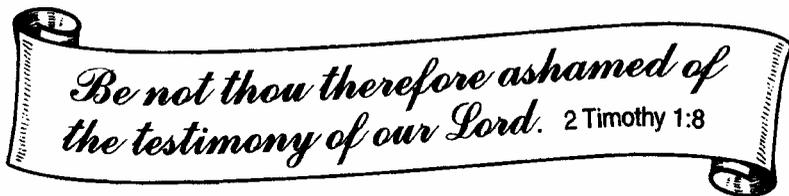


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

SELECTED ARTICLES FROM THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION
OF
THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA MENNONITE CHURCH
APRIL 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.

NB. Only limited extracts from The Eastern Mennonite testimony are published on this website. No addresses or personal details will be published for privacy reasons. The views expressed in the articles are those of the individual authors.

Editor: anabaptistmennonites.org.

The Significance of the Crucifixion

Both the annual Good Friday observance of Christ's crucifixion and our semiannual Communion services focus on the death of our Lord. This event is most significant and merits our special commemoration. God also deserves daily thanksgiving and praise for what was done on that momentous day.

In one sense the hours of Christ's suffering and death were the darkest hours in history as man crucified his Maker. Yet we also see the brightness of those hours when our Creator provided redemption for us. The darkness and the brightness of this event make Christ's crucifixion, along with the resurrection, among the most significant events in history. We glean key truths about man, about God, and about the Christian life from the crucifixion. These truths affect our eternal destiny.

What key truths does the crucifixion signify?

The exceeding sinfulness of mankind. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). The vileness of the human heart is revealed in Christ's crucifixion. The sinless Lamb of God was slain by sinful

man. This wicked deed proves what is in man. Wicked men, by crucifying our Lord, demonstrated the need for Christ to die. No good thing dwells in natural man (Romans 7:18).

The incomprehensible depth of God's love for mankind. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Christ, the Son of God, descended from glory to become man, making Himself of no reputation. He died the cruel death on the cross, bearing our sin for us. All this pain and scorn was because "he was wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5). In His death, He provided the offer of salvation to all, even to the wicked men who maliciously connived in His suffering and death. This love of Christ passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:17-19).

The satisfaction paid for our sin on Calvary. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11). The approximately four thousand years of history preceding the crucifixion of our Lord had clearly revealed man's sinful nature. God's judgment on disobedience in the Old Testament had revealed God's wrath on sin.

Christ's death on the cross has paid the price for our redemption. He atoned for our sin; His blood is efficacious. Through Christ's death, God can simultaneously remain just, yet forgive sinful men (Romans 3:26).

Christ's mortal blow on Satan. "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (I Corinthians 2:8). Paradoxically, when the Seed of the woman died on the cross, He bruised the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15). Christ's painful death on the cross is compared to a slight injury in contrast to the deathblow that Satan received. What Satan intended to be Christ's defeat became the very means God used to free man from Satan's deadly grip. The evil plotting of those darkest of hours delivered the deathblow to the powers of darkness.

Christ's perfect example in humility and cross bearing. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto

death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). That the Lord of glory should die the dreaded and despised death of crucifixion is the ultimate example of humility. The crucifixion challenges us to follow Christ in humble cross bearing. All of self must be crucified; all that the flesh desires must be denied. We are called to follow Him without reservation. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Our eternal redemption secured. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:27, 28). Because He died for us, we can be saved from sin. Because He died for us, we can live for Him today. Because He died for us, we can someday be with Him eternally in heaven.

—GEA



We Shall Be Changed.

One day "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52). This change is imminent, and it will be "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Our mortal bodies will be exchanged for immortal ones. These bodies that are subject to sickness, injury, aging, and death will be changed for incorruptible ones.

As the Lord descends to gather His elect, "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Why must we be changed? Why is it stated that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53)? It is because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." To Moses, God had said, "There shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). Paul, in extolling God, said, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor

can see" (1 Timothy 6:16). To stand in the presence of God, our mortal bodies must be exchanged for immortal ones. If we desire to see God, we must be changed.

Through faith we know that we shall be changed. "Some man will say, How are the dead raised up?" (1 Corinthians 15:35). As Abraham believed "that God was able to raise [Isaac] up, even from the dead" (Hebrews 11:19), so we also must believe that God is able both to raise the dead and to change mortal bodies to immortal bodies. The account in Luke of the rich man and Lazarus clearly teaches that there is life after death.

The Scriptures also reveal that we shall be changed as it manifests God's power to raise the dead to life. The Shunammite's son, the widow's son from Nain, and Jairus's daughter are all examples of God's resurrection power.

A further evidence that we can know we shall be changed is that Christ himself arose, being the "firstfruits of them that slept." If Christ had not risen, the saints could not anticipate the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:17-20). Christ's resurrection was prophesied centuries before. The Psalms record that God would redeem His soul from

the grave, and that the Holy One would not see corruption (Psalm 16:10). Because Christ, who is the first fruits from the dead, lives, we shall live also as we remain in Him.

Christ's resurrection was also typified in the Old Testament Law. Each year at harvest time, the Israelites were to take of the first-ripe fruit to the priest for a wave offering before the Lord. The first fruits were to be the best that they could bring. Of the first fruits that were brought to the priest, he would take a tithe, the choicest of the best, and offer it as a sacrifice to the Lord. As God accepted the offerings of the first fruits, Israel could enjoy the benefits of their harvest personally.

Likewise Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection. When Mary recognized our resurrected Lord in the garden, Jesus said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). He needed yet to present Himself as the first fruits unto God. Christ, the first fruit was holy, so now the lump, the church, is also holy (Romans 11:16).

As we consider the suddenness and the surety of our change, it brings an urgency to our personal salvation experience and also to the Gospel message we share with the world around us. Jesus spoke of the ten virgins, but only five were prepared and ready when the bridegroom returned. Jesus also said that two shall be in the field and two at the mill, but in both instances only one will be taken; the other will be left. Only those who are ready when our Lord returns will go with Him.

The importance of being ready for that day is also emphasized in 1 Corinthians 15, the Resurrection Chapter. We are warned that "evil communications corrupt good manners" (15:33), and challenged to "awake to righteousness, and sin not" (15:34). Sin carries consequences, eternal death (15:55, 56). That day will bring a separation that will be final.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (15:58).

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

Brother W.E. PA



LIFT YOUR GLAD VOICES.

Lift your glad voices in triumph on high,
For Jesus hath risen, and man shall not die;
Vain were the terrors that gathered around Him,
And short the dominion of death and the grave.

He burst from the fetters of darkness that bound Him,
Resplendent in glory, to live and to save:
Loud was the chorus of angels on high,—
The Saviour hath risen, and man shall not die.

Glory to God, in full anthems of joy;
The being He gave us death cannot destroy:
Sad were the life we may part with tomorrow,
If tears were our birthright, and death were our end.

But Jesus hath cheered the dark valley of sorrow,
And bade us, immortal, to heaven ascend:
Lift then your voices in triumph on high,
For Jesus hath risen, and man shall not die.
—John Edgar Gould



Watershed Issues of the Twentieth-Century Mennonite Church (Part 2)

Developments During the Twentieth Century

Many changes came to the Mennonite Church during the twentieth century. In the earlier part of the century, many of the changes seemed positive. But as the century progressed, the Mennonite Church moved from its Biblical and historical foundation, resulting in

much fragmentation and apostasy.

Various watershed issues stand out in the developments of this century. These issues shifted Mennonite thought and practice. Higher education was the foremost one, and many of the other watershed issues, to some degree, sprang from it.

1. Higher Education

The public schools had influenced Mennonite youth toward higher education. The greater openness to change among the Mennonites in the West also propelled this interest. It was thought that Mennonite colleges were needed to save the youth for the Mennonite Church. The western conferences established the first colleges: Elkhart Institute in Indiana in 1894, which became Goshen College in 1903, and Hesston College in Kansas in 1907.

The East viewed these colleges, especially the one in Goshen, with some suspicion. Too many youth from the East who attended these colleges rejected the conservative viewpoint. The churches in the East attempted to protect themselves from this liberal influence by establishing a college of their own. In 1917 a number of concerned brethren from Virginia and elsewhere started Eastern Mennonite School (EMS), which later became Eastern Mennonite College (EMC) at Harrisonburg, Virginia. (It is now Eastern Mennonite University.) *1.

Some of the more conservative conferences of the East also had reservations regarding EMC. Some conservative leaders questioned whether it was even possible to have a Mennonite institution of higher learning that would truly serve the conservative cause. Noah

Mack, a Lancaster Conference bishop who had some sympathy for EMS in the early days, stated this after observing the various Mennonite efforts in higher education: "I do not believe that a school [of higher learning] can be established to be of permanent good toward the maintaining of the simple faith and practice of a plain church.*2. A simple reflection on the Mennonite Church and higher education in the twentieth century gives credence to this conclusion.

Higher education militates against a truly Biblical, Mennonite conservatism. It invites the subtle influence of Protestant thought through Mennonite professors trained in non-Mennonite schools. It weakens Biblical separation through emphasizing a broad awareness of other cultures and ideas. It creates free thinking and individual autonomy, which undermines established and long-standing traditions, developing the mindset that conservative church leaders and practices are out-of-date. It influences the church toward the professions. These, in turn, militate against the stranger-and-pilgrim lifestyle and bring association with the more elite of society.

These threats of higher education became reality as education changed the mindset of many in the Mennonite Church. Many concluded that advanced education is

needed to write books and church periodicals, to serve as effective missionaries, to teach school, and, eventually, to lead the church. Those influencing the church through the last half of the twentieth century had the mindset and the outlook produced by higher education.

2. Industrialization and Urbanization

The process of industrialization and urbanization was in progress throughout the entire

century, but its impact was especially evident in the first half of the century.

At the turn of the century, home life was very simple. Families made their own clothes and used home remedies for illnesses. They had no electricity, telephones, or modern farm machinery. The countryside was rural, and travel was by horse and buggy on dirt roads.

But within a few decades this changed. Mennonites began to purchase cars and modern farm equipment, including tractors. Electricity and telephones were introduced. Factory-made clothes created pressure on the church to more clearly define dress standards. The increasing urbanization and the transition from farming to the trades and later the professions brought Mennonites into closer proximity to society. In some conferences, the church stood firmly

against changes such as the television and gave direction to others by setting standards. However, the subtle undercurrents of these changes increasingly affected the church.

These changes increased the amount of affluence and leisure time. Increased travel and communication brought increased exposure to the world. Industrialization and insurance programs resulted in less dependence on the brotherhood. A faster pace of life developed a more complex lifestyle. Pressures from the surrounding culture thus increased. While some of these changes had many benefits, they also brought a serious challenge to the Mennonite Church's separated, stranger-and-pilgrim way of life.

3. The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy

In the early 1900s, Protestants in general faced a time of confusion and unrest. Modernism attempted to blend religious beliefs with contemporary thought such as evolution and higher criticism. The resultant liberalistic teaching held that the Bible only contains the Word of God and emphasized the individual autonomy of man.

Fundamentalism was an element of Protestantism that reacted to this modernism-liberalism. It taught the inspiration of the Scriptures, atonement through the blood of Christ,

and many other doctrines that the Mennonites believed.

But Fundamentalists did not embrace nonresistance, nonconformity, separation of church and state, and the practice of all the ordinances as taught by the Scriptures.

In this controversy, the Mennonites felt more akin to the Fundamentalists than to the modernists. But this empathy for the Fundamentalists brought a subtle influence that undermined the Biblical Anabaptist understanding of the need for discipleship and practical applications of Biblical principles in daily walk. It clearly brought a weakening of the New Testament concept of the church as a brotherhood and led to the outlook that Mennonites are too rigid and should learn from others. Emphasis was placed on right belief without an equal emphasis on right living.

Some Mennonite leaders attempted to help the church maintain Mennonite distinctives. Daniel Kauffman produced *Doctrines of the Bible*, which became a Mennonite classic on Bible doctrine and its practical applications. George Brunk, Sr., published a periodical called *The Sword and Trumpet*. The (Old) Mennonite Church adopted a statement of faith, entitled *Christian Fundamentals*, at Garden City, Missouri, in 1921. While these were heroic efforts to check the influence of the times,

the Fundamentalist Movement left its mark on the Mennonite Church.*3.

Some educators propose that the Mennonite Church did not have sufficient education to face this controversy. But could it be that if the Mennonite Church would have stayed free from higher education, she would never have become entangled in the controversy?

4. Blurred Fellowship Lines

Throughout the twentieth century the (Old) Mennonite Church did not keep her fellowship lines clear. She mingled too freely with other Mennonite groups, and even occasionally with Protestants. When the West increasingly charted a course toward compromise, the East failed to separate herself sufficiently to resist the influence. There were protests and reservations throughout the church, but essentially the lines were too blurred to maintain a conservative position.

These blurred fellowship lines surfaced in various ways. The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) was a relief organization founded to help war refugees during and after World War I. At its inception, it was not intended to be a permanent relief organization, but it became that. It later provided relief for war refugees during and after World War II, including Russian Mennonites.

While much good has been accomplished through this organization, the various Mennonite groups and bodies working together spread the liberalizing influence to the more conservative church groups. When the MCC headquarters were moved to Akron, Pennsylvania, in 1935, the more liberal Western personnel were brought into one of the most conservative church centers of the East, creating significant undermining pressure.*4.

Foreign missions were another area of blurred fellowship lines. In 1899, the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, based in Elkhart, Indiana, sent missionaries to India. To the consternation of the conservatives, these missionaries mingled too freely with Protestants and even allowed non-Christian native teachers to teach in their schools. The mission also tolerated worldly practices such as wearing the mustache.

Later the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (EMBMC), based in Salunga, Pennsylvania, was formed by the Lancaster Conference to counter the liberal tendencies of the Elkhart board. However, when the EMBMC board sent an exploratory team to Africa in 1933, Elam Stauffer, who became their first missionary, and Orié Miller, their board secretary, stopped in Europe and consulted some Protestant mis-

sionary societies there. In Africa the missionaries continued to consult Protestants, establishing a pattern of relating to Protestant missions.

Although much good was done by these mission efforts, the blurred lines helped bring Protestant influence to the mission fields. The mission influence, in turn, influenced the home church in ways that many had not anticipated when these mission efforts were initiated.

Mass evangelistic efforts held in large tents in various Mennonite communities also significantly influenced the church of the 1950s. Some of our brethren, in reflecting on these meetings, observed that in the early meetings, doctrinal understandings and nonconformity were strengthened. Convictions were built against the use of tobacco. However, fellowship lines were clouded. Ministers who would not exchange pulpits at home sat together on the pulpit in these campaigns. People from congregations that did not fellowship together mingled freely here.

Later, it was observed, these campaigns shifted. Subtle reflections were made against church discipline. Church authority was thereby demeaned, and the local church authority was undermined.

The CPS, I-W, and VS programs also contributed to obscuring fellowship lines. These programs

were arranged with the government, allowing the Mennonite young men to serve in alternate service rather than in the Army. While there were many good benefits, the mingling of young men from various Mennonite branches weakened conviction. The I-W and VS programs often placed boys into worldly settings without suitable, conservative supervision. As a result, many Mennonite youth were lost. Those who did remain in the Mennonite Church were often spiritually weakened, and, as they moved into leadership, they influenced the church in a liberal direction.

5. Pietistic and Pacifistic Thought Patterns

By 1944, many of those who had sought to maintain a conservative church, such as George Brunk, Sr., and Daniel Kauffman, had died. New leaders with college training and more exposure to society were taking control of the Mennonite Church through the Mennonite General Conference. The church periodicals, the publishing house, the CPS program, and various boards fell into their hands. Change was in the air.

At a 1944 special session of General Conference, a resolution was considered wherein any conference not in harmony with General Conference forfeited their place in General Conference. If approved,

this would have, in effect, disassociated the Illinois Conference, which had been lax on nonconformity and other issues. The meeting quickly lapsed into considerable debate. Confusion overtook the delegates, tension rose, and the meeting reached an impasse.

In response to questions regarding the reason for the current distrust, Sanford Yoder stood and said, "It is because fellowship has broken down.... Today the feeling experienced is one of ostracism. The fellowship is gone. This is the reason for distrust and tensions within the church." The audience was stunned. There was deathly silence—until a brother suggested a time for prayer.

After a lengthy period of prayer, the tone changed. "Fellowship" and "brotherly love" became more important than doctrinal soundness and Biblical practice. The next morning the committee presented a softened resolution, and it passed easily. One historian said, "The old had died. The new was born in 1944." *5.

Pietistic lines of thought permeated the various conferences over the next decades. Fellowship and brotherly love took precedence over doctrinal soundness and Biblical application. Conservative older bishops and leaders were regarded as too oppressive and legalistic. The warmth and glow of pietism had begun to undermine the long-

standing Biblical foundation of the (Old) Mennonite Church. Pacifism, with its more political emphasis, gradually replaced nonresistance.

In the following decades, the Mennonite Church rapidly apostatized, losing much of what she had stood for in the past. Nonconform-

ity was lost, first in the West, but soon also in the East. It was the groups that had emerged in the 1800s and the regroupings of the latter half of the 1900s that carried on the practical Biblicism for which the Mennonite Church had stood for generations.

---Brother Lynn Martin

References:

*1. Harry Anthony Brunk, History of Mennonites in Virginia, 1900-1960, vol. II (Verona, Va.: McClure Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 478, 479.

*2. Noah Mack, "The Situation in American Mennonitism," The Sword and Trumpet, October 1930, p. 11.

*3. The Mennonite Encyclopedia, 1955-90, article "Fundamentalism" and "Faulty Fundamentalists," The Sword and Trumpet, October 1931.

*4. John L. Ruth, The Earth Is the Lord's, (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001), p. 971.

*5. Albert N. Keim, Harold S. Bender, (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1998), pp. 348-350.



PRAYER POINT

*“The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much”*

*Thank God for the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' death on the cross
and for the spiritual provisions His resurrection accomplished*

*Thank God for His goodness in creating the variety
And beauty we enjoy with each changing seasons.*



Ambassadors for Christ (Part 2) - Representing His Kingdom

"How are you?" Nathan pleasantly greeted the gentleman seated next to him in the doctor's waiting room. Nathan had noticed a downcast, anxious look, and wished he could somehow encourage the man.

"I don't see how I can go on," came the troubled reply. "Three months ago I lost my wife in an automobile accident. Just yesterday my only son was diagnosed with a rapidly growing cancer. The doctors do not expect him to live to see the New Year."

"I am sorry to hear this news," Nathan spoke with feeling. "When I face overwhelming circumstances, I talk to God about my problems. The Bible tells us that God welcomes us to bring our cares to Him and He will carry them for us. Do you know Jesus as your caring friend?"

As we go about our daily activities, we should think, "How can I be of use to the Lord today?" We observe how Christ seized the opportunities that came to Him. John 4 records that as Jesus waited for His disciples to buy meat, He opened a discussion about living water. God will surely bring us opportunities if we are looking for them.

Witness opportunities begin as we meet people. We can include a Bible verse in our greeting: "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). As we make plans for the future, we do well to include the phrase, "if the Lord will." This helps both us and others to remember that our times are in God's hands.

We can inspire others to think of our heavenly kingdom by displaying a Gospel sign in our front lawn. It is surprising how many discussions these can generate.

Exemplifying the stranger-and-pilgrim concept will also cause folks to be pointed heavenward. We must choose to live simply, for we are but passing through this world. Our properties and our vehicles should give evidence that we are sojourning. How sad indeed to be so attached to this earth that we could not leave it behind when Jesus comes!

Our neighborhood relations will show that we are representing another kingdom. We will empathize with our neighbors when they lose their house through a fire or face other catastrophes. We will seek to be the kind of neighbor that we wish to have.

How do we answer folks when we are questioned as to what we do for fun? We should give a very positive reply. We sincerely enjoy serving the Lord. There are so many service opportunities that provide diversion for us. We would not exchange our relationship with the Lord for any temporal pleasure.

The heavenly ambassador will seek to promote virtuous characteristics. He will not stoop to discussing church difficulties with a neighbor for fear of destroying a trust in the brotherhood. He will speak charitably of the brethren and of those over him.

What a lofty calling to be representing our King to this world! May God help us each to be faithful to our high calling. —*Brother G.E.B.*



The Eyes of the Lord.

With interest very keen and clear,
The eyes of God run to and fro
To find a few here on the earth
On whom He could His strength bestow.
So when your life seems jarred and marred,
Oh, maybe God is trying then
To show His strength at first to you,
And through your life to other men.
How precious are the storms of life
A sign from heaven's shining length
That God has seen your faithful walk,
And picked your life to show His strength.
We oft forget God's aerial view,
And blunder here in darksome fear.
Take courage and remember, friend,
God looked with interest keen and clear.

—EMH

"For the eyes of the LORD ran to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." (2 Chronicles 16:9).

