

# COMMUNITY IS THE HIGHEST COMMAND OF LOVE



An Epistle by Andreas Ehrenpreis, 1650

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This letter was originally written in 1650 in German by Andreas  
Ehrenpreis, a leader of the Hutterian Brethren in Moravia.

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

In an age when all of Christendom is under attack from many quarters, it is necessary for believers to consider their standing before God. This letter from Andreas Ehrenpreis is a timely reminder of God's will for the Church. It was written at a stage in the history of the Hutterite Brethren when their faith was in decline and many had turned away from the beliefs that had held them for more than a century. Ehrenpreis led a reform among the Hutterites, inspiring them to take hold of scripture and salvation. In this epistle he argues for the believers to truly fulfil the will of God by living in Christian community, holding all property in common, and submitting to the commands of the New Testament.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Hopeful Christian, founder of the Gloriavale Christian Community in New Zealand, and to those pioneers who laboured with him to establish Christian Community in the last days. Led by the Holy Spirit, these faithful men and women based their life of equality and love on the principles laid down by Jesus Christ in the New Testament. When Ehrenpreis's epistle became known to them, they recognised immediately that his work was also led by the Holy Spirit. They had already proven that the community life is possible, and that it is indeed the highest command of love.

The Editor

Lakeview Publishing



## **Introduction to the original text**

I have investigated the history book and learnt that your forefathers wanted to unite themselves with our communities. There were several letters written but it did not come to pass. I can find two reasons why: Namely community, which is abandonment of temporal goods, and the other is obedience, which is surrender of one's own free will.

Without these steps, we cannot reach perfection. Jesus showed the rich young man this as the highest demand of love, as the door through which it is hard to go. And yet, cannot be otherwise. Whoever wants the most precious jewel, the hidden treasure, must sell all that he has, and give it up.

Andreas Ehrenpreis



*An epistle to all who want to be separated from the world as a  
peculiar people who call themselves  
brothers and sisters in Christ.*

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they  
shall be filled.

(Matthew 5)

Wherefore the rather brethren, brethren, give diligence to make your  
calling and election sure.

(2 Peter 1)

## **Greetings**

Grace, salvation, mercy and godly blessing from the Almighty God  
and our dear Lord Jesus Christ as well as proper understanding  
through the power of God, which leads to everlasting life, I wish to all  
hungry and thirsty souls on the earth under heaven, Amen.

# **COMMUNITY IS THE HIGHEST COMMAND OF LOVE**

Jesus Christ said numerous times we must forsake everything to follow Him (Matthew 10, Matthew 19, Luke 14) It is required from God's servant and the true followers of God to give up private possessions and self-will. Moses forsook the riches and the pleasures in Egypt choosing to suffer with the people of God.

Some people comfort themselves in the fact that they live separated from the world, but they still hanker after the things of the world in their hearts. They seek costly clothes, beautiful houses and apartments, recognition and advantage of this world, riches and temporal goods. But the world and all its lusts will pass away and will not stand at the great judgement day. We must forsake all to follow Jesus.

This is very hard for natural men and women, who like to cling to their possessions like caterpillars to cabbages. It is just as the Lord said it would be. Those, who want the kingdom of God, which is the precious pearl hidden in the field, must sell all that they have. (Matthew 13) The holy scriptures are crystal clear in this matter. And yet many people want to hang onto their possessions and self-will and reason the scriptures away.

A powerful example of this work of the Holy Spirit was the first Church at Jerusalem. These first Christians created community by selling their houses, lands, and goods and laying the proceeds before the apostles. As a result, nobody could say of his goods that they belonged to him. No, they held everything in common. That is an undeniable fact. That is the light that penetrates through the world. That is the invincible City on the Hill; it cannot be hidden.

Dear friends, the Word of God and the work of the Holy Ghost must never be argued away. Nobody should say it was not necessary for the people in the early church in Jerusalem to sell their houses, lands and possessions, lay the money at the apostles' feet, and have all things common. Let the good seed of God's word no longer choke and die among the thorns, which are the cares, riches and pleasures of this life. Take heed of God's word and care for your soul more than for your body. Flee from the wrath to come and find salvation and everlasting life. Nothing is more important than this.

Now let us think of Jesus in his poverty and remember that the disciple should not be different from his master. Imagine the sailors who run into danger with an overladen ship; they must lighten the ship and throw their cargo overboard. We also must unburden ourselves of our pernicious self-will and our temporal possessions.

These things are not to be thrown away and lost but rather turned to good use, for they are all to be given to the poor and needy, and what is much more, to Jesus Christ the Lord, in order that they may bear fruit a hundredfold.

These are the characteristics of the true people of God. Jesus loved to use sheep, doves, and vines as symbols because by nature none of these like to be alone; they always want to be together. However brightly a coal may glow, it will soon go out if it is left alone. Hence the importance of gathering. Those who had been called by Christ remained together after they had left their parents, their trades, their professions. That is what Jesus means by His parable of the great banquet and the wedding of the king's son, when the servants were sent to call all the people together. Why did his anger fall on those who had been invited first? Because they let their private, domestic concerns keep them away. Again and again we see that man with his present nature finds it very hard to practice true community; true

community feeds the poor every day at breakfast, dinner, and common supper table.

Self-will and selfishness constantly stand in the way! How many are hindered and held back by it! However wonderfully they may speak in several languages, they have no life because they have no love.

Where there is no community there is no true love. True love means growth for the whole organism, whose members are all interdependent and serve each other. That is the outward form of the inner working of the Spirit, the organism of the Body governed by Christ. We see the same thing among the bees, who all work with equal zeal gathering honey; none of them hold anything back for selfish needs. They fly hither and yonder with the greatest zeal and live in the community together. Not one of them keeps any property for itself.

If only we did not love our property and our own will! If only we loved the life of poverty as Jesus showed it, if only we loved obedience to God as much as we love being rich and respected! If only everybody did not hang on to his own will! Then the truth of Christ's death would not appear as foolishness. Instead, it would be the power of God, which saves us.

Now consider Moses, who was instructed by God, and ordered true equality and community among the people of Israel. Whoever gathered much manna had nothing over, and whoever gathered little manna had no lack. Moreover, when manna was gathered and stored for selfish reasons it went bad. But when manna was gathered and stored for everybody's benefit on the 6<sup>th</sup> day it did not go bad. This miracle is a sign which, by the wisdom of God, is revealed through Jesus Christ and his servants, teaching that rich people will hardly enter the kingdom of God. (Luke 6, 1 Timothy 6)

There will be no excuse. No good thinking or saying somebody else is richer than I. You might not own much. But if you hang onto the little bit you do own you own enough to be disobedient to the Word and will of God. Then you are no better than the young rich man, who did not want to sell what he had, give to the poor and follow Christ. (Matthew 19) And when Peter spoke to Jesus saying, we have left all to follow thee, Jesus did not reply it was not necessary or he did not require it. Instead He gave the promise of a great reward to those, who forsake all for him. Those, who want to have eternal life, must enter through the highest command of love at the strait gate. (Matthew 7)

Some people say they are believers and agree that we should not go to war. They agree in many other things. But too many of them still want to hoard up their riches, in spite that it is not what Christ and the apostles command. Those, who love their earthly possessions more than their fellow believers, have not one spark of God's love in their hearts.

### **GOD'S PEOPLE SHOULD BE TOGETHER IN COMMUNITY**

The people of this world will speak and write against community, but the people of God will be known by living in community.

The Scriptures teach we should live together. Jesus is the shepherd and his followers are sheep. Sheep like being together. When sheep are on their own, they are more likely to get killed by wolves. And we should consider the example of the bees, which diligently work and form a community. No bees hold anything for themselves selfishly.

And what did Jesus want to show us through the miracle of the fish that were caught? (Luke 5) People, as fish, should be caught out of the

sea of the world through the calling of God and with the net of the Gospel.

Many will try to enter but will not be able to because self-will and selfishness stand in their way. (Luke 13) they do not want to follow the example of those who have learnt to deny themselves and have been courageous in obeying God, even if it meant to die for it. Where there is no community, there is no true love, nor a taking heed of the apostle's words in Ephesians 4; let us be righteous in love and grow as members of the body of whom Christ is the head. Christians are required to live in community, as seen in the first early church, where they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayer. (Acts 2)

### COMMUNITY IS A FREE CHOICE

Dear friends, we were the children of this world, but the love of God caused us to forsake the world with its lusts and self-will. We cannot serve God and mammon. It must be one or the other. Take heed, the Lord does not want us to feel obliged to forsake all for him. He wants us to forsake all for him with great joy and gladness like the man, in the parable Jesus told. This man found a treasure hid in a field and for joy sold all he had and bought that field. (Matthew 13) All material things in this world will burn. We should therefore not put any value on material things, rather exchange them for the treasure in the field; the kingdom of God.

Neither the Lord nor we force anyone to live in community. If living in community is not done out of love and conviction through the Holy Spirit, one should refrain to do so. Whoever is led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God, who will inherit everlasting health and joy in eternity. As many as are led by the spirit of this world will be under the wrath of God and eternal punishment.

Being half-hearted is dangerous. Thereby people become a stumbling block to others. Half-hearted people err from the right path and speak evil of the way of truth. They say community causes discord and strife. As if Christ, the apostles and the Holy Spirit did not know what they were doing when instigating community.

## **WE DO NOT ACCEPT ARGUMENTS AGAINST COMMUNITY**

Living in community is not without problems and difficulties. Christians throughout the ages have had to sort out problems. This does not mean to say they were not the people of God. Jesus had to rebuke Peter saying to him: “Get thee behind me Satan.” The disciples of Jesus had plenty of disputes and issues to sort out (Luke 12) But did they split up because of this? No.

Some people compare community to a marriage out of sorts and say they love one another best living far apart from each other. This is not praiseworthy. In the marriage bond the one should love the other and overcome difficulty. Both should help one another in times of joy as well as in times of hardship or sorrow. More is expected from the people of God, who should love one another and forgive one another. We should be faithful and live in peace and unity together. Jesus stressed the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness (Matthew 6)

How much more does that apply to the new life of community, in which a whole people of God should bear with one another in love and forgive each other everything! They make allowances for each other. They can never forsake each other because of human weakness. They do not desert each other. We know very well that Jesus turned sharply on Peter. We know of disputes among the first disciples. Did they therefore desert one another? Could the unity of the Spirit be lost on this account? Or shall the communal life of Christ and His apostles

be despised or rejected on this account? That is impossible. Now we can understand why Christ, who is our Lord, insists so much upon reconciliation and forgiveness.

Even at the time of the early Christians there was plenty of unpleasantness among the believers. Was the unity of the Spirit lost because of that? The Church remained united in spite of it, that one Church to which we must listen if we do not want to be outside. It would be wonderful if a people of God could live in uninterrupted peace, completely without blemish or defilement or any hateful thing. But because of our human weakness, such disturbances happen all the time. One ought never, on account of such shortcomings and weaknesses, to reject a whole people. “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water.”

These things will not be an obstacle to anyone who is intent on building up Church community for the sake of love and salvation. He will be filled with a burning zeal to build up a living organism and to make the sacrifices demanded by the Spirit. That includes the surrender of all his possessions and all his strength in true service to God. He surrenders his whole self. That is how he finds true salvation and joy.

It is human to have weaknesses. Such a weakness could be likened to an injured foot. You don’t just cut it off. You try to heal it or you put up with it. However, if the sore foot causes severe damage to the rest of the body, the Scriptures say to cut it off and cast it from thee. (Matthew 5) And: Put those, who do evil, away from you so that a little leaven not leaven the whole lump. (1 Corinthians 5) Corrupted people, such as Alexander the coppersmith who spoke evil of the apostles, must not be a reason for rejecting community.



## **WHY ARGUE AGAINST THE COMMON PURSE?**

People have been sending letters to us arguing against having a common purse. They feel Christians should have the right to personal private ownership. They search for Scriptures to justify their tight grip on personal possessions.

In one of the letters they said Simon the sorcerer, who had become a believer, owned money and offered it to the apostles to buy the power of God. (Acts 8) One wonders, why they picked this example. They should know that Simon was a false brother. They should consider what Peter said in reply, namely: “May your money perish with you.”

People argue because they are carnal, lack proper understanding and love money and independence more than they love God.

When people lack proper understanding, we are happy to be patient and lead them into the way of truth. We also keep in mind that some people are babes in Christ. Paul said: I have fed you with milk and not with meat: For hitherto ye were not able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 3)

## **COMMUNITY IS POSSIBLE AND NECESSARY**

Many thousands of people say it is not possible to give up all personal wealth and surrender one's self-will. However, if Jesus says to do something it must be possible to do it. We have enough evidence that this is indeed possible. For example, Abraham left his homeland to follow God's leading. (Genesis 12) Moses gave up his royal court life to be with the people of God. (Hebrews 11) The apostles left father, boat, net and all they had to follow Jesus. (Matthew 4) The apostle Paul forsook his riches and high standing in society and counted those things as dung that he might win Christ. (Philippians 3)

And anyhow none of us can hang onto property for ever for we have brought nothing into this world and it is certain we will carry nothing out. And the dear apostle Paul wrote: Godliness and contentment is great gain. And having food and raiment let us therewith be content. (1 Timothy 6)

And thousands of times greater than these examples is Christ's. He left His Father's glorious kingdom and came to earth. He became poor. (John 1) Although He was the Son of God He humbled himself and learnt obedience through the things He suffered that He might bring salvation to them who obey Him. (Hebrews 5)

And we consider Jesus and how He lived in community with His disciples. We know that the disciples had not yet been given the gift of the holy Ghost. (John 16) They were waiting for it. And it came onto them with great power and many signs and wonders. (Luke 24) When Peter was filled with the Holy ghost he preached, and many believed and were able to forsake all for the truth. They were not as they who say living in community is impossible or unnecessary.

Since that time many thousands of dear followers of God, both men and woman, have left their houses and surrendered their will to follow Christ. Many of them came with empty hands and were thankful to God for showing them the truth and would not have traded the truth for anything. Many of them testified for the truth and gave their life for it. They were drowned, burned and put to the sword.

## **COMMUNITY AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

Jesus Christ instigated baptism as well as the keeping the Lord's supper. He used bread and wine in the last supper showing that we being many are one bread and one body. (Matthew 26, Luke 22, 1 Corinthians 11) Thereby believers are united in community. The grain

of the wheat must fall to the ground and die before it can grow and bring forth fruit. Likewise, all who would follow Christ must deny themselves, pick up the cross and follow Jesus. (Matthew 10) And just as the wheat must be crushed and ground to be made into bread, those also who want to partake in the Lord's supper must be broken by the Word of God and surrender their will to serve Him (1 Corinthians 9) In the same way the grapes must be pressed so that their juice can become wine. The wine does not contain whole or even parts of grapes, but they have been completely crushed to become one. When we break bread we remember how Jesus suffered and died for us.

Here we see the most powerful picture of community. That is how Christ presented it to those who were with Him at the supper. But even this uniformly baked loaf is broken, just as Christ let His body be broken. For us, this means that the stubbornness of self-will is broken and that we must be ready to suffer and die, even in the daily life of community. God himself brings this about by letting His power break in upon us, as the love that brings all God's truth to fulfilment. As Christ has loved us, so love reigns among us. By this His flock will be known. This is the only way we can hold the Lord's Supper and community of the table. Everything we were or had, all strength and energy and property were given for common use. Like the loaf and the wine, we have become one. Whoever wants to be a brother, whoever has a longing to share in the breaking of the bread and in prayer, cannot reject community.

We never ask in the Lord's Prayer for my bread or their bread. We ask for our bread, our daily bread, the opposite of private property. Each time Christ distributed bread, He gave to many, to all, to each alike no matter how small the supply was. He did not want to give to any one person alone. So, the small became great, the little became much.

Likewise, we need to give our lives for each other, even to die if necessary. As Jesus teaches in John 13: A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one to another.

Many want to be called Christians and partake at the Lord's supper, but they reject living in community. This is unacceptable since God warns us not to partake of the Lord's supper unworthily. (1 Corinthians 11) We must consider what happened to Ananias and Sapphira, who sold a possession and kept back part of the price. They did exactly what many people do these days: Wanting more for themselves, whilst calling themselves believers and brethren.

### **COMMUNITY IS THE FULFILMENT OF LOVE**

Talk of faith and brotherliness does not go together with wearing expensive clothes, dining well every day, or piling up riches. The man who saves and accumulates always does it for himself and his family. Whether he lives or dies, his brothers and sisters in the faith have little or nothing to expect from him. How can he speak of love to God, of love to his neighbour, when the desire for wealth is doing its destructive work in him?

When we are filled with the spirit of community, we become simple and modest. We will be satisfied with what little food and clothing we have. On other points, people who honestly call themselves brothers can easily find a common recognition and reach a common agreement in faith; for example, that it is God's will to shun war and weapons once and for all. But about possessions, in spite of the prophets and apostles, men will fight and struggle against the clear truth. Any profits from our work should not be hoarded. The fruits of our work must be put at the disposal of all our brothers in God.

They are for the feeding, housing, and clothing of the poor, the hungry, and the old. It was through love that Jesus became poor and one of the lowliest on earth.

So, He commands us as our Lord to love one another in the same way He loved us. That means that we make our fellow citizens in His Kingdom fellow heirs of all our goods, that we accept one another as members of the Household of God, that we close neither our hearts nor our purses to any need of a brother. Then, and then only, will God's love remain with us. That alone is genuine love. Genuine love prompts us to give all our goods and even our bodies with an undivided heart. That is the way to the light. That is community. Where there is no genuine love, there is no faith.

Our love for our fellow men must be so great that it compels us to share all our possessions with them; anyone who does not have that love for his neighbour should not think that the blood of Christ frees him from sin. As love springs from faith, so works spring from love. The only true "charity," consisting in acts of fervent love, is inseparable from true life and real freedom from sin. Active love will urge us to work for the overcoming of need and poverty rather than for our own benefit. Whoever does otherwise has not a spark or drop of divined love. He who loves God must love all men who have their life from God. If we really believe that all men have one God and one Father, we cannot possibly seek to gain or maintain an advantage over one of our brothers. If we still seek our own advantage, then love is extinguished and cold in us. We see the need and poverty of His children; we could help, but we do not do it, perhaps even saying, "Should I give bread to people I do not know?" So, we become evil. We want to keep for ourselves what has been stolen from others. We are pleased we have succeeded in life. Those who have dropped behind on the way get nothing from us. Do they not need their share just as we do? This is how we lose our feeling for justice. It grows darker and darker around us because we cannot love our brother. The

cries of the poor surround us like dark shadows; they have nothing and suffer privation while we have more than enough of the best.

That is a public scandal. The cries of “Woe!” uttered by Jesus surround us. How hard the Apostle Paul had to struggle in his day for the new order! Even among the Christians there were poor people who went hungry while others had plenty. Let us never forget that nothing can stand before God except love. That was the Gospel from the beginning. That is the source of the rich and unfailing strength that enables us to follow the command to give up our possessions and our very lives for the sake of the brothers.

We should not think that we are sacrificing our lives only when we face the sword or some other violent death. No. We have to give up our lives in good times too. When we are achieving something, and things are going well, we should give our lives to serve our neighbours. Just at such times we are expected to give up everything and not spare ourselves. Paul could have done many things, but he wanted only what was for the good of all. So, it is a question of wanting the good for others instead of for oneself. Therefore, I will even give up my own judgment, poor or good, if it causes a brother to fall. We forfeit the love of God if we cling to our possessions in the face of our brother’s need. For we should love, not with words, but with deeds and in truth. The love that works through us must be the same as that love in which God gave His Son.

## **THE VISION OF THE KINGDOM**

The way of love for our neighbour is the way Jesus leads us into the realm of His lordship, into His Kingdom. In comparison, everything else is dirt and rubbish. Joy-filled life streams out from this new City, from this radiant City-Church. If in the face of this world of the future a man still longs for the pleasures of the senses and for possessions,

he is a fool. His present life will soon be demanded of him. Then his heirs will quarrel over his estate. The worms have long been waiting for his body. It is simply stupid not to be able to let go of one's worthless possessions in order to gain the coming Fatherland-just as stupid as refusing to exchange a worthless grain of corn for a diamond, or a poor clay pitcher for a golden dish. The only wise thing is free surrender, holding on to nothing. The only great thing is the faithfulness that makes a man hand in all his goods. This faithfulness is what God expects of every man without exception. It applies to rich and poor alike. He who is faithful in this radical sense with his few possessions will be entrusted with the stewardship of great things. He will judge and rule over the whole world and all its spirits. Such great things God has in store for insignificant men, if they will only love.

In the face of the shining lordship of God, one's immediate needs become extremely unimportant. They matter next to nothing. One cannot hold on to property when one stands before God. Between members of His kingdom, companions in the faith, there is an end of mine and thine. We bear with joy the loss of our possessions (worthless, however precious they seem) as soon as we discover the greater good. This is enduring and gives no cause for fear. It gives courage. He who lives in faith enters that wonderful land of God's rulership. Then his thoughts are no longer with his coffers. They are where Christ is ruling with God. Therefore, it is never enough to shun the revolting sins. Self-will – not the most obvious and despicable sin is what prevents people from accepting the invitation to the wedding feast and banquet. A man stays away for the sake of his own field, his own responsibilities, his own yoke of oxen, his own wife, his own business. It is merely the natural self-interest needed for daily subsistence that causes men to ignore the fellowship of the common meal. Time and again this is what makes us unworthy of the invitation - the invitation given to all.

The fig tree was not cursed on account of bad or poisonous fruit. It was condemned to wither away because it could have borne good fruit and did not do so. Out of repentance and turning around must come good fruit. A new life that does not produce good fruit is not genuine. The Baptist tell us what this good fruit is: giving away your second coat and feeding those in need. Faith is power, the power that gives strength to bear fruit. Then we will provide food and drink and clothing, and labour as well, for those who need it; then we will put love for the brothers and for all men into practice, and then, if we are consistent in this service, we will become simple and modest in our own needs. This surrender will not let us become lazy or unfruitful. That is the fruit that God demands; that is the fruitfulness brought about by brotherly love, the living sap of the new tree. In such a life, God and the brothers and sisters become greater than everything else. Whoever is not ready for this remains blind and unpurified. All talk of Christ remains aimless talk and idle opinion as long as our thoughts and longings are concerned with personal aims arising from our worldly condition. Only faith that brings forth love opens the door to that other kingdom in which Jesus is Ruler. Jesus, our Healer and Saviour, leads the way into this new life and Kingdom.

### **SERVING ONE ANOTHER IN THE CHURCH**

The church is the house of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 2). Nobody is to reject the ground and the truth. The apostle is a tool God uses. Through the grace of God, the apostle, as a wise master builder, must establish the proper foundation. But let every man take heed how he builds upon that foundation. (1 Corinthians 3)



Dear friends, some people wonder if we should work hard for material gain. The answer is this: Work diligently for the common interest, for the benefit of the community and for the poor. Do not work for personal benefit and remember, your labour is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15) Paul wrote: Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. (1 Corinthians 12) And in Luke 3 we read: He that has two coats let him impart to him that has none.

The dear followers of God diligently go about building the house of God, the church. They are not weary in well doing and are lively stones. (1 Peter 2) They not only contribute their possessions, but they give their bodies as a living sacrifice. (Romans 12) It is our proper and reasonable service not to be conformed to this world. People of this world think it is enough to give alms. No, this is not enough, when one should be a light in the world. We should live together keeping good order as a family of God in good times as well as in bad times.

Godly people will have their thoughts with God and will set their affection on things above. They will produce the fruits of the Spirit and add to their faith brotherly kindness and charity, not seeking their own benefit. (2 Peter 1, 1Corinthians 13) But those who do not produce the fruits of the spirit, even though they say they have risen with Christ, are blind and have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins. (2 Peter 1)

And yet many people will argue and say the love of God is not about serving others with material goods. Let's read in 1 John 3: But whoever has this world's good, and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?

If people find it hard to give their material goods to their brothers and sisters in need, they will not be able to give their lives and die for

them. This is the ultimate test. What is expected of a true believer? Read in 1 John 3: we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

And this means not only giving one's life in death but giving one's life to serve others. Let us not love in word neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. Jesus said: I was hungry, and you gave me meat, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, naked and you clothed me. (Matthew 25) Wherefore, brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things you shall never fall. (2. Peter 1)

God created man to walk erect with his head up. Man is not meant to be like the animals that hang their heads earthward. He is not meant to be preoccupied, like them, with the search for food. He belongs to the whole of God's cause and to the Kingdom.

The believing man steps into a new life. He is asleep or even dead to his previous life. All desires that are directed toward the earth are killed. Love for property and attachment to possessions have died with them. The vice of avarice hangs like a leaden weight on a man, pulling him down. Once a man had died, he will no longer be found in his own house. Once a man is buried, he is no longer seen on his own land or in his favourite tavern. The man who has died has left behind his wealth and property, after death no man's wealth, house, money, or goods belong to him any more. This is how we understand truth that we must die to the present world. Having died, we are no longer found among our possessions. From the point of view of self-will and desire for possessions we are in fact no longer living. To walk with God means to sacrifice ourselves just as Christ did. To give body and life means much more, not less, than to leave goods and chattels. Out of this strength to die we maintain a new order in a united household. Like children who are equally loved by their parents, we live in community and share our food and all our goods

equally. We have left our previous way of life behind us just as though we had died.

### **COVETOUSNESS (GREED) IS LIKE A DEADLY POISON**

Covetousness is the cause of wars, robberies and murders. Covetousness is listed and put at the same level as all other evils which keep people out of the kingdom of God, unless they repent and change their lives. (Galatians 5, 1 Corinthians 5,10)

Covetousness is the mother, the root and the beginning of pride. A proud person cannot please God (Philippians 2, 1. Peter 2). The apostle Paul writes: for this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of God (Ephesians 5). And straight after this he warns: Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience. (Ephesians 5)

It is hard for people to admit they are greedy because this terrible evil presents itself as a deception. Greed creeps in in the name of virtue to those, who comfort themselves in living separated from the world.

Covetousness is the same as idolatry; worshipping of false gods. This is because the hearts of the heathen cling unto their idols in the same way as the hearts of the covetous cling onto riches and temporal goods. Greedy people love their riches more than they love God or God's Word.

Only a few people recognise covetousness as being like a dreadful weed and a deadly poison. Mostly rich people get blamed of being greedy but both the rich as well as the poor can carry this evil lust in their hearts. Many of the greedy live a life of luxury and Christ and

His followers would appear like beggars and slaves in comparison. Many of the poor that would be greedy waste their money in the pub or elsewhere.

It would be very good for those, who call themselves Christians, to take a good look at themselves in the fear of God and consider what Paul earnestly teaches: But I have written unto you not to keep company if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a drunkard, or a thief, with such an one not to eat. (I. Corinthians 5) If people think this is too difficult they probably have a wrong conception of God. Jesus Christ is not as lenient as many people believe. (Matt, 25, Luke 12, 14, 16)

The Lord Jesus could have used his power to become very rich, but He chose to be a servant. We should follow in his footsteps. (John 6), (Matthew 10), (Luke 22). And remember, where your treasure is there will your heart be also. (Luke 12)

## **NO COMFORTABLE LIFE FOR CHRISTIANS**

Followers of God should not want to live an easy and soft life. Jesus said: foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the son of man has not where to lay his head. (Luke 9) Many false teachers and preachers stretch the Holy scriptures saying it is fine to live a comfortable life. This allows them and their followers to hang onto their self-will and property without feeling bad about it. Since their teaching pleases many, especially the rich, they gain more followers and accuse those, who live in community, of being wrong.

People do not naturally choose the narrow way, which brings rejection from the world, pain, poverty and suffering. Many people love reading of the grace of God, that brings salvation and has appeared unto all men, but they choose to ignore the verse that comes straight after: the

same grace of God, that brings salvation, teaches us that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world (Titus 2).

Opulence must be left to wealthy households and their vermin. Excess of any kind goes hand in hand with luxury and hypocrisy; excessive eating and drinking are forms of this same soft indulgence in non-essentials. We call it despicable weakness.

The austere life of John the Baptist, so poor in food and clothing, was there for all to see. That made it possible for him to demand that men share all their goods with their fellows, and to proclaim fire and destruction over all the unfruitful chaff. Let no one who wants to be known as a believer or a brother teach the broad way of covetous desires. Let us not entertain the delusion that it is not necessary to turn our backs on wealth and possessions, that it is not necessary to embark on community life in full surrender.

Those who confess Christ should fear God and stop teaching people to walk the broad and easy way. I will encourage the reader to recognise the way of truth in the light of Christ's example and the early Church in Jerusalem.

## **PRIVATE PROPERTY CANNOT BE DEFENDED**

The strong ruler Mammon opposes this guidance of the Holy Spirit; he opposes all those follow this leading. Again, and again he employs lovers of property to do his work of covering up and distorting the truth. He gets them to use pious words in support of their disorderly way of life and their possession of money, but he often makes mistakes in his choice of words. He works against himself when he

makes them quote the case of the false apostle Simon to support his arguments. Like Judas Iscariot and Ananias and Sapphira, Simon, with all his money, was cursed. Certainly, one can emphasize that John the Baptist to begin with spoke only of the first step in the new life, that is, doing no man violence or injustice. Certainly, Paul bade carnal men who were still in the infant stage to put money aside for the Church at Jerusalem, which lived in community. These are examples of transitional stages, however, that were to be outgrown.

Instead of trying to provide a certain justification of private property by these pious arguments, the rich should rather say quite openly that they choose to follow the way of the world. They want to follow it, even though property leads to servitude. They want to hold on to it, even though life in community would bring freedom and spiritual life. If they choose to hold on to their animal nature, let them keep their own hole or nest! Jesus at any rate quite clearly rejected property. Whoever walks with Him cannot keep anything of his own. Some people may argue that owning communal property is no different from owning private property. The answer is that what belongs to the community is neither mine nor thine. Common property excludes private property. Life in community means devoting one's life and strength to working for the benefit of all.

The door to this community life stands wide open. Come out of your private nests! Out of your private houses! Stop looking after your own affairs! Away with self-will! Sell everything! Give to those who have nothing! Come! Come, follow Me! Renounce all you have, then you can be My disciple. Do you really want to follow Me? Then give up yourself. Leave your goods and chattels; let go of yourself. Follow Me. I have nothing of my own. I have not even a place to lie down and rest. Is it because of your field, or your work, or your household that you do not want to come? Are you holding on to such little things? Do you love your self-interest and possessions so much?

Then, of course, you cannot sit at the table of My community. You do not belong to Me.

This is how Christ speaks to those who are held back by the ideas that rule the whole world. Their lives will never be fruitful. To vindicate themselves they take counsel with many others who, like them, hold on to their own nests and, like them, want very much to be Christians and still keep their possessions. They want to uphold property, so they have to be-little the life of community. And they end up by neglecting and despising the clear way of Christ, His perfect order, and His very truth and life. Then the Word, which had already been at work in them, flees from their hearts; their hearts are turned away from faith. They return to seeking their own food. They are unwilling to work their fields and keep house for the common purse. They become like moles and foxes that undermine the communal plantations and cause them to depreciate. And still some feel in their hearts that they cannot deny the existence of love when it creates a life in community that is there for all to see. In the depths of their being they recognize this fact as good and necessary, but the right moment, the favourable opportunity, never seems to come. First one thing stops them, then another. So, the structure of community that should serve the House of the Lord never gets started. But for continuing the old life in their panelled houses, the right time always seems to be there. (Haggai 1:4) The true reason lies deep. What they love most is not God but holding on to their things. They still have far to go.

### **FORSAKING ALL TO FOLLOW JESUS**

Many people are like the five virgins that were not allowed to meet the bridegroom. They want to be accepted by Christ and meet Him. They are willing to avoid some sins, but do not want to obey Him in all things. Therefore, Jesus Christ said: Not everyone that says unto

me Lord, Lord shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven (Matthew 7).

We need to be doing God's will; be diligent, faithful and true, for there will be a sorting out on the day of judgement. (Matthew 25) On that day many will think they are fit for the Kingdom of God, but they have not chosen to walk the narrow way and have not entered in at the strait gate of self-surrender. Wherefore, they are not wise but as such who build on sand and uncertainty, namely the flesh and earthly possessions. And when the day of the Lord comes with wind, water and downpour, their hope will melt like ice. Then, no excuses or apologies will do any good.

The day of testing will come. Then everything will melt and break like ice. Then it will be evident what kind of life people have led. They did no good deed for Jesus, for they did not keep His Word and did not truly love Him. And therefore, they could also not love those who belong to Him. In the face of this, it will be no use asking any questions or making any excuses. They are rejected. They recoiled from the supreme test of the refining fire. This fire could have proved in good time whether there was real gold in them or whether what looked like faith was only a delusion.

*Gelassenheit* is the name of the refining fire that gives the decisive answer to this question. In this heat, all dross and inferior metals are discarded. In it they are removed, disposed of, eliminated. What is freed is the pure gold: faith, and the love that comes from faith. What is left behind is everything else that one had. God and Mammon cannot remain amalgamated. That is the test of faith which the rich young man, Ananias and Sapphira, and many thousands of others had to undergo. This fiery test showed what meant most to them: their pious self-will and their possessions-or Christ in every fellow-man! This furnace burns away everything that blocks and hinders. It has the same effect as the needle's eye or the narrow gate. None of the



things we have been dragging along with us can get through. Fire is needed if gold is to be proved.

Everyone has to go through this test! It was so from the beginning. When the earth was created, God saw that everything was good in its own way. Only about man God did not say that he was good. Instead, He set him a test in order to see whether he would be good or bad. In this test man first showed what he was; he made the wrong choice. Abraham too had to undergo this test in its sharpest form. The same thing happened to the Israelites, who were called out to be a people in wealthy Egypt and then led into the desert. Poverty was their test, and the prohibition of certain meats was part of it. In the case of Job the nature of this test was even clearer. Each time something becomes the object of man's greatest love, god steps in. Through Jesus, God strikes at that that self-will and greed harder than ever before. Whoever goes through this trial and chooses the way of Jesus is given the greatest responsibility, entrusted to him after he has left house, family, and goods for Christ's sake. But whoever loves any of these things more than he loves Jesus does not belong to Jesus. Therefore, love will decide, love born of faith; it is the refining fire of true *Gelassenheit*. What remains as purified gold is the love of God; it alone has a place in His Kingdom.

### **DOING GOOD TO ALL**

The scriptures teach we must prove our love to God by loving others, especially those who are in the household of faith. In Christian community we show great diligence in our daily tasks. We work with all our might to make a provision for widows and orphans as well as for poor and handicapped people. We also lovingly prepare meals for people who are in need. We do all this with a heart of love and without wanting to receive payment knowing we will be rewarded in heaven.

In Christian community we serve one another using all the gifts and talents we have received from God. We do not work to make a profit out of serving others.

It is wrong to lend money to others expecting to be paid back with interest. Jesus taught this very clearly: Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward will be great. (Luke 6: 35)

### **ONLY A FEW WALK THE NARROW WAY**

Many well-known enlightened men have written volumes about the Christian faith and godly conduct. For fear of danger and persecution and for fear of losing popularity they have pointed to the way of truth from a distance only. Such men were Johann Arndt and Menno Simon.

Johann Arndt wrote strongly against covetousness and upheld brotherly love. His teachings were almost perfect. However, he did not challenge his readers to obey the highest command of love, which is fulfilled in community. He knew that people, who proclaimed and testified to the whole truth, were put to the sword. Moreover, He feared that leading people to community would cause him to lose favour with the world. Therefore, he only wrote what he knew the crowds would accept.

The same was the case with Menno Simon, who produced many useful writings about the Christian faith. Many of his teachings were almost perfect and came very close to the truth. Nevertheless, he omitted Acts 2 and 4; the mighty miracle of the early church in Jerusalem, the work of the Holy Ghost where believers were together and had all things in common. He also bypassed the notable story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) If Menno Simon had written about forsaking all to follow Christ he would not have had many followers.

Besides if these men had left the shore and entered the boat, they would have had to call out: Lord, Lord save us we perish.

Dear friends, remember, throughout history it has always been just the few that chose to walk the narrow way (Matthew 7, Luke 13) Let us be of the few.

## **COMMUNITY FULLY ESTABLISHED**

In these last and dangerous Reformation times heroes of the faith have come forward again at last. They are a strong witness to the truth and do the work of God through the power from on High. They do not love their lives unto death, by drawing such great courage and tremendous strength from God, which cannot be expressed well enough with words. Wearing the whole armour of God, they fight valiantly for their crown of eternal life. The victory is theirs as they stand strong in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Dear friends, let us follow their faith considering the end of their conversation. They went about establishing the excellent work of perfect love; building the community of pious believers. The gates of hell did not prevail against them. They were not put off by fearful, doubtful hearts, who thought it was impossible. They established complete Christian order in community.

In spite of persecution, we did well, at different times we had well over 20 communities in various locations. In each community there were 300 to 600 people living together. In each community there was one kitchen, one bakehouse, one dining room, one school, one nursery and so on. In each community a householder was appointed to do all the buying and to ensure everyone was cared for.

Praise be to God we were able to keep this order for more than 100 years. Despite hardship, robberies and wartimes we survived. We put up with poverty and suffering and taking in the persecuted believers who were in need. We pooled our resources together and cared for everyone in the community; our many children, the aged and the sick.

We also suffered much reproach, especially by the backslidden. Dear friends, remember, all lovers of God had enemies who spoke evil against them. As it happened to Jesus and his apostles, so it will continue to happen to true believers unto the end of the world.

Jesus said: Blessed are you, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. (Matthew 5)

We thank the Lord who will be with us in times of tribulation. He will never leave us nor forsake us. And we thank the Lord that many men and women have left their houses and lands and have surrendered their self-will to join us. They are thankful to God for leading them to the truth and testify of this truth until the end of their lives.

## **WHAT PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW BEFORE THEY JOIN THE COMMUNITY**

When people want to do the work of the Lord and become part of a Christian community, they need to count the cost. Too often people are too hasty to join themselves to the people of God. In goodwill they hand over their property. Before long they regret their decision and want to be given back what they had handed in. In the long run they find it hard to submit to the orders that arise inevitably from the Spirit of Christ. Sooner or later their courage and zeal flag. They break their covenant. They leave the path. They quarrel and give trouble. The difficulties are greatest with those who fall away after having given in

their property, originally with good intentions. And now they demand it back. They want it again for themselves.

For this reason, we simply set people's property aside. We give them the opportunity to listen to the preaching. We give them ample time to experience life in the community. If they don't like it and decide to leave they are given back what they had brought in. If someone recognises and embraces the truth and asks to be baptised, we also give back the property that had been set aside earlier. Now they can hand in this property afresh, knowing it will no longer belong to them personally. It will be used, where it is needed in the work of the Lord.

Many people have a problem with this issue. However, on judgement day the lovers of riches and property will realise how the thorns, which are the cares and riches of this life had choked them and how the good seed, which is God's word, could not grow in their hearts to bring forth good fruit. Many times, people come to the community without money and we provide everything for them right from the start.

All believers are required to submit and get rid of self-will. Amongst the people of God there must be order and obedience. (Matthew 16) One must be in full submission, ready to be used to serve where most needed in the community. As Paul teaches: I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12)

Such obedience is demonstrated by the apostles of Jesus Christ. When Jesus sent his apostles to do something, they obeyed and did as Jesus commanded them (Matthew 21) We must not only submit to the Lord, but also submit to people in authority, as the apostle Paul teaches In Hebrews 13: Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of faith, considering the end of their

conversation. And: Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (Philippians 2)

People, who consider these teachings on submission and obedience to be of little importance, will not receive God's grace on judgement day.

### **REBUKE AND REPENTANCE**

The deepest root of the noxious weed of wealth is certainly not the external and tangible aspect of property, it is rather the arbitrary self-will and obstinacy anchored in the wilful heart, the will of the ego, which is directed against the communal will. Whoever is accepted into our communal life has to be obedient in every aspect of his life. It is not only a matter of a man leaving his goods and chattels. It goes deeper than that: through obedience he enters into discipleship. In obedience he has to subordinate himself to the Church. He has to be willing to be used by the Church in whatever work and service is considered right and useful. If we first surrender to Christ himself as our Lord, we submit to the will of God. With this, we have in fact given ourselves to the Church and to the brothers and sisters. This is confirmed by the New Testament. It means real sacrifice, the surrender of our lives.

Christ the Lord himself expected the same of His apostles and disciples. He demanded obedience of them. Wherever He sent them they went, even if it cost them their lives. He sent them like defenceless creatures into the midst of beasts of prey. They are expected to be submissive and obedient to men insofar as these were given authority by Him. He who listens to the apostles listens to Jesus, and therefore to God, from whom Jesus has His mission. The prophets foretell that from all the wildernesses of this world men who are like

wild beasts will become capable of living together in community, that people who are like wolves will become like lambs, that a little child will be able to lead them all.

For that to happen, obedience and a definite order must be established. Otherwise people cannot live together as a people of God. So, the apostles tell us to obey those who have been given authority. We have to subordinate ourselves to them because they have to give an account for our lives. Whoever looks down on them despises God himself! For He has given His Spirit into them. When Moses called together the people known as the company of Korah, they declared, “We will not come.” And this disobedience was their downfall. The Apostle Paul emphasizes most strongly, “Have nothing to do with him who does not want to obey our words.”

Further, the young should submit to the other older ones. And more than that. Each one, yes, each one, should submit to the other. More significant still is the reason for this command: God sets his face against those who think highly of themselves; those who are aware of their own smallness and count themselves among the lowly will be rewarded by God. In the Old Covenant this attitude led to the harsh words, “Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death.” All believers must be led to joyful submissiveness. It is in this submission that we break with the Devil and our self-will. “You no longer belong to yourselves.” Nobody belongs to himself. He must do whatever he is appointed to do by men whom God calls. The Apostle Paul expects this obedience even in his absence. He claims God as his authority for this. Through Paul, God works on men to will and to work. It is God who brings about both the willing and the accomplishing of good. Obedience and enthusiasm born of the Spirit are constantly needed in God’s Household. Everyone does joyfully and with a will what he is asked to do, He hates and turns away from his own will.

Obedience takes the place of ritual sacrifices. Disobedience is disbelief and arises out of it. Disobedience is demonic sorcery, nothing but selfish ends of man's own will. Invocations to God and the accompanying rituals strengthen man's obstinate self-will to the point where disobedience becomes idolatry and sorcery of the worst kind. Therefore, any man who ignores as unnecessary, thus repudiating, the command of obedience given by God and Christ, has good cause to fear the Day of Judgment.

The scriptures say believers were together in one accord. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the apostles ensured the believers were not in company with corrupt people, laden with sins. Mankind has inherited a sinful nature from Adam. Therefore, discipline is necessary, to support the purification of God's people.

People who have committed gross sins must be rebuked openly before all the believers. The apostle Paul wrote: Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. (1 Timothy 5) Many people are too soft and too slow to use discipline. They fear people more than they fear God.

It is important for discipline to be applied in the proper measure. Where one trespasses against another in small matters, a warning or a word of rebuke might be enough, to set the thing in order. But when sinful, stubborn and rebellious people won't accept rebuke, the matter must be taken to the church. If they hear the church and repent, the matter can be put right. But If they refuse to hear the church, they must be cut off and excluded as the apostle teaches: Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person (1 Corinthians 5) It is better to cut off an offending member than to confuse and defile the whole body.

Discipline is used to restore people not to destroy them. If one has sinned and is guilty before God, one should receive and bear brotherly



discipline. One should also be willing to rebuke others if necessary. This is what we promise in our commitment, when we become part of the body of Christ.

If a person sins, the person should not just give up hope, forsake the faith and leave the community. Instead the person should accept the discipline, recognise the sin and make the matter right through genuine repentance before God.

The angels in heaven greatly rejoice when a sinner repents; when a truly repentant one is gladly received back into fellowship in the church. This is a great comfort for all sinners who have repented of their sins.

## **BRINGING UP OUR CHILDREN**

For all these things, separation from the world is necessary. That applies in a particular way to the education of our children, which concerns us greatly because it is a most important matter. We must constantly endeavour to find the best ways of bringing up our children.

The fallen, sinful nature makes itself manifest very early in childhood. Keeping children pure is like keeping a garden clear of weeds: a lot of effort is required. Keeping children separated from the world is important because they tend to copy what they see and hear. Sad to say, many parents tend to be too soft in the rearing of their children. They lack the strength to stand strongly against wrong in their children. This is a good reason why one should be in favour of Christian Community.

One hears too often that children of godly parents have made shipwreck of their lives and brought shame and reproach to their parents. Such is the example of Eli, who was negligent in the

disciplining of his sons and was therefore rejected and punished by God. (1 Samuel 2) God is bringing this example to our attention to show parents must be diligent in correcting their children.

It is very unwise to arrange for our children and young people to work for worldly people because it places their souls into grave danger. It's like sending lambs among wolves. It is often pride which causes people to send their children into the world to gain more knowledge. We say: do not do it. Our children's souls are more important than anything else. On judgement day we will have to answer for the souls of our children.

Parents would benefit in reading what Menno Simon had to say: God-fearing parents should prefer to see their children in poverty or persecuted, burned at the stake for their faith than to have them brought up in the pomp and luxury of the world, which will destroy their soul.

Dear friends, who look for godly council: Separation from the world is vital because people's salvation is at stake. As the saints through the ages we strongly believe in separating from the world and its ways, even if we get scorned because of it.

## **BELIEVERS SHOULD NOT MARRY UNBELIEVERS**

In the light of God's order marrying into the world is not acceptable. Godly parents and church leaders should not permit believers to marry unbelievers. A marriage between a believer and an unbeliever leads to confusion, pain and sorrow.

And in the event of death, who will claim their inheritance? Will it be used in the work of the Lord? No, in most cases it is the ungodly who claim it. Some people justify marriage between believers and

unbelievers by quoting: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let not him put her away. (1 Corinthians 7) One must understand the meaning of this scripture properly. Paul did not write this scripture to allow believers marrying the ungodly. It was to be applied for people, who were already married but later only one party got converted to Christ.

Shepherds, teachers and elders who allow believers to marry unbelievers do not present their church to be the spotless bride without blemish and without wrinkles, as described in Ephesians 5.

When sheep go astray one holds the shepherd accountable. Likewise, it is the responsibility of church leaders to give proper instruction on these issues.

And why would a believer want to marry an unbeliever? It is simply because of self-will and weakness of the flesh and because of a lack of order and obedience.

## **SENDING OUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL**

Each year we send people to gather souls for the Lord as we have been commanded by Christ. Jesus sent the apostles to teach and to preach. Later He sent 70 two by two and said the harvest is great but the labourers are few. (Matthew 10, Luke 10) However, during the war we were not always able to do this.

Several of our zealous brothers have gone out to preach the gospel in different places, even though it cost many of them their lives.

Dear friends, we are certain that the basis of our faith is the true foundation of Jesus Christ. And we know that we are not always completely perfect, but we say with Paul: Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may

apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3) We have no doubt about the whole basis of our faith. It is in our conduct in daily life that we feel very imperfect. But also, in these things we strive with all our strength to reach the goal. Our hearts and minds are fully assured about the foundation and the truth of God's light and our perception of it. In all humility we are certain that what we teach is the true content of the Scripture, nay, its very foundation, and Jesus Christ is its cornerstone. We know that no one can lay any other foundation. There is but one, and that is Jesus Christ. And no matter how many enemies rise up with great power and might, the Lamb shall overcome – Babel will fall.

Andreas Ehrenpreis, 1650



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In an age when all of Christendom is under attack from many quarters, it is necessary for believers to consider their standing before God. This letter from Andreas Ehrenpreis is a timely reminder of God's will for the Church.

It was written at a stage in the history of the Hutterite Brethren when their faith was in decline and many had turned away from the beliefs that had held them for more than a century. Ehrenpreis led a reform among the Hutterites, inspiring them to take hold of scripture and salvation. In this epistle he argues for the believers to truly fulfil the will of God by living in Christian community, holding all property in common, and submitting to the commands of the New Testament.

“ ... those also who want to partake in the Lord's supper must be broken by the Word of God and surrender their will to serve Him. (1 Corinthians 9)  
In the same way the grapes must be pressed so that their juice can become wine. The wine does not contain whole or even parts of grapes, but they have been completely crushed to become one ... “