

A Consideration of Eight Points

Lancaster County, Pa USA
April 2013

Introduction

The light which first dawned in the early days of the kingdom of Christ has shined down through the ages. Though at times it flickered and grew dim, it again shone brightly in Europe in the 16th century and in various and sundry times and places since. In these last days this light has begun once again to shine brightly among God's people. This writing is an effort to describe those things being taught by the Spirit of God to His people in these times. We are not so concerned about the opinions of men, but rather "what saith the Scriptures" is the purpose and promotion of this writing.

When possible we also wish to look at subjects in light of the historic Anabaptists and their beliefs and practices, especially the first couple of generations where the fire of God, revival fire, burned brightly in Europe. In so doing we hope to root and ground new believers in the "faith once delivered to the saints". We also hope to equip believers new and old with tools to answer the questions that come their way. In providing these writings we wish to challenge seekers of the truth, to answer the age old question "What is Truth"? And finally we wish to encourage those who are of a contrary opinion to consider these points. We respectfully invite dialogue from the scriptures on anything that we have written.

This writing is not in any way exhaustive. Neither is it a statement of faith, but merely a tool, an instrument written up by brothers who have an agreement on the matters at hand and wish to present them in a careful, God-fearing form. We are thankful to God for the understandings and revelations He has given us, but we encourage each individual to search the scriptures, like the Bereans (Acts 17:11), and establish for themselves, "What is Truth?"

The titles of the subjects are as follows:

- 1 How Does One's name get written in the Book of Life?**
- 2 What is a valid baptism?**
- 3 A Royal Priesthood**
- 4 A scriptural definition of the congregation of believers.**
- 5 According to Christ and the Scriptures is there a place for denominations?**
- 6 A scriptural view of Authority and Leadership**
- 7 Preaching for doctrines (teachings) the commandments of men.**
- 8 Concerning Emotionalism vs. Emotions, Pietism vs. Piety**

1. How Does One's name get written in the Book of Life?

Revelation 3:5 *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*

The New Testament teaches clearly three tenses (time frames) of salvation - **past, present, and future.**

In the **past** a child of God has been saved, or justified, as in Ephesians 2:1, 8-9 and 1 Corinthians 1:18 *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

Presently we are being saved, or cleansed, as in 1 John 1:7, 9 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

And finally in the **future** we shall be saved from this flesh, and from this present evil world 1 Corinthians 15:54 & Matthew 24:13 *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

Having seen clearly these various aspects of salvation we proceed to answer from the scriptures the question, "How does one get translated from darkness to light, and when does someone become one of His?" Romans 8:9 says that *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.* In John 3:3 Jesus told Nicodemus that if a man is not born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Romans 8:16 states *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* In other words if the Spirit of God takes up residence in a man he will know it, there will be a witness. It is not merely a mental assent, commitment, or re-commitment to follow Christ. (Even Peter did that but denied Christ because he had no power). Neither is it works, for Isaiah 64:6 says *all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,* and Romans 3:12 says *"there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* In fact, as we noted earlier from Ephesians ... *"by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"*.

According to the scriptures no amount of carefulness and performance will get us through the gate. Salvation, or the new birth is, a new life, the life of His Holy Spirit, born inside of us. The chief question then is, have you, have I, been born from above of the Spirit of God? 1 John 5:13 *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

The scriptures tell us we can know. Do you know?

2. What is a valid baptism?

The New Testament was originally written in Greek, so sometimes it is helpful to take a look at the original Greek words and their meanings. The Greek word baptizō is translated baptize or baptized. From Strong's exhaustive Concordance we find that the definition of this word means; *to make whelmed (that is, fully wet)*; it may also refer to bathing or washing.

We wish first to consider the subject of water baptism. In Acts 8:39 when Philip baptized the Eunuch we read "*When they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip...*" John 3:23 reads, "*John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there:*" In Romans 6:4 & Colossians 2:12 we read that "*we are buried with him by baptism into death...*" The point here is not how the baptism is done but that one is whelmed, made fully wet, and buried.

An early Christian writing of the first or second generation called the Didache reads as follows: "*Concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living (running) water. But if you have no living (running) water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit...*"

Why is one baptized? It is part of the commands of scripture for salvation. In Acts 2:38 when asked what they must do "*Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*" Later in 1 Peter 3:21 he writes: "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us ...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*". Romans 10:10 Tells us "*For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*"

As we noted earlier concerning salvation, it begins as one is born from above of the Spirit, which happens by repentance and faith. The scripture commands baptism as a necessary step in this process. We will never be saved (present tense) from our flesh, the world and the devil if we are not obedient in this. Along with the confession of the mouth noted in Romans 10:10, this moves salvation into a realm that affects all of our life and ultimately our destiny.

Another question presents itself quickly at this time, who should do the baptizing? In Matthew 28:19 in His parting words Jesus gave some instruction to his disciples. A disciple is one who learns or one who follows. Christ instructed those who were learning from and following Him to first make followers, learners, or disciples of Him and then to baptize, as well as to teach those baptized, all the things He had commanded them. One of the things He commanded them was to baptize those who became His followers. To clarify this point let us word it a different way. Jesus commanded his followers or disciples to baptize followers and then to teach those same persons to follow all His commands which as we just noted includes the command to baptize those they bring to be followers of Jesus.

Many Christians will freely confess and admit the responsibility to follow and obey this "Great Commission" yet strangely, somehow, separate the responsibility of baptism for a select few - "the ministers". We find it interesting that based on this understanding (that all believers shared the responsibility of baptizing as Jesus commanded) some of the early Anabaptists actually asked those being baptized whether they (those being baptized) were willing to preach the gospel and baptize other believers. They had to say yes to this question before they were themselves baptized. Of course, in those days to baptize someone was punishable by death, so to make this vow was nearly the equivalent of agreeing to a death sentence. Certainly if they could agree to this commitment under such conditions surely we should be able to walk in this today.

In Acts 8 we read how Philip who was not an apostle or an overseer went to Samaria and preached the good news and baptized believers (Acts 8:12). In v. 36-38 we read “*and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.*” In like manner the early Anabaptists went everywhere preaching and baptizing. We do not find teaching or precedent in the scriptures relegating baptism only to apostles or overseers, but rather find that it is a function and command for all believers along with preaching the gospel (good news) of the Kingdom.

Another question concerning baptism presents itself to us. What about the “instruction class” and baptizing into the local congregation. As noted already from Matthew 28:20 Christ instructed His followers to disciple, mentor, and teach all those they have baptized. It must be noted throughout the New Testament that this is always done following baptism and is the responsibility of all, but especially of the mature, and of those given charge of oversight in the flock, the elder or overseer. We can see clearly from Romans 6:3, Colossians 2:12, Acts 8:37-38 that we are baptized into Christ – not into a denomination, or into a local assembly.

Certainly, and for good reason, the scriptures instruct us in Hebrews 10:25 to “*not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...*” Here we see the born again baptized Christians functioning, meeting, and assembling together, as opposed to being baptized into some earthly organization, denomination, or congregation. So then, the instruction and mentoring of the new believer is commanded, but not as a prerequisite to baptism, but rather as ongoing, equipping, and establishing of the Body as in Ephesians 4:12-16.

There comes then the question, “Is water baptism the only baptism spoken of in the scriptures?” There are three other baptisms we wish yet to speak of: the baptism of the Spirit, the baptism of suffering/fire, and the baptism of blood.

The first is the **baptism of the Spirit**. As noted previously being baptized has the thought of being *whelmed* (*that is, fully wet*). Here we are concerning ourselves not so much with past experience but with present reality. Because of the prevalence in some religious settings of persons not being born of the Spirit, the question has become common, “Are you born again?” – referring to the past tense of salvation. Here it might be noted that possibly a better question could be, “Are you full of the Holy Spirit?”

In Ephesians 5:18 the scriptures command us to, “*be not drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit*”. Here again the thought of being “whelmed or totally wet” comes to mind. There are various and differing beliefs and opinions about when and how the baptism of the Spirit happens, which are beyond the scope of this writing. The important point is not so much what has or hasn’t happened, or when or where, as much as, “Are you full of the Holy Spirit now?”

Let us consider from the scriptures some examples of what happens in a believer's life when he or she is baptized or *whelmed* (*that is, fully wet*) in the Spirit. In Acts 2:14, 4:8, 29-31 we see men fearless, full of courage and boldness. Because of this, the Word (the gospel of the Kingdom) was preached everywhere. We also see miracles, signs, and wonders following just as Christ promised would happen. Acts 6:8, 10:38, Mark 16:17-18, Acts 3:6, Acts 5:15-16, and 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 to name a few.

There are some who erroneously teach that this has ceased, or that it was only for the introduction of the “*church age*”. This is not only contrary to the scriptures, but a man-made doctrine that is also contrary to the experience of thousands of believers down through the ages, and even the world over today. We have also been eye-witnesses of many miracles, healings, prophecies, speaking in tongues, and deliverances from demons in our day.

In Acts 4:33 we read that with great power the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and great grace was upon them all. People could see Jesus was alive because of the supernatural miracles, signs, and wonders as well as the great grace that was upon everyone.

One of the deceptions of our modern time is a lack of understanding that manifestations of the Holy Spirit and a holy life are intended to go hand in hand. On one hand some people focus much on manifestations but little on grace in the daily life and the Fruit of the Spirit. On the other hand there are others who seemingly focus much on the life, and yet do not walk in the fullness of the presence and power of Almighty God. The life full of Christ is full of grace and truth. He is the Holy Spirit. Being full of Him will produce holiness of life and victory over sin and vice – in thought, word, and deed. It is reasonable to suspect the spirit or experience that does not produce this. On the other hand to reject the true manifestations of the Spirit because of counterfeits or excesses serves only to accomplish that powerlessness which the enemy of our souls, who hates His Spirit, desires Christians to fall into.

The scriptures speak of a **baptism of fire and a baptism of suffering**. In order for His strength to be made perfect and effectual, the believer must not only submit to these baptisms but actually welcome and embrace them. Many believers have hesitantly or grudgingly accepted the cross when laid on them against their choice, but few there are indeed who willingly volunteer, welcome, and embrace suffering as a means to grace. It is often only as we are thankful in suffering that it really accomplishes what He had in mind Hebrews 12:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:18 and Ephesians 5:20. May we have the mindset that it is a privilege *“to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name”* Acts 5:41. We are meant to come through suffering as “more than conquerors”, not with a “wounded spirit” or a victim mindset. In Exodus 3:2 Moses encountered the fire of God in the burning bush. This fire did not consume the bush, but like the scriptures teach in Malachi 3:3 the fire of God burns out the dross and leaves us better. We should not view the fire of God as a negative thing to be “submitted” to, but rather as a positive experience that releases power and spiritual authority in our lives.

The early Anabaptists also referred often to a **baptism of blood** or martyrdom – *Revelation 12:11*. Many saints down through the ages and in various lands today have had the privilege to seal their earthly life with this baptism.

3. **A Royal Priesthood.** *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* 1 Peter 2:9-10

It has been said that Martin Luther taught the priesthood of all believers, but the Anabaptists made it a reality. What is a priest? Is he not one who represents God to the people? That is what we as believers have been called to do. 1 Timothy 2:5 tells us “*there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*”

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Paul writes to us about the headship order. It is not as one preacher erroneously put it, “God, Christ, Church, Man, Woman.” God has given gifts and assigned responsibilities in the Body with some of them confirmed and recognized by men. This however in no way creates a hierarchy system like the papacy and its daughters (Revelation 17:5). In fact in Mark 10:43 Jesus said it should not be so among us.

All of us are invited “*come boldly unto the throne of grace.*” Hebrews 4:16. All believers should be able to hear and discern God's voice Hebrews 8:11. Jesus said, “*his sheep know his voice*” John 10:4. In Christ there is no clergy – laity divide, there are not several tiers etc. There is one King with many followers, we are all part of one family Mark 3:35. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren, Hebrews 2:11 and we are seated with Him in *heavenly places* Ephesians 2:6. We are “*heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*” Romans 8:17. We are “*laborers together with God*” Because all authority was given to Christ, He commissioned us (all of His followers and disciples or learners) to preach, baptize, mentor (Matthew 28:18-20), “*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give*” Matthew 10:8, and that's exactly what they (the early believers) did Luke 9:6 & Acts 8:4. All believers are to break bread together in remembrance of Christ, and again that is what they did in Acts 2:46.

In the Congregational Order Points in the back of the “Schleitheim Articles”, Points 1 and 7 instructed the early Anabaptists the same. “*The brothers and sisters should meet at least three or four times a week, to exercise themselves, in the teaching of Christ and His apostles and heartily to exhort one another to remain faithful to the Lord as they have pledged. The Lord's Supper shall be held, as often as the brothers are together, thereby proclaiming the death of the Lord, and thereby warning each one to commemorate, how Christ gave His life for us, and shed His blood for us, that we might also be willing to give our body and life for Christ's sake, which means for the sake of all the brothers.*”

4. A scriptural definition of the congregation of believer's

The first occurrence of the Greek word “*ekklessia*” (which has been translated “church” in the King James Version of the English Bible) is in Matthew 16:18. In the German Bible this word is translated “*Gemeinde*” (fellowship/brotherhood) not “*Kirche*” (Church). *Ekklessia* has the thought or definition of a gathering, an assemblage, and more specifically a group of called out (chosen) persons representing the populace to make decisions (governance). So why did Jesus use this word when he had a perfectly understood Greek word “*sunagōgē*”? (From which we get our modern English word synagogue which is a close equivalent of the word church.)

In John 4:21 Jesus clearly taught that true worship of the Father was not dependent on a place. From this understanding among various believers, including the Amish and the River Brethren has come an unwillingness to erect buildings and rather to meet in the homes. In fact, the early Mennonite meeting places in America were not called churches but rather “*meeting houses*”. The focus of this writing is not a discussion of whether or not buildings or meeting houses are used, but rather a reflection on the true nature of the Body of Christ. It is not to be divided by denomination, and we (the believers in a given locale) are to assemble together often.

Once again noting the Congregational Order Points in the back of the “Schleitheim Articles”, Point 1 instructed them to gather 3-4 times a week in their homes. Point 2 admonished them to be in order and take turns sharing, much the same as 1 Corinthians 14:30-31 instructs us, “*If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.*” In fact, the early Anabaptists had a name for this. They called it “*sitzrecht*” or sitter's right. They also understood that any *gemeinshcaft* (fellowship) they would have with each other resulted directly from their *gemeinshcaft* (fellowship) with Christ, thus keeping the reality of an individual vibrant relationship with Christ an integral building block of any assembly or gathering of the saints.

This fellowship results in local autonomous gatherings functioning directly under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He is the direct, actual, functioning head of each assembly by His Spirit. Yet these assemblies are able to receive input and fellowship with any other believer or assembly of believers regardless of shape, size, nationality, culture, brand, flavor etc. This teaching that any brother is free to share as the Lord directs, elevates the value of each individual. Christianity, as opposed to Communism, Nazism, Islam or any other ideology, has resulted in the elevation of worth of the individual, his conscience, and his relationship with Christ. Because of this influence we have come to regard religious freedom as normal.

In his article “*Altars, Pulpits, and Tables*” Curt Wagoner of the German Baptists points out that one of the primary reasons we come together is to function (“*around the table*”) as believers. In the Altar Model, one comes to the priest, to the sacrament. Later the Reformers replaced this model with the Pulpit Model where the congregation gathers around the sermon. This was especially sharply in focus prior to the introduction of Sunday School. In the Table or Circle model we come together to function and to share Christ, and even visibly to share His broken body (communion). When this is reality, when brothers and sisters meet out of a close personal walk with Christ, it makes the man-made accountability structures of membership and rules look like just what they really are – a cheap counterfeit of the real thing. In such a circle there is no doubt who is “committed”. Sin becomes sinful and hiding things and hedging shows up quickly. This sort of relationship is spiritual and while providing a visible expression of Christ's Kingdom, far supersedes the organizational models many follow today. Because there is no name, no brand, no membership etc. there is nothing to register with the government. All who are submitted to Christ are welcome and those who are not will be exposed.

5. According to Christ and the Scriptures is there a place for denominations?

In John 17:20-23 Jesus prayed, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Then later in Ephesians 4:1-6 the Apostle Paul writes to us: “I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation (calling) wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” And again in 1 Corinthians 3:3-4 he writes, “ye are yet carnal. For whereas there are among you emulation and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk according to man? For when one says, *I* am of Paul, and another, *I* of Apollos, are ye not men?”

Christians today have divided themselves into many denominations, and act as if division in the body of Christ is acceptable to God. We need to recognize that as God looks down on earth, He only divides between unbelievers (those who have not yet come to Christ) and believers. In Matthew 25:32-33 he divides between the sheep and the goats. In the body of Christ, the only valid division (of sorts) is between believers who are in unity with God and each other, and disciplined believers (or those who call themselves believers) who are under discipline (marked in some way, shape, or form) by the assembly. This excludes all divisions, brands, I of this, I of that etc.

We realize there are some very real and practical challenges in walking this out both individually and as gatherings of believers, but lest us let the standard be the standard and pursue after it, imperfect as we may be. Let us not lower the standard or make place for the sin of dividing Christ's body. Our goal should be that our ranks of fellowship and communion would mirror as perfectly as possible Christ's ranks of fellowship and communion.

In 1 Corinthians 11:18-19 (DBY) we read, “For first, when ye come together in assembly, I hear there exist divisions among you, and I partly give credit to it. For there must also be sects among you, that the approved may become manifest among you.” God tells us here that how we respond to divisions in His body will manifest whether we are approved or not. How are we relating to “The least of these my brothers....” Matthew 25:40? Christ takes this very seriously. Do we? Let us especially evaluate honestly how we relate to an individual we are certain is a brother, but he isn't part of our circle, “brand”, or “flavor”?

One of the tools that has mightily strengthened denominations in our day is the human innovation of *church membership*. Certainly the scriptures teach a vital and vibrant connection with brothers locally receiving input, encouragement, exhortation, and even rebuke or correction. However, we are “Christ's Body and members in particular” 1 Corinthians 12:27. As noted earlier in Ephesians 4:4 there is *One Body*. We do not join “a local body” because there is only One Body, not many bodies. We assemble together locally, and in Hebrews 10:25 we are told to not forsake that gathering “as the manner of some is”. However, when we join something additional what are we joining? Is there not an allegiance or joining of something beyond Christ and His Body?

6. A scriptural view of Authority and Leadership.

In Luke 22:25-26 Jesus give his disciples a command of how authority will and will not function in His Kingdom. *“And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. Again in Matthew 23:8-12 (DBY) He forbids titles such as teacher, father, and by extension, reverend, pastor, bishop etc. “But *ye*, be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your instructor, and all *ye* are brethren. And call not any one your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, he who is in the heavens. Neither be called instructors, for one is your instructor, the Christ. But the greatest of you shall be your servant. And whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whoever shall humble himself shall be exalted.”*

One of the questions often faced when considering how the Body of Christ functions and especially the local assemblies is the question, “What about elders and overseers?” The old saying, “A lot more would get done if no one cared who got the credit” may well apply here. If concerned persons were more interested in the function happening in the Body of Christ and less concerned about titles and positions it might well come out much easier and better. Nevertheless, the scriptures have much to say about this and it is well to consider these points.

First we wish to point out what true Spiritual Authority and Leadership is not. As noted above it is not lordship or lording it over the flock. 1 Peter 5:3 *“Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”* What is lording? The definition of lord from Webster is as follows: *“one having power and authority over others: a : a ruler by hereditary right or preeminence to whom service and obedience are due”*. So then lording would be telling someone they must serve or obey because of one's position. This is exactly how many shepherds and overseers function, just what He said we shouldn't do. Some may object and point to Hebrews 13:17 and say it is clear sheep are to submit, or as one translation puts it, be submissive. This is true, believers are to follow the good example of faithful godly men, especially of those charged with watching over the flock and to give their words much weight. That is the job or responsibility of the Body, but never the demand of those taking the lead or watching over the flock, as this is strictly and expressly forbidden.

Overseers also are not to desire preeminence 3 John 1:9. In fact, it was following the disciples' expression of just such desires of greatness that Jesus gave us the strong teachings about not taking titles, not lording over, etc. Men who understand these points will quickly realize the difference between organizational authority and spiritual authority. Organizational authority puts a “badge” on a man's shoulder, and authorizes him to rule over people with a “do what I say” mentality. True spiritual authority will be seen as a man has authority over demons, sickness, sin and self, as people see God's confirmation on him, as people follow him because they want to, and because God is leading.

When true spiritual authority is operating as it ought people follow because they want to, and because God is leading or confirming. The one(s) who oversee should not always be at the front, or leading from the front. Instead like Christ taught they will be looking for ways to serve, and as we read in Ephesians 4 the result of their ministry will be to equip and empower others both in the local assembly, as well as beyond. Even in matters of decision making and direction they will be quick to involve the Body or circle and to lead them, rather than deciding things themselves and then seeking to implement their decisions. A very good historical study of this difference is the different way the Dutch Mennonites and the original Swiss Brethren functioned. We can see some of this unrighteous Dutch Mennonite influence bearing fruit in the life of Jacob Amman which we will note further below.

This bringing everyone along, reminds us of the “One Accords” of Acts, e.g. Acts 2:46. In the Spanish Bible the word is *unánimes* which means the same as or very similar to our English word unanimous. This means we work together and in this way bring each part of the Body that is involved

along. Those who are serving as overseers may not be immediately noted to the immature undiscerning visitor, but to those he labors among he will be well known. He will constantly be developing the skill or ability of being able to “lead” from the corner and work himself out of a job. His first oversight will always be in prayer and it is there in the place of prayer, where he first learns to “*give account*” Hebrews 13:17. There may be cases of dealing with the false prophet/brother where he will need to exercise his authority publicly, but even then it should only be for the situation. Because of the trust he has earned by his walk, and the confirmation of the Spirit, there will be little or no question of his authority.

“Elders” is a comparative word, as in an elder brother. It is not necessarily descriptive of a certain age but rather one who is noted as more mature in his Christian walk. Such men are responsible to “feed the flock” 1 Peter 5:2, and to see the flock is doing well. Because of this and other reasons some have wrongly equated elders or overseers with preachers. There are many types of preachers. There are evangelists, prophets, teachers etc. Ephesians 4:11. In Acts 8:1, 4 we read that everyone except the apostles scattered everywhere preaching. Elders however, are more mature saints who have met the qualifications laid out in scripture especially 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. They must live exemplary lives because they are going to be recommended for the Body everywhere as examples to follow. 1 Peter 5:3 Their intellectual training and study is not as important as their reality of walk in areas such as victory over sin and their own flesh as well as having spiritual authority.

We wish yet to consider the Jerusalem conference Acts 15:1-30. What it was not. It was not one man making a decision binding on others. It was not Barnabas and Paul going to Jerusalem to get input or endorsement, but rather to trace the error back to its roots and confront it. When there was disagreement (Acts 15:5) the apostles and elders – the leaders among them – came together. Together they discerned and confirmed what the Spirit was saying. They then all submitted to the Spirit's voice. Thus, because it was earth lining up with heaven's voice, it was binding on all believers not just on a certain circle or denomination.

It is important to note here a deception common in our day. This deception is a wresting of the scriptures in Matthew 16:19 “*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” This lie propagated by the Roman Catholic Church and strangely believed in and promoted by many other denominations and persons is one of the things that gave rise to the supposed legitimacy and infallibility of the papacy. This teaching that heaven will back us up and “enforce” whatever we decide is false. From the Williams Translation, another rendition of this scripture may help us to get a better understanding of the meaning or reading of the original Greek text. “*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you forbid on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven.*” Comparing scripture with scripture this lines up with the words we find in the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11 “*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*”

In a letter written in 1697, Gerrit Roosen an Anabaptist leader summed it up well. He wrote: “*The Scriptures must be our guide. We dare not run ahead of them. We must follow them, not lightheartedly, but in carefulness and fear. It is dangerous to step into the place of God's judgment and bind on earth what is not bound in heaven.*”

We see the bible teaching the following components (in order) of authority.

A. Spiritual Authority – An individual first has a calling and anointing from God.

B. Relational Authority – As an individual functions well in their God given calling their authority is recognized in their relationships with others as trust is earned.

C. Equipping Authority – As a man is equipped and trained he gains authority and understanding to function where he is called.

D. Positional Authority – As individuals walk in the above components they are recognized and confirmed by believers. “*A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.*” Proverbs 18:16

7. Preaching for doctrines (teachings) the commandments of men.

Matthew 15:8-9 *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines (teachings) the commandments of men.*

In Colossians 2:16-23 in the Williams Translation*we read: *Stop letting anyone pass judgment on you in matters of eating and drinking, or in the matter of annual or monthly feasts or Sabbaths. These were but the shadow of what was coming; the reality belongs to Christ. Stop letting anyone, in gratuitous humility and worship of angels, defraud you as an umpire, for such an one is taking his stand on the mere visions he has seen, and is groundlessly conceited over his sensuous mind. Such a person is not continuing in connection with the Head, from which the whole body, when supplied and united through its joints and sinews, grows with a growth that God produces.*

If once through fellowship with Christ you died and were separated from the world's crude notions, why do you live as though you belonged to the world? Why submit to rules such as, “You must not handle,” “You must not taste,” “You must not touch,” which refer to things that perish in the using, in accordance with human rules and teachings? Such practices have the outward expression of wisdom, with their self-imposed devotions, their self-humiliation, their torturings of the body, but they are of no value; they really satisfy the lower nature.

* a translation especially easy to understand and recommended for its accuracy in communicating the original Greek meaning.

Again in an excerpt from chapter 20 of the book *The Secret of The Strength*, by Peter Hoover we quote the following: “*In the beginning the Anabaptists did not regulate specific dress patterns. When such regulations first appeared among groups with Anabaptist background (such as the Old Flemish Mennonites and the Amish), many leaders warned against them.*

Gerrit Roosen, author of the confession of faith of the Anabaptists in northern Germany, and of the Christliches Gemüthsgespräch was a leader among European Anabaptists in the seventeenth century. On December 21, 1697 he wrote:

I am truly sorry that you have been disturbed by people who exalt themselves and make rules about things not clearly laid down in the Gospel. If the apostles had told us exactly how and with what the believer is to clothe himself, then we would have a case to work on. But we dare not contradict the Gospel by forcing men's consciences about certain styles of hats, clothes, shoes, stockings or haircuts. Things are done differently in every country. We dare not excommunicate people just because they do not line up to our customs. We dare not put them out of the church as sinful leaven, when neither Jesus nor the apostles bound us in matters of outward form. Neither Jesus nor the apostles made rules or laws about such things. Rather, Paul said in Col. 2 that we do not inherit the kingdom of heaven through food and drink. Neither do we inherit it through the form and cut of our clothes.

Jesus did not bind us in outward things. Why does our friend Jakob Amman undertake to make rules, then exclude those from the church who do not keep them? If he considers himself a servant of the Gospel but wants to live by the letter of outward law, then he should not have two coats. He should not carry money in his pocket nor shoes on his feet. If he does not live according to the letter of Jesus' law,

how can he force the brothers to live by the letter of his own laws? Oh that he would follow Paul who feared God, who treated people gently and who took pains not to offend the conscience of the weak. . . . Paul did not write one word about outward forms of clothing. But he taught us to be conformed to those of low estate and imitate only that which is honorable. We are to do that within the manner of the land in which we live. We are to shun styles and proud worldliness (1 John 2). We should not be quick to change our manner of dress. Fashion deserves rebuke. New articles of dress should not be accepted until they become common practice in the land, and then only if they are becoming to Christian humility.

I do not walk in the lust of the eyes and worldliness. All my life I have stuck to one style of dress. But suppose I should have dressed myself according to another custom, the way they do it in another land? Should I then be excommunicated? That would be illogical and against the Scriptures.

The Scriptures must be our guide. We dare not run ahead of them. We must follow them, not lightheartedly, but in carefulness and fear. It is dangerous to step into the place of God's judgment and bind on earth what is not bound in heaven."

From the above scriptures and Anabaptist writings one can see clearly that the man made rules and "ordenung" (church rules and ordinances as we know it) are not acceptable. The question that quickly presents itself to our minds then is, how is true spirituality to be maintained? This is where really knowing each other and practicing true brotherhood is important. The old question "Am I my brother's keeper" again surfaces. Many persons have relegated this responsibility to the bishop or the "church standards", rather than need to practice discernment and invest the time to understand what is wrong when wrong fruit presents itself. It is often much easier to snip off fruit than to deal with the root. Then too, many settings have not been spiritually hot with regular prayer gatherings and walking in the Holy Spirit, so men have built fences to try to make up for the lack of the keeping power of the Holy Spirit. These fences may be great for maintaining a nice veneer for at least a while but do little to deal with the root issues.

Unfortunately, because lawlessness abounds (Matthew 24:12) and because of cheap grace producing licentious living or as Proverb 29:18 (DBY) says "Where there is no vision the people cast off restraint;" many have misunderstood these teachings and have both erred from the path on one hand, or reacted against it on the other. Also there are some who like the uniformity that can be created by man's rule, and because they desire that end, they justify the ungodly, illegitimate means of man-made "touch not, taste not, handle not" standards to get there. Unity and uniformity are two very different concepts and must be divided in the way the scriptures divide them. A study of the articles from Schleithem show that the Swiss Brethren faced this challenge as well, but as referenced above, their answer was not to create rules but rather to focus on the true "faith once delivered to the saints" – Jude 3.

8. Concerning Emotionalism vs. Emotions, Pietism vs. Piety.

There are some in these days who regard walking in the Spirit as *Emotionalism* or *Pietism*. We would like to briefly give an answer to those charges. Certainly if one focuses solely on or follows the brightly colored “caboose” of emotions he or she may well be going backwards down the tracks. On the other hand to imagine that the engine of faith and salvation, with fire of the Holy Spirit in the “fire box”, will not be pulling the entire train, including the emotions, down the tracks is absurd. Emotions are like a thermometer on the wall, they can tell us what the temperature of the room is, and if there is any “fire in the stove”. No emotions equal a cold room indicating it is time to draw closer to Christ and His Spirit. Focusing only on emotions is the equivalent of tampering with the thermometer and not dealing with the root issue - a lack of love and the fire of the Holy Spirit.

In considering the charge of Pietism the answer is similar. The “far ditch” of Pietism focuses only on inner experience or “light” with little or no correlation to one's walk of life. This is directly against the relationship of faith and works which we find so clearly laid out in the book of James. On the other hand, the “opposite ditch” is focusing only on works without proper regard to one's spiritual relationship with Christ. Jesus warned us in Luke 11:39 the danger of only “*making clean the outside of the cup.*” Let us seek the “high ground in the middle” of a close, “hot” relationship with Christ (Revelation 3:16), producing a life of *good works* 1 Peter 2:12.

In conclusion Proverbs 30:5-6 says “*Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar*”. Let us be as the Bereans and search the scriptures daily so we might know the truth, and the truth will make us free John 8:32

We are all “works in process” and we anticipate further updates and improvements of these points in the future. We invite your input, comments, and suggested improvements.

For more copies or for correspondence write to:

8 Points
P.O. Box 104
Intercourse, Pa 17534-0104