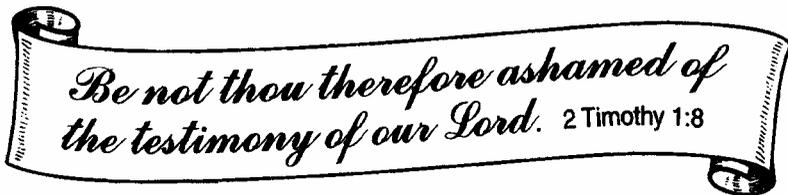


# THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

SELECTED ARTICLES FROM THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION  
OF  
THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA MENNONITE CHURCH  
AUGUST 2009



The Eastern Mennonite Testimony is the official organ of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church. That publication seeks to promote the historic Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and practice. The Testimony is published monthly by the Publication Board of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church. Subscriptions are free. Forward subscriptions and contributions to Eastern Mennonite Publications, 40 Wood Corner Road, Ephrata, PA. 17522 U.S.A. Telephone (717) 733-7988 Fax: (717)733 2757.

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## Editorial

### *"Having Eyes, See Ye Not?"*

It has been said, "Seeing is believing." There is no substitute for the gift of sight. Try to describe the color purple to someone born blind. The picture of an apple makes the first lesson of school stick. God uses visual aids to make spiritual truth so clear that unbelief is inexcusable. Consider the following areas in which God pleads with man, "Open thine eyes!" (Proverbs 20:13).

*We see God in the revelation of creation.* "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). The sovereign power and existence of God is clearly seen in nature. Man's desperate effort to believe the theory of evolution and its fabricated data reveals outright rejection of God.

In a climate of unbelief in spiritual realities, we should point unbelievers to the evidence of God seen in creation. Paul opened his address to the secular Athenians by saying, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24). We should use the facts of creation as a platform to reason with men from the Scriptures. Technology has enabled man to discover hidden marvels of creation such as the structure of DNA. God is extending mercy in our age of darkness!

*We see God in the incarnation of the Son.* "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). Jesus was the "fulness of the Godhead bodily." When Philip asked, "Shew us the Father," Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). The life and death of Jesus is a revelation of the attributes of God.

We cannot naturally see Jesus today, but the indwelling presence of Christ is real. Severe judgment is pronounced on those who "have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," and then "turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

*We see God in the Spirits work of transformation.* "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is per-

fectured in us" (1 John 4:12). We know God is real and believe He lives in our heart because of the difference He makes in our life. Holiness of life is also a reminder to the world of the reality of God. The erroneous theology of Calvinism has attempted to discredit the fact that holiness is the evidence of salvation. The Word still stands, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).

Many times the question is asked, "How can I know what is right?" If we untangle our minds from complex philosophy and focus on who is living right, the issues of life become clearer. Jesus said, "Wisdom is justified of her children" (Matthew 11: 19). It is wise to take counsel from those who have raised faithful families. Choose a church fellowship that is reproducing righteousness in its people rather than one that is flaunting a pleasing philosophy. It is foolhardy to leave a regulated church fellowship to follow the phantom of supposed spirituality that lacks evidence of separation from the world. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12).

*We see God in the fulfillment of prophetic signs.* "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matthew 16:3). God has given signs to indicate the "end of all things." Many are being fulfilled in graphic detail. Increasing famines,

Increasing disturbing pestilence and earthquakes in diverse places turn our eyes to the clouds (Matthew 24:7). Apostasy is rampant and the love of many waxes cold (Matthew 24:12). Behold! the fig tree "putteth forth leaves" (Matthew 24:32). The discussion of global government continues to escalate along with increased government oversight (Revelation 13:7). The stage is set for the appearance of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2). Would Jesus have to rebuke us and say, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25)?

Seeing without believing is rebellion in the face of mercy. Seeing is not always believing, but believing in God is always seeing. May Jesus be able to say of us, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (Matthew 13:16).

—BAS.



## The Peril of Squandering Pearls

In His great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned against the error of having a condemning, judgmental spirit. He encouraged us to exercise our most careful and severe judgments on ourselves. Then He added, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matthew 7:6).

Is there a connecting link between these two seemingly different thoughts? Do they fit together? Yes, the Master Teacher is saying, "While you should not judge critically and harshly, at times sound discernment is needed. Some people act like dogs, having no regard for holy things. Others are like swine, with no serious regard for spiritual things." As good stewards with good discernment, we should recognize the difference. We are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, but we are not to have the "wool pulled over our eyes."

How can the child of God "prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:21), "try the spirits" (1 John 4:1), "beware of false prophets" (Matthew 7:15), like Christ, be "separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26), or "have no fellowship with the unfruitful

works of darkness" (Ephesians 5:11) if he is going through life only half awake?

Peter, in referring to a hardened group of people observed, "It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:22). Like a dog that will lick up that which made him sick before or like the clean pig that will roll again in the same mud hole that made her dirty before, so is the person who leaves the good things of God and returns to the disgusting, sickening, and defiling things of the world.

Jesus taught His disciples with similar logic. "If you share the truth in one city and you meet with absolute rejection, leave that city; wipe the very dust off your feet, and move on to a place where they will receive you." (See Luke 10:1-12.) We cannot force truth on those who will not accept it.

However, we should not be quick to categorize people with labels like hogs or dogs. Jesus Himself turned aside to help the poor, wretched Gadarene demoniac. The woman caught in adultery was sent on her way with spiritual encouragement. He brought salvation to the house

of the "ungodly" tax collector, Zacchaeus, and he had time for the sinful Samaritan woman.

The psalmist caught the compassionate heartbeat of the Lord when he said, "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men" (Psalm 90:3). Even in the midst of judgment, there is a call of mercy.

We should not hastily judge people as dogs and swine. Rather, in the spirit of this passage, we should ask, "What can I do to keep myself from falling into this deplorable condition?"

Remember Judas? When did this chosen disciple of the Lord start to

go wrong? How did he ever get to the place where the Lord told him, "That thou doest, do quickly?" Had He never told him, as He had Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not?" Likely He had, because God is no respecter of persons. "The love of money" had a death grip on the heart of Judas that strangled his spiritual life. Finally he crossed a line that even the Captain of salvation would not invade. Note the words of this poem, "The Hidden Line" written by J. Addison Alexander. In the paragraphs that follow them, observe how the Bible illustrates the words of the different stanzas

There is a time, we know not when,  
A point we know not where,  
That marks the destiny of men  
To glory or despair.

There is a line by us unseen,  
That crosses every path;  
The hidden boundary between  
God's patience and His wrath.

To pass that limit is to die,  
To die as if by stealth;  
It does not quench the beaming eye,  
Or pale the glow of health.

For the men of Sodom, the dawning day of their destruction was just another day of business as usual. They did not see fire, nor did they smell brimstone. Lot's pleas went

unheeded and the angels' work was unsuccessful. No more pearls would be cast their way. They had trampled their last "holy things" under their feet.

Consider Pharaoh of Egypt.  
Many a day his eye glowed with  
beaming health and kingly anger.  
After all, he was still king in Egypt!  
Or was he? Even after ten devastat-  
ing plagues he still had captains,  
soldiers, horsemen, and military  
might. This newcomer, Moses,  
could still be stopped. Emboldened  
by pride and the strength of the  
flesh, he rushed right into a watery

grave. God did not stop his chariots  
so that Moses could offer one last  
prayer and give one last warning.

Take a brief look at Korah,  
Dathan, and Abiram. "We are not  
doing anything wrong! You are not  
the only one, Moses, who can think  
right! You take too much upon  
yourself!" Their disrespect for  
God's established authority resulted  
in a direct fall into hell's fire.

The conscience may be still at ease,  
The spirits light and gay;  
That which is pleasing still may please,  
And care be thrust away.

But on that forehead God has set  
Indelibly a mark,  
Unseen by man, for man as yet  
Is blind and in the dark.

Luke 16 gives the account of the  
rich man and Lazarus. The wealthy  
man had his fine house, rich food,  
expensive clothing, and lavish life-  
style every day. He had no compas-  
sion and did not like the sight of the  
poor man begging just outside his  
gate.

At least the gate could be locked,  
and the nauseating sight blocked  
from his view. Why did not this  
man take better care of himself?  
Did the rich man ever feel impend-  
ing doom? Did he have opportunity  
for salvation just like the poor  
man?

And yet the doomed man's path below  
May bloom as Eden bloomed;  
He did not, does not, will not know,  
Or feel that he is doomed.

He knows, he feels that all is well,  
And every fear is calmed;  
He lives, he dies, he wakes in hell,  
Not only doomed, but damned.

Read the account of Herod in Acts 12 and you will see the truth of these words. He reveled in man's praise, thinking he really was some great person. Immediately God's judgment fell. Worms ate his very life away from him.

Belshazzar further illustrates the truth of the above lines. The handwriting on the wall of his banquet hall was not a call to repentance. It

was a call to judgment. Even God's man of the hour, Daniel, offered no call to turn and change his ways.

"There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he should pray for it" (1 John 5:16). When the children of Israel asked for one more opportunity to go and conquer Canaan, their request was denied. It was an appeal that neither God nor Moses granted.

Oh! where is that mysterious bourne  
By which our path is crossed;  
Beyond which, God Himself has sworn,  
That he who goes is lost?

How far may we go on in sin?  
How long will God forbear?  
Where does hope end, and where begin  
The confines of despair?

An answer from the skies is sent;  
"Ye that from God depart,  
While it is called to-day, repent,  
And harden not your heart."

Rather than trying to determine who is in the "dog" or "hog" category, let us rather pray,

***"LORD, KEEP ME FROM SQUANDERING MY PEARLS.  
HELP ME TO JUDGE MYSELF! KEEP ME FROM ANY  
STEPS THAT WOULD LEAD ME TO THE PLACE WHERE I  
BECOME HARDENED TO THY TRUTH. MAY I NEVER  
CARELESSLY TRAMPLE BIBLE TRUTH INTO THE GROUND.  
MAY I ALWAYS RESPOND PROPERLY TO HOLY WORDS!***

*H. M. E.*



## *Trust Amid Doubt*

Heavenly Father, our Guide,  
This was good in Thy sight.  
Thee we trust for we know  
Thou hast done what is right.

When our minds strive to grasp  
How Thou seest some good,  
Then our doubts clearly show  
That we misunderstood.

For as humans we ask  
Foolish questions of Thee,  
So forbear if we doubt  
What Thy will ought to be.

Thou canst see clearly, Lord,  
In the future for us,  
But have mercy, O God,  
With our doubts and our fuss.

But, O Lord, leave us not  
Doubting Thy perfect will.  
Lead us upward in life  
Out of doubt and self-will.

This we ask, Lord, of Thee,  
That Thou stand by our side.  
Help us daily, we pray,  
In sweet faith to abide.

—*E. M. H*

*“Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight” Matt. 11:26*

## *Church Committee Report - Hymnbook Development.*

The Hymnbook Committee began meeting in February 2006 under the direction of the Joint Publication Council. The assignment was to produce a new congregational hymnbook to be published by Eastern Mennonite Publications. Our first responsibility was to identify the qualities of the hymns and hymnals we appreciate and to establish guidelines for the material we would consider acceptable for the new book.

Since October 2006, more than 2,700 pieces of poetry or music have been received for evaluation. Each submission receives a dummy number to identify it as it circulates through the committees. The comments of each committee are collected on an attached evaluation sheet. The Hymnbook Committee makes an initial general evaluation of each song. Those that pass are sent on, first to the Hymns and then to the Music Committee.

The Hymns Committee asks these questions about the words: Is the poetry dignified? Is it correct doctrinally? Is it grammatically acceptable? Is the imagery fresh? Is the meaning clear, and will it meet our spiritual needs? Is the thought well developed and properly concluded? Is the rhythm flawless and the rhyme consistent? Into which section of the book will it fit? Which verse belongs beneath the title?

The Music Committee contemplates the value of the music. Is the melody appealing and fresh? Does the harmony progress and conclude properly? Do the words and music complement each other? Will the average congregation be able to sing and enjoy the music? When there is more than one tune submitted, they decide which tune matches the words best. If the submission has no accompanying music or if the music is unacceptable, they look for appropriate music.

The Hymnbook Committee plans quarterly singings to allow the committee to evaluate the songs in a "congregational" setting. These singings are held at different locations among the three groups involved in the work. Nearby congregations are invited to participate. Our youth and other persons interested in singing new songs are making a good contribution to this project.

The Eastern Mennonite Publications office personnel contribute by cataloging and filing hymns as they are submitted. Copies of the hymns are made available to each of the committees upon request. They also copy the song packets that are used at each singing. Songs that have passed through all the committees are being filed, based on the book's table of contents. This will help identify sections of the book for which we need more songs.

We have interest in including a number of hymns from our Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. The “*Ausbund*” and “*Ein Unpartheyisches Osches Gesangbuch*” hold special interest to us. Recently, a collection of hymns from these books was translated and versified. Careful attention will be given to ensure that these hymns flow well while retaining the original thoughts of the authors.

Quite a few hymns have been submitted that are new to our people, including some written within the past seventy years. These hymns will need to stand in doctrine and quality beside those that have stood the test of time. We recognize that time and exposure are needed to help us appreciate what is new to us. We continue to welcome poetry and music for this book.

We envision a book similar in size and quality to the Church Hymnal. It will not be a mere reorganization of familiar hymns. This will take considerable time and effort. We desire that this work would glorify God and be an inspiration to His people. Pray with us to that end.

*Bro. J. R.. For the Hymnbook Committee.*



## Cultivating Godly Character (Part 2)

### The Commitment of Ruth

Ruth the Moabitess exemplifies complete commitment. Attracted to Naomi's desire to return to her homeland, Ruth and Orpah followed her on the road back to Bethlehem. Naomi paused along the way to remind her daughters-in-law that she had nothing material to offer them in this move. Orpah wavered and retraced her steps to Moab, but Ruth decisively committed herself to a godly lifestyle. Why was Ruth's commitment so steadfast? Her five-pronged commitment (Ruth 1:16, 17) shows that she had thoroughly counted the cost of following Naomi back to her homeland.

"Where thou goest, I will go." Ruth believed that humbly following Naomi back to Israel was the road to spiritual blessings. Each step took her nearer to the true God and farther from her old life of idolatry. Anyone who follows the example of spiritually mature Christians reaps the blessing of stability and growth.

"Where thou lodgest, I will lodge." Naomi was poverty-stricken. Ruth accepted this. She valued living with Naomi and the opportunity to grow

spiritually. Blessed are the youth who are content to enjoy the bountiful blessings of home life!

"Thy people shall be my people." In choosing to leave her homeland, Ruth was renouncing her family and all that stood between her and God. In essence, she was committing herself to conform to God's laws, which included new worship patterns and dress codes. What a total change of identity! Yet this is crucial to evading the temptation of an easy return to the world.

Should a Christian cringe in separated attire? Tinting our Christian identity with worldly fads paves the road of retreat to the world from which Christ died to save us!

"Thy God, my God." For Ruth to make such a statement, she needed to break clean from the idolatrous worship of her youth. In this difficult aspect of her commitment, Ruth gave a resounding testimony of loyalty to the one true God. The Moabitish idols of clay have mutated into twenty-first century gods of materialism and technology. An addiction to the latest technology fads will stifle love for God. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"(Luke 12:34).

"Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried." Ruth dedicated herself to the true God for a lifetime. She included no escape clauses for selfish living. Review your baptismal vows. You vowed to renounce self and the world and be faithful unto Christ and His church until death. Are you faithfully keeping your promise to God?

While Orpah disappeared from the pages of history, Ruth's commitment to God lived on in her great-grandson King David. Ruth's decision for righteousness was also honored by the birth of the Messiah in her lineage.

*Brother Daniel.*

### PRAYER POINT

*"The effectual fervent prayer  
of a righteous man availeth much"*

***Thank the Lord for faithful youth that make a  
valuable contribution to the cause of Christ and His kingdom.***

***Pray that God would bless the various street meetings, tract  
distributions and other methods of spreading the Gospel.***

