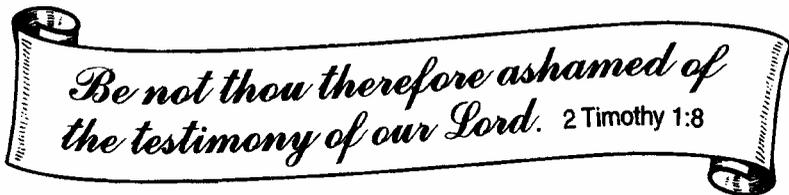


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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Editorial.

"The True Light"

Many about us hustle and bustle with holiday preparations. If they ask, we can assure them that we are always ready for Christmas. The preparations of gifts and ornamentation detract from the worship of the "holy child Jesus." However, we appreciate that the society in which we live acknowledges the birth of the Savior. We should use the opportunities of the season to remind men of Jesus' death and coming again.

Jesus also used a winter holiday as a springboard to preach the Gospel. After Jesus' teaching on the shepherd and the sheepfold, John records, "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter" (John 10:22). This feast is also referred to as the Festival of Lights or, more commonly today, Hanukkah. It is observed this year on December 12 by the Jewish community.

Although the Old Testament feasts and ceremonies are superseded by the New Testament ordinances, they continue to inspire us. This feast is a memorial of miraculous victory by a faithful remnant of Israel during the four hundred years between the testaments. Alexander the Great had conquered the world, including Israel. To ensure a united kingdom, he pressed for a uniform culture that spoke the same language, learned the same philosophies, and worshiped the same gods. Antiochus Epiphanes, a succeeding ruler, followed many of the same ideologies in a brutal reign of terror.

Under his reign the Israelites were denied worshiping on the Sabbath, practicing circumcision, and reading or owning a Torah. Instead of sacrifice to God, they were forced, under penalty of death, to offer pigs on altars erected to Zeus. Many decided it would be better to be apostate and live, than to be orthodox and dead.

Mattathias Maccabee stood for his God. When forced to offer a swine on an altar, he refused. When another Israelite stepped forward to offer the pig, Mattathias and his five sons attacked the apostate and the soldiers. After three years they reclaimed the temple, cleansed it of idols, and rededicated it to God on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, 168 B.C. Three years to the day before this, Antiochus had set up the abomination of desolation and caused the sacrifices to cease. For eight days they rejoiced in worship and celebration, thus beginning the custom of the Festival of Lights.

During this festival, commemorating the relit temple candlestick, Jesus

used the opportunity to proclaim, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5).

Just as the ninth candle of the Hanukkah menorah is used to light the other eight, so Jesus is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Borrowing from the festival's theme of freedom, Jesus pled, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). Their restored freedom had been fragile, at best. Jesus offered true, lasting freedom that would not be shattered by civil unrest.

The climax of Jesus' appeal was His proclamation, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11). This analogy matched prophetic teaching so closely that the Jews demanded, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus responded, "I and my Father are one." "The Jews took up stones again to stone him ... [saying] because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Antiochus Epiphanes (God manifest) had also claimed to be God. He came to power by promising to be their protector. They were cruelly deceived.

Many today are still looking for a good man to bring peace to the world. Jesus is the man. He said, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). Those who do not accept the Good Shepherd will be deceived by a false shepherd—the Antichrist (Zechariah 11:16). As Antiochus, he will come by flattery and promise peace while defying God. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God.... spewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The current rejection and blasphemy of God is a sign of the end times!

Will you testify, "The LORD is my shepherd"? Take the time as Jesus did to point men to the "true Light" in contrast to all the vain lights and hopes of the season. "The night cometh, when no man can work."

—BAS



Biblical Separation in Our Vehicles (Part 2)

Another directive of our Rules and Discipline to guide us in separation prohibits "sports cars." The definition of a sports car has changed with time. Before the eighties, many car models were available in both a four-

door model and a two-door sport model. Many times the two-door had a different roofline and styling that reminded you of speed. Because of their impracticality, manufacturers have dropped many of the two-door models to cut production costs. Today many of the sports cars are four-door sedans such as the Pontiac G8 and the Dodge Charger.

Vehicles may also be classed as sport-luxury models. This category features four-door models that are high-priced and powerful and have large wheels and tires with a low sidewall, along with many other sport-luxury features.

Certain cars carry their own image. For example, General Motors offers the basic models of Chevrolet as the common man's car, Buick as the premium line, and Pontiac as the sports line. Sporty models of any kind are not becoming to Plain People. The retro models also have a definite sports flavor. Some of those models are the Chrysler PT Cruiser and the Chevrolet SSR and HHR, SUVs (sport-utility vehicles) also come in the "sports car" classification. Their popularity has dropped off considerably and is being replaced with a new vehicle segment known as the crossovers. They are a cross between the minivan and the SUV. To the casual observer, a crossover does not appear that much different from an SUV since they have kept much of the SUV styling. Since the styling of the crossover is similar to the SUV and the segment is new and represents status and prestige, we do well to refrain from purchasing these vehicles.

"Sports features on regular cars" are also a battle line. Deciding which items are sports features is not clearly black and white. Large-diameter wheels are one of the current sports features we reject. Low-profile tires correct the proportions of the wheel to the size of the car but accentuate the image we want to avoid.

Dual exhaust is also a popular sports feature. Manufacturers highlight the dual exhaust in their sales literature. Many of the dual-exhaust systems are only dual from the muffler back, establishing the fact that dual exhaust is for appearance and is not an integral function of the vehicle.

As manufacturers develop new engine technology, the horsepower derived from a liter of displacement continues to rise. Manufacturers are also "shoe horning" larger engines into smaller cars. Racing teams know that a winning combination is to lower the weight of the car and raise the horsepower. Through the use of composites and lighter metals, cars have been shedding pounds, and the weight of the car relative to the horsepower continues to drop. A midsize sedan with an engine that reaches a horsepower of 250 is a very fast car. As one manufacturer put it, it has "pulse quicken-

ing performance." This amount of horsepower presents unnecessary temptation, especially in the hands of young people. This is an area that we may not overlook.

LED interior lighting is a new trend. Some models are available with lighted foot wells and cup holders and the ability to change the color of the light to accentuate the mood. Ground effects, sunroofs, deck spoilers, and contrasting two-tone seats are other current sports features.

Many acceptable car models are available with an unacceptable sport package. These sport-packages include a combination of the highest available horsepower engine, large wheels with speed-rated tires, dual exhaust, ground effects, deck spoilers, sunroofs, fog lamps, special instrument panels, and upgraded infotainment systems.

Separation applies to "all our vehicles," including work trucks and pickup trucks. Work trucks of the past were practical vehicles suitable for heavy, dirty work. The rise in popularity of pickup trucks and SUVs has had manufacturers scrambling to introduce more luxurious and expensive trucks. Four-door and extended-cab trucks became very popular. The harsh ride of the truck was softened, and interiors became very plush. In the world, it became a status symbol to own an expensive truck. People began to use trucks instead of cars to travel and attend social functions. With the increased popularity of the truck came an equal increase in accessories for trucks so people could customize their trucks to fit their taste or project an image.

The world's truck culture has crept into the church. Occasionally, trucks that violate the standards we apply to our cars appear at church and social functions. Our trucks should basically be tools for our occupation, rather than family vehicles for church activities and social functions. Our trucks should be practical and not for show or status. Chrome wheels, brush guards, large 4 x 4 decals, Nerf bars, and polished stainless rocker panel trim portray an image of being "one of the boys" rather than a separated people.

As a separated people, we should also be conscious that we are stewards of God's possessions. Everything we have is given to us by the goodness of God. God expects us to be good stewards of the financial resources that we use to purchase vehicles, and then to be good stewards of our vehicles. The purchase of new or expensive vehicles with sports and luxury features or accessories to dress up a vehicle is poor stewardship. Usually, power chips and other performance accessories do not pay for themselves. Remember, that every one of us will give an account to God of how we used the re-

sources He has given to us.

Separation and nonconformity are distinctive of the people of God. Since vehicles are designed by men who are not interested in separation, we will need to continually evaluate new models and trends in the automotive industry. Because of the many new models and the continuous changes in the automotive industry, we do well to seek counsel of someone who is familiar with these trends before making a purchase. As people of God, may we continue to be separate in the area of our vehicles.

Brother D.M., New Holland, PA



PRAYER POINT

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

Thank God for His love and mercy in sending His only begotten Son to give eternal life to whosoever believes in Him.

Pray for the Bible schools at Ashland and Numidia, that seeds may be sown that will spring up and bear much fruit.

Pray for the new homes that have been established among us, that they may shine as bright lights in the world with God as their head.

Pray for the Regional Winter Bible Schools that the Word might not return unto the Lord void but rather accomplish that which pleases Him.

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6).



Cultivating Godly Character (Part 6)

The Fearlessness of John the Baptist.

The final sermon preached by John the Baptist was short but penetrating. With a powerful tyrant as his audience, John the Baptist boldly reprovved Herod Antipas for his sinful relationship with his brother Philip's wife, Herodias, saying, "It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matthew 14:4).

This fearless messenger of God "being dead yet speaketh" to Christians today.

John fearlessly denounced the specific sin of Herod. Stepping outside the comfort zone of vague, passive warnings, John the Baptist stepped squarely on Herod's toes. This fearless preacher valued Herod's soul more than his own skin. Your opportunity to confront unrighteousness will also come. Be bold to confront one who speaks disrespectfully of his parents or the church, or feeds on questionable music. Frankness coupled with meekness will speak more effectively than a vague raise of the eyebrows or a moment of uncomfortable silence.

John fearlessly confronted a man of high position. Where were the "righteous" Pharisees at this time? For them, it was easy to bring a timid woman caught in the same sin to Jesus. Instead of coddling personal interests like the cowardly Pharisees, John was guided by impartiality and the steady, shining star of truth. Someone's position, race, or popularity should never hinder us from reaching out to him with truth.

John fearlessly sought to turn people to repentance. This was his mission. His bold, "no beating around the bush" style prepared many for the coming Messiah. Yet here, in the case of Herod and his unlawful wife Herodias, did he make a tactless mistake? Was he too unpolished in his presentation? John handled the truth with boldness. Attempting to water down truth so that it is more palatable is like taking off the sharp edge of a knife so that it will cut better. Such an effort is ineffective in convicting sinners of their condition before God.

John feared God more than men. So of course, he sought to please God more than tickling Herod's itching ears. Contrast this to his cowardly captor. Herod feared John, he feared the people, but he did not fear God. His answer to John's reproof was to cast him into prison. Fearing God raised John to a plateau above the petty fears of men and their frightening faces. Fearing God is the prerequisite for courageous Christian conduct. Cultivate your fear of God by studying His attitude toward sin and man's need for repentance.

Herod died unsaved. Was John's preaching ineffective? Certainly not. His fearless courage, like that of other Bible heroes such as Phinehas and Daniel, is inspiring. Be a fearless soldier of Christ in the battle for truth.

—*Brother Daniel.*



The cry is ringing in my ears,
Those weak, yet plaintive strains,
Of millions doomed to hopeless fears
And bound with self-made chains.

I see those eyes of misery
And feel them gaze on me;
They reach out arms in poverty—
They're crying to be free!

I watch them groping in the dark
With desperate, sin-stained hands;
They try to grasp some light, some spark
Of hope to leave their bands.

But finding naught, they turn once more,
Dejected eyes to me;
Then shift the loads they must endure—
So lonesome, so empty.

The cry is ringing in my ears
Of children far away,
Caught in the feverish fits and tears,
Their innocence gone—like day.

There's nothing like security
In those wild, darting eyes;
For they have seen hostility,
Deception, terror, lies.

O God, I cry, why can't I go
Those tears to dry, Those hands to grasp,
Those lives to show
Thy love before they die!

How can it be
That I should live this life in ease,
While others—misery ... ?
O Lord, send me if You so please.

—*Sister Jana S.*