic Russian immigration from Russia. Edward Wuest (Wüst), a Lutheran, was responsible for bringing Pietism into Russia. He influenced the beginning of what would be the Mennonite Brethren today.

Pietism considers an emotional, personal, spiritual experience as the cornerstone of Christendom. That is short saying an emotional, personal, spiritual experience is the cornerstone. This resulted in an overemphasis on the subjective element of Christendom and minimized the objective act of what God does through Christ as related to creeds and confessions of faith that describe discipleship. I trust you followed my thinking here. It emphasized a spiritual experience as the cornerstone of what the Church is, and subjective would be how you feel. Associated with that is the individual experience rather than

a collective relation. Finally it de-emphasizes the place of confessions of faith or creeds otherwise. It automatically leads to theological liberalism and weakens discipleship.

Robert Friedman wrote a book *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries*. (Robert Friedman is also the author of *The Theology of Anabaptism*). Robert Friedman was a converted Jew. He was not an Anabaptist, nor a Mennonite, but he was a historian basically studying the Anabaptist movement. He wrote: "When Pietism came into the Mennonite fold, it blunted the essential thrust of Anabaptism as related to discipleship. . . They were much more ready to accommodate themselves to the prevailing culture and abandon the Anabaptist teaching on nonresistance and nonconformity." That is his observation as a result of it.

With that background in mind, we will look at some thought patterns that precede and have preceded the movement in America or perhaps otherwise. 1) *A wrong understanding of law and grace or a wrong view or wrong thinking about it.* 2 Timothy 2:15 says that we are to "Study to shew [ourselves] approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." It is rightly divid-

ing between law and grace, and rightly dividing between the Old and the New Testament. Our Lord was ever endeavouring in the Gospels already. He gave much teaching on the relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament using illustrations like not putting new wine into old bottles [Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37]. He showed that there is a new entity and we are not merely carrying over and improving on the Old Testament.

The Judaizers (of which there were thousands) were “hounding” the apostle Paul wherever he went. In the Galatian letter especially and the 2 Corinthians, he was addressing these people who were trying to confuse the issue between the Old and New Testament. The book of Hebrews is primarily written to clarify the difference of worship in the New versus the Old Testament approach. The Hebrew letter says that in the Old Covenant God led them out of Egypt by hand [Hebrews 8:9]. It goes on to explain that in the New Covenant, He leads them by the heart (verse 10). It is the difference between an external that was preparing for the New. The New Testament is the answer, but not like some interpret it with the idea that you can use grace to cover sin. Jude talks about “turn-

ing the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude 4), or license for sin.

Paul in the Roman letter says, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound” (Romans 6:1)? The idea is summarized in Titus 2:11, 12 “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us . . .” We are to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” and “we should live soberly.” The idea of grace pulling down a shroud of holiness over us and overlooking sin finally leads to Pietism and reckless living.

2) *A wrong thought about organizational relationships and Bible principle.* Perhaps this one would be closely related to the Pharisaical approach too. It tends to think that Church position can rectify, or justify, disobedience to an application of Bible principle. The Judaizers were that way. The Samaritan woman said, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship” (John 4:20). In other words we are justified to do it this way.

It is a little bit like a minister in the past who was in New York City overnight. When he came to his hotel room there was a card laying there inviting him to the seekers club that evening. He

had nothing to do so he thought he would go and listen in. In that meeting they were having a main speaker, a Hindu holy man, who was giving his views. Then, they asked him (since he was introduced as a minister) to give a talk on his view. He gave an evangelical message to them. He related that some of them sneered a little and then let others talk. Finally, the moderator said, "Now, after listening to all those, we will conclude that it does not so much matter what you believe, so long as you are sincere in what you believe."

Some people would say that is an extreme, but some people sometimes change churches for liberal reasons and they feel if the way is too tight they could go to another place for more liberty and then they are all right. They feel good because they are not in any way violating and they feel that they are right. In the final reality a motive like that is deception because of Bible principle. God wants to see us obedient to Bible principle and submissive to the Church of Jesus Christ rather than try and simply be obedient in a formal way and think that everything else is all right. That is a deceptive approach and it leads to Liberalism and Pietism. When I think of Pietism, I think of the

idea of an individual thinking that it is all right with me, using Romans 14:22 for example, "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God." If your conscience does not condemn you are all right.

It is a little like a person who was on his sick bed whom I knew. He was enslaved to cigarette smoking. This was related to his illness as well. His different visitors advised him to get victory over cigarette smoking. His wife said, "If it would be wrong for him to do it, God would surely tell him," and she helped him to get the cigarette so he could smoke. Those are not proof whether something is right or wrong. Finally it is Scripture and Bible principle.

Individualism has various ways of expressing itself. People can find themselves a little bit like John Funk's grandsons when they left the Mennonite Church. John F. Funk was one of the leading founders of the Sunday School movement and the literature publication work in Elkhart, Indiana. His grandsons joined the Episcopal church and became Episcopal clergymen. Their grandmother (John Funk's wife) said, "One thing you will like about the church you belong to now, is that you can never be bad enough to be put out of church.

You will like that.”

3) *A wrong thought about Church authority, or authorized responsibility.* That can lead to Pietism. This is one that is more commonly observed and experienced. God has made administrations (bishops, ministers and deacons) to administrate an agreed upon position. They do not make their own rules and ideas. Rather, they administrate with what we are asked to administrate. One person was asked why he does not believe anymore like he did. He said, “I believe like I always did. I merely quit being the Holy Spirit to the people.” That is rank Pietism. It is the idea that he “shirks” or rather removes responsibility to administrate (or keep house in the church as we call it) from his own mind by simply preaching and letting the Holy Spirit tell people what to do. That is Pietism which leads to Liberalism, and it has done so in the group that he represents.

4) *A wrong thought about divine love as related to social shunning.* In 1 Corinthians 5:6, we are told that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” It is easy to lose our convictions by making friends with the wrong people. We love them so much that we want to show that we love them by identifying with them,

associating and socializing with them. Finally, we can make friends with the wrong people and deceive them and ourselves in the long term. We do not necessarily adhere to the strict social shunning that the Dortrecht Confession of faith promotes and was part of the Amish division. However, there is a side to that we are apt to shy away from so far that we do not know where the lines are anymore in socializing. They are not the kind of people that we ought to have as a close social circle, if they are people who have done away with what they once believed and associated with for the sake of a more liberal way. Our shunning is related to Communion and membership. Finally, there is a sense in which they should not be our most intimate friends if they have taken another route. That is one way to break down our convictions and finally move into Liberalism and Pietism.

Associated with this, it affects the practical side of Church administration. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8, Paul says, “But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: (8) So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because

ye were dear unto us.” This was in the name of love and concern about keeping their confidences, keeping communication, and keeping their good will. It is the idea of being gentle and treating them very carefully. We believe in all that. The answer is in Galatians 6:1. If someone . . . “Be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” There is something like being gentle as a nurse and disciplining as needed. We are not be too much concerned whether they keep on appreciating us or not. This is part of the price of sound administration.

I will give an illustration. Not too long ago a brother confessed something shocking to a bishop brother. The bishop brother listened to his story and when he was done he said, “I am surprised that you are not more shocked and that you talk as mercifully to me about this as you do.” The bishop replied “Well, it is like this. I am a man like you are and I could get into the same thing, but by the grace of God I did not. We must face what you are in and deal with it.” He did not scold him. He did not tear him up and tell him how bad he makes things now for everybody and so on. Rather, he dealt with him gently

but he nevertheless disciplined him. That is what this has in mind.

I remember another bishop back in the Conference when things were starting to go wrong as they were (of course it is hard to tell when that was but at least they were going wrong). He had a family of boys who were loyal supporters, but the time came that one after the other one was dropping their plain suit, and they were marrying wrong partners and such like. Then, this bishop said, “One thing I will tell you is that some of you brethren who have dealt with your children have lost communication. I am still communicating with my boys. We have good communication,” but all the while they were going more liberal. We can do that, but that is a snare of Pietism. Finally, they have a wrong understanding of divine love as related to Church administration, social shunning and Church administration.

5) *Thinking that divisions are always wrong or are always sin.* They use Scriptures such as Galatians 5:20 which address seditions (which means “divisions, heresies (a party spirit),”) and variance which means “the idea of being critical all the time.” One also needs to recognize that it does say that heresies



must come. “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest” (1 Corinthians 11:19). We also have Scripture in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 which says, “that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly.” There are two sides. The reason that I thought of this one was that during the late '50's and early '60's when the Revival movement was beginning in the Mennonite Church, the Church at large noticed this. The Mennonite General Conference noticed this. There was an article in *The Gospel Herald* that Paul Erb (editor at that time) said was discussed at Mennonite General Conference. He said, “Finally, the conclusion was that division is the greater sin and we will all need to work to stay together.” That leads to what it did. It is deciding that division of organization is the greater sin. Rather, the greater sin is to be the cause of that division.

6) *Thinking that we are in changing times and that we need to continue adjusting to them.* There always were changing times. This is a subject that is worth looking at. When the changing times came, like the industrial revolution, our forefathers around the late 1800's

shored up church standards in order to meet the influence of commercial-made clothing when the spinning wheel was put away in the attic or given to the antique dealers later. People hardly know what spinning wheels are today. There was a changing time there. Commercial cloth and clothing brought about a change of influence into the Mennonite church that caused the leaders to do something about it, and that did not affect Bible principles.

In our day, change is justified because we have a rapid fire of technological change. Let us ever remember that there is no short cut to salvation. I have had a deed in my possession that represented the early deed of the farm where I grew up. It was as wide as this desk [pulpit] and about as long. It was written with the most perfect handwriting. All the way across, lines were neat and straight. Can you imagine the time it took to write that? Today, you put it on a computer and you turn it out in a short time and preceding that there was the typewriter. Those are changes. Technological change has come but we have shortcuts to such printed matter today. We have photocopiers and they are much better than the duplicators we had and such like,

but there is no shortcut to salvation. As we think of the thought pattern that we are in with changing times and then justify changes let us ever remember that the Bible principles of separation, nonconformity, separation of Church and State, nonresistance, always remain and there is no short cut to it. There is no shortcut to salvation.

7) *Thinking that we must blend with the culture to reach society is another thought pattern.* They used Scripture like 1 Corinthians 9:22 when Paul said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." I will give an illustration. This, again is an experience in the Conference. One Sunday morning, one of our older brethren, after Sunday School sat with his wife. We did not have mixed seating. He sat with his wife and a few others did too. I talked to them afterwards and said, "This is something we do not want. You are starting something." "Well," he said, "We are a mission station and we need to make people feel at home. We want to sit together so when they come in they feel at home since they are accustomed to sitting together." That, you might say, is a very simple one, but that particular principle can be carried very far, if you finally accommodate to

get on the level of people. We are prone to do most anything to get on the level of people. That is adjusting or becoming "all things to all men."

It is a little bit like the story that was told of a minister who was always preaching the people to get down to the level where the people are, so you can win them. On the way home from church that preacher slipped off the road on a muddy road and was caught in a gutter. Then, a brother came along and he asked him if he would pull him out. "The minister said, "I have a rope along would you pull me out?" The brother replied, "Sure, I'll pull you out," and he backed down into the gutter too, out in front. The minister said, "Now you are in the same fix I am." The brother replied, "Well, that is what you are preaching all the time. I want to get down on your level." Well that is a little bit the way people look at it. Get down to where the people are to pull them out. We need to "Maintain and keep on saving them that are saved so others can find the light to come to the shores of safety."

8) *Accepting the tradition (this is one of our bad traditions) of a generation gap theory.* This is the thinking that there must be a difference between the way the young people and the older peo-

ple dress — maybe their coverings and such like. The old argument was that you cannot put a young head on old shoulders and people think that you need a double standard. That is all deception. It is part of the reason that the Mennonite church has gone down. If you watch that pattern, we have overcome quite a bit of it, but I do not see any reason why the coverings on our younger sisters have to cover any less of their heads than of our older ones. If you have a reason for it give it to me. That theory and thought pattern that there is a gap between the younger and the older that is justified, is outright deception. It has led to apostasy. It leads to Liberalism and Pietism. We hear the term *situational ethics*. That is another one of what I am giving the practical side of. It thinks that because the situation is this way, we must do it this way. It is that bad now that we need to do it this way.

This thought came to me on Count Zinzendorf adding the emotional aspect to it. The emotional side of Pietism is artificial and finally what it does is it makes people feel good in an atmosphere. They must go from one atmosphere to the other to keep feeling good. It is absolutely not solving any problem as compared to the real goods of

knowing that you have peace with God because your sins are forgiven. That brings about an emotional stable experience that cannot be duplicated by any external demonstrations. It is the knowledge that you are right with God, have assurance of salvation, and that your sins are washed away by the blood. You know that you are a changed person and have peace with God. The kind of religion where they lay hands on people and they fall over and some twenty people lay around on the floor that is the extreme of it today, because the Holy Spirit slew them. That is not Scripture. You cannot find Scripture for that. When you have peace with God, you have a stability that attracts people to want what you have. You have something which God can use.

9) *There is the wrong thinking about uniting forces for select projects.* This is the thinking that we need to unite to do certain things where the activities overlap and we can do that and not be affected. It comes fairly close to social shunning. In the '50's, A. J. Metzler wrote in the *Christian Living* magazine, "The time will come that we will worship together as a larger Mennonite Church" — that we will become one large Mennonite Church. "Since we are doing all things

together as we do it is only logical to finally merge. And if not then, we must stop where we are.” Then, he said, “We are not able to, nor are we about to stop doing what we are doing. . . . Finally we are going to be together.” Today General Conference and Mennonite General Conference are alike and together.

I will show what he was talking about. In 1920 the relief organization was started under MCC — Mennonite Central Committee. It was developed from there on. That was for Russian relief. Today it represents the Mennonite Church at large. In World War II there was the Civilian Public Service program that was represented — what was called the NSBRO (National Service Board for Religious Objectors) which MCC Peace section was one of

the main thrusts of it. In 1940 they started the development of Mennonite World Conference. In 1948 there was the Mennonite Youth Fellowship which had its local chapters and finally a large meeting for all Mennonite youth. Somewhere in Colorado was the first one. There was the Mennonite Publication board in 1908. The Mennonite General Conference, or the Old Mennonite Church (1898) in 1958 started a joint seminary, and A. J. Metzler reasoned about doing all those things together. I would like to give a warning. We need to keep the lines of separation where we can allow God to handle them for us. I do not mean to be an isolationist but neither a pessimist. We hear talk about the pessimist and the optimist. I think there is one other one and that is a realist. Let us be realistic.

## Heaven

How fitting it would be to simply sing of the glories of God. The Scripture tells us of a time when a “great multitude, which no man could number,” (Revelation 7:9) will be gathered together in heaven. There will be singing. I often think of this when we sing. There is a difference. The Scripture tells us that

as we gather to worship there will be a parting, but on that day we can sing and walk together on the “streets of gold” (Revelation 21:21) with Jesus and there will be no parting. It will be forever and ever. Can we grasp that? It gives us reason to motivate ourselves again and again that we are made ready and faithful so

that we can attain, by the grace of God and be under the blood of Jesus Christ, so that we can be in heaven and we can be partakers of singing this new song with this great multitude of people.

Jesus said in John 14:2, 3 where it says, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” I have studied and studied on the subject of heaven and it is simply unexplainable. I simply cannot find the words to describe heaven. I have tried to come across different wordings and different Scriptures. Someone wrote, “Let men sing of the glory of God; let poets paint the picture in the loftiest flights of the imagination; let the preachers unfold the scene in forensic flights of oratory: let revelators reach the heart of the power of language to portray what God has revealed to them — when the saved of earth shall ascend into the realms of eternal glory, their eyes shall behold a scene which beggars all description.”

I have spoken to several people who have been on the death bed. That is always precious memory

to be able to speak to people who have been on the death bed and have had visions of heaven.

*An unforgiving spirit will bar us from heaven and if we are carrying grudges.* At the end of the Lord’s Prayer is one thing Jesus saw need to emphasize. If we do not forgive our brethren, He will also not forgive us.

*The blood of Christ alone is where our salvation is.* In the day in which we live, we have people perhaps very conservative, whom I have already heard remark, “As long as we keep the standards of the church and do as the ministers say, we will be all right.” It is almost incomprehensible for me that someone can actually think and believe that. On the other hand there is perhaps, on the liberal side, the danger of this “easy believism,” that if we confess with the mouth and believe, everything else will be all right.

Both the ideas of forgiveness and the importance of the blood of Christ are taught in the Scripture. It is important that we teach that the blood of salvation is our only salvation. We can teach a lot of things in a number of areas and that is good and fine, but Paul said this to the Corinthians, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him

crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Paul was trying to say that it is so important that we as ministers would teach Jesus Christ and that only is where our salvation is.

There is a story based on the children of Israel in the times of Egypt as they were brought out. The blood was to be applied on the sides and the tops of the door, where they made the entrance in and out. If the blood was not applied, the death angel visited that house. It teaches us a lesson. They were sitting in the house and the blood was to be applied because the death angel was to come that night. Grandfather was sitting on the chair. He could not go by himself anymore. He needed help to go everywhere that he needed to go, and he was sitting and meditating on the fact that if the blood was not applied, the death angel would visit them. He was very concerned about this and asked, “Is the blood applied?” The father in the home (perhaps his son) said, “Yes father, we applied the blood.” Grandfather sat there longing and thinking. He meditated some more and had a great concern. He asked again, “Is the blood applied?” They assured him that it was. The third time he sat there for a while and asked again, “Is the blood applied?” Finally, they took up his chair with him to the

outside and turned him around and showed him that the blood was applied. At last he was satisfied. I ask our ministers in this, “Are we concerned like this grandfather was?” Is the blood applied to our congregation? To ourselves? That alone is where our salvation is. Is the blood applied?

*Heaven will be intermingled with love.* I had to think of the expression Paul wrote, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). That is speaking of Jesus Christ and of heaven itself. Jesus Christ is love. It is part of God, and God is love. If we do not have love in our hearts, we cannot make an entrance into heaven.

Paul gave a stirring testimony as he was nearing the end of his life. He. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Timothy 4:7, 8). It is so important that we have love in our hearts. That will be a part of

heaven in the presence of God. We talked about an unforgiving spirit. It is so important that we are filled with the love of God. Then, there is no place in our hearts for an unforgiving spirit or for a grudge. This is a reason why the Scripture records Jesus final words on the cross. Jesus died on the cross. He was tormented and the nails were put to His hands. As He hung there, one of the first phrases that the Scriptures record for us is that what He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

We see this also of Stephen, at his death, when he was stoned. They hated him so much, but he also had love in his heart and therefore he could say, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). May we have love in our hearts as we go through life, because if we want to have an entrance into heaven we need to have love in our hearts.

Hebrews gives an expression in the faith chapter how Abraham, "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). It also says in verse 13, 14 that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of

them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (14) For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." *It has always been my desire as a minister of the Gospel, to somehow portray the importance of this stranger and pilgrim aspect to our people.* We must not become rooted in these natural things. We cannot get carried away and forget the bliss of heaven or get away from this stranger and pilgrim aspect. We need to always remember that we are of dust, and the time will come when we will need to leave this earth. Where will we go?

A number of years ago, one of my nephews died very suddenly. We had a son who was his age. They were together in the same grade at school. This boy had written a poem not too long before on the glories of heaven and also the golden crown. Of course, this all made new meaning or meant even more for us after he was gone. However, that morning, as he came to school, he fell over dead right in front of our son. Later we found out it was his heart. I simply relate this to you, as far as what it means to be a stranger and a pilgrim on this earth.

This made a very profound

impression on our children and on our son. Here was his best friend, his classmate, his cousin, and he left this earth. I remember so clearly over the time of the visitation as we were there for the viewing, he was shocked beyond explanation. He was not one to be given to emotion, but I remember him as he was standing by the coffin, he was gazing into it and he simply could not comprehend why his best friend and cousin was taken away so suddenly. Before that he had not been acquainted with death to such a degree, but death to him became reality.

We tried to teach our son the importance of death and life. It was only a couple of years later when he expressed his desire to become a part of the Church and to be baptized. We asked him what his desire was and for his testimony. He did not express many words, but it spoke volumes to us. It was his desire to be a child of God that he can someday be in heaven. I think there was an effect of this pilgrim and stranger aspect. He realized that he does not stay here all the time. Death to him became a reality.

Too often, I am afraid we lose that stranger and pilgrim aspect in life. We go about thinking that we will be here all the time or a

maybe a long time yet. Then, we are not motivated to do the things that are right and to make preparations as we should. May God help us that we can be ready at all times to see and understand that we are only dust and the time will come when we will leave this earth. Do we know where we will be?

Also as I think about heaven, I think of the book, *Pilgrim's Progress*. I would encourage each one to read this book. It is parable or allegory of Christian. We read how Pilgrim came to the cross and was loosed from his burden. Then he started on his Christian journey and was headed for the Celestial City. It is good for us to get a glimpse of what Christian saw or rather, what John Bunyan (the writer) envisioned. It is good for us to realize what heaven is and what is waiting for those that are ready and have kept themselves pure and spotless. Through the Lamb, Christ, they are called to the supper and are ready to meet Him at all times. In the last part of *Pilgrim's Progress*, as they crossed the river of death, they came to the other side and were met by the shining ones, which were the angels. They rejoiced in the fact that they had made it to the Celestial City.

John Bunyan tells us in his



allegory that they talked with the shining ones about the glory of the place. They told him that the beauty and the glory of the city was inexpressible. That is the way I find it. I hardly can express the beauty of the Celestial City. They said, "Here is Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect." Then, it says, "You are going now to the paradise of God in which you will see the Tree of Life and eat of its never fading fruits. When you come there you will have white robes given you, and your walk and talk shall be with the King every day. Even all the days of eternity. There you shall not see again the things that you saw when you were in the lower regions of the earth, sorrow, affliction, sickness, and death, for the former things are passed away. You are going to Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets, men that God has taken away from the evil to come, and who are now resting in their beds with each one walking in his uprightness."

That gives a very fitting description of what he saw in a vision of heaven. I am sure we can all say they were exceedingly joyful about what they saw. John Bunyan says, "Now I saw in

my dream, that these men were at the gate, and lo as they entered, they were transfigured and they had raiment put on them that shone like gold. They had also had received harps and crowns, the harps to praise continually, and the crowns in token of honour, and I heard in my dream that all the bells of the city rang again for joy and that it was said to the pilgrims, 'Enter into the Joy of your Lord.'" As the gates were opened to let the men in, Bunyan says, "He looked in." The gates were open and Pilgrim and Hopeful were ushered into the Celestial City. Then he says, "I looked in after them, and behold, the city shone like the sun and the street was also paved with gold. And in the streets walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands and golden harps for singing praises. Some I saw had wings and they answered one another without intermission saying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord.'" Then he says, "After that, they shut up the gates which when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

*It is good for us to meditate on heaven and what the Scriptures have to say.* It is good for us that we become homesick for heaven because it will draw our minds to heaven. It will motivate us to that end if we can meditate on

what is in store for those who come after Jesus Christ and do His commandments and will. We can go through this life, if we realize what heaven is like and that it is to be eternal.

*We need to also teach that there is a hell, and damnation for all those who do not repent on this side of the grave.* We need to teach what heaven and hell are all about. We could ask, “Is it worth it? We can think and reflect on heaven and the glories therein. “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Revelation 21:22). This is a description of the holy Jerusalem — of heaven and the rest in Revelation 21:23–22:3. The first part of chapter 21 says how the holy Jerusalem came down. John heard this great voice, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Revelation 21:3, 4)

Many times, as we go through life, we have a tendency to forget about these things. We need to

meditate on this and ask the question, “Is it worth having conflict with our brother?” When we are tempted into conflict with our brother, is it worth it to hold grudges against our brother, lose our soul and be banished forever from the face of God, and from the glories of heaven? Or, is it worth it to heap to ourselves riches and temporal things that fade away? Is it worth it to become impatient with a weaker one and become rash and speak unkindly? We need to ask ourselves the question. No, a thousand times no, it is not worth it. Rather, we should take upon us things that are unpleasant, or that which is not pleasant to the flesh rather than become angry or come in conflict with our brethren, and lose our soul to hell. May God be with us that we do not do that.

Daniel 12:1 gives reference to the final deliverance. “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” At that time, we understand, that there shall be a book that will be opened and all the children of God will be written

therein. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (3) And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (verses 2, 3)

This is thought provoking, especially verse 10 to the end. Daniel was troubled. verse 6 says, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" In the time in which we live now, there are many things which we wonder "How long can it go?" We are concerned for our own soul and our children. We are concerned of the souls of the brethren of the church. What will life be at that time? We cannot point our finger at anyone else and say, "It was because of him that we are not saved. It was because of him that we are offended." We let ourselves become bogged down with sin and we could not overcome.

Daniel was concerned, and it is good to be concerned about our brothers and sisters, but we need to also take heed to ourselves. We need to realize that on that day, each of us will be found in our lot. Each of us will need to answer for what we have done or said, or the attitudes which I have

borne. May God help us that we also want to help our brethren. We need to be rightly concerned for our souls and realize that we must answer for what we have done, and not for what somebody else has done.

There are a couple of verses in Revelation 14 that are important as we teach of heaven. There is a place called heaven. As we teach the glories therein, we need to also realize that there are those who are not ready to meet God and there is also a place that is prepared for them. Many of us perhaps do not like to speak about this. Many people would rather avoid the subject. Since they live in sin and have a guilty conscience they cannot even sit down and meditate until their conscience plagues them to such a degree they must always be doing something. They simply cannot concentrate or meditate long enough. It torments them to think about it. Revelation 14:9, 10 says, "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, (10) The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the

presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.”

We often hear the expression “the no mores of heaven,” but do we realize there are also “no mores” of hell? Hell also has “no mores.” There shall be no more opportunities of grace in hell. There will be no more happiness of any degree. There will also be no more rest, day or night. And last, but not least, in hell there is no more relief or respite from the heat, pain, misery or the awful condition that hell has to offer. There is no more relief as the rich man has found out, and no more opportunities for a cool refreshing drink. As he was there in torment he said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:24). Father Abraham replied, “remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented” (verse 25).

*It is also important that we give instruction of how to get there.* It is not only that heaven is so nice. In John 14:2, 3 Jesus talked of Heaven. He wanted to go and prepare a place. “Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how

can we know the way” (John 14:4)? Jesus was prompt to reply, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” I like this expression of Jesus. What was He talking about? I think he was talking about the way of cross leads home. If we meditate on the life of Christ and how He led us home, we can see that He went through the cross. There was a dying and a rising up again in triumph. This has spiritual significance. If someone wants to enter into heaven, there must be a dying of self. It is by the way of the new birth. We need to die and as Christ died. Thinking about death is not pleasant. Denying the flesh and self is not a pleasant thing. The disciples experienced what it was when Christ died. It was not pleasant at all. They also experienced what it was when Christ rose again. It was such a joy and such a gladness. Anyone, church or parent, who has a wayward member realizes what joy it is for someone who has lived in sin to come and repent, and see him die to self and rise up again in the new birth. There is great rejoicing and this only is the way to heaven.

Isaiah 35, in my Bible, the heading says, “Joyfully flourishing of Christ’s kingdom.” Verses 8–10 say, “And an highway shall

be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein. (9) No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: (10) And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” It is a wonderful promise that “sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” All of us perhaps have favorite songs that move us at certain times. I especially think of a song that has been sung at several funerals when there is a loved one who has passed on. We meditate on where his soul is, especially if they have been faithful, left a good example, and have left a good testimony behind. We cannot help but meditate on the fact that as his body lays in the coffin that his form is there and still, but the spirit has left. Later, perhaps that evening, we gaze upon the heavens beyond the stars and we think, “There is where his spirit is. His spirit is in heaven where all is glory.” This song brings out this point quite clearly. It is one of my favourites.

“Let me go where saints are going,

To the mansions of the blessed.

Let me go where my redeemer

Has prepared his people rest.

I would gain the realms of brightness

Where they dwell forever more.

I would join the friends that wait me,

Over on the other shore.

Let me go where none are weary,

Where is raised not wail of woe.

Let me go and bathe my spirit,

In the raptures angels know.

Let me go for bliss eternal,

Lures my soul, away, away

And the victor’s song triumphant

Thrills my heart, I cannot stay.

Let me go for why should I tarry,

What is there to bind me here,

What but cares and toils and sorrow,

What but death and pain and fear.”

He says further . . .

“Let me go, for hopes most cherished,

Blasted round me often lie.

Oh, I have gathered brightest flowers

But to see them fade and die.”

Many times, we have gathered brightest flowers (so to speak) but we see them simply fade and die. This is what happens to all these temporal things that we see with our eyes — these things that perhaps we put so much effort in. They only last so long and then they are gone. We have disap-

pointments that it turned out the way it did. It is different with heavenly values. That is what the song writer was saying, “Let me go where there is no experiencing anymore the things I have gathered that will fade away, to where things have eternal value and will be there forever and ever.”

Our life here is but a short time. Sometimes we hear people make expressions like, “This or that happened a long time ago — fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago.” In the canvas of time that is but a speck in eternity. It is like the song we sing, “When we’ve been

there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise, Than when we first begun.” It behoves us to redouble our effort. We need to realize how temporal these things are here on the earth. We need to do all we can so that our souls are saved and we are ready and made fit by the grace of God, and be under the blood of Jesus Christ so that we can be among that innumerable multitude where we can sing and there will be no parting. That is possible with the help of God. God has made that possible through Jesus Christ.

### Scripture References

<b>Proverbs</b>	14:2, 3	13, 20	<b>2 Timothy</b>	
23:7	1	14:4	20	2:15
<b>Isaiah</b>		<b>Acts</b>		4:7, 8
35:8–10	20	7:60	15	<b>Titus</b>
<b>Daniel</b>		<b>Romans</b>		2:11, 12
12:1	18	6:1	5	<b>Hebrews</b>
12:2, 3	19	14:22	6	8:9
12:6	19	<b>1 Corinthians</b>		8:10
<b>Matthew</b>		2:2	14	11:10
9:17	5	2:9	14	11:13, 14
15:19	1	5:6	7	<b>Jude</b>
<b>Mark</b>		9:22	10	4
2:22	5	11:19	9	<b>Revelation</b>
<b>Luke</b>		<b>Galatians</b>		7:9
5:37	5	5:20	8	14:9, 10
16:24, 25	20	6:1	8	21:3, 4
23:34	15	<b>1 Thessalonians</b>		21:21
<b>John</b>		2:7, 8	7	21:22
4:20	5	<b>2 Thessalonians</b>		21:23–22:3
		3:6	9	

## From the Previous Issue:

### The Snare of Gradualism

From a message by David G. Weaver

Sunday, October 08, 2000

Richland Mennonite Church

### Perils of Apostasy

From a message by the late Eli Graber

Preached at a ministers' meeting in March 2003

## FIFTY FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

47. **There is a bodily resurrection in store for all people, good or bad.**

In support of this truth, let us quote from the language of our Saviour: "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28, 29). For a fuller exposition of this subject, read the fifteenth chapter of First

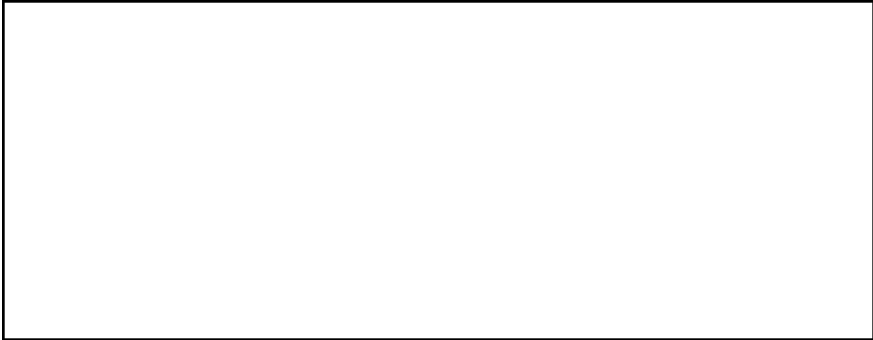
Corinthians. The doctrine of the resurrection is taught by the inspired writers in both the Old and the New Testaments. The one point that we wish to urge at this time is the certainty of it; carrying with it the solemn warning that we make our "calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10) while we have the opportunity; lest the resurrection may mean to us "the resurrection of damnation" and not "the resurrection of life."

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*"Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" — Isaiah 66:1*



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