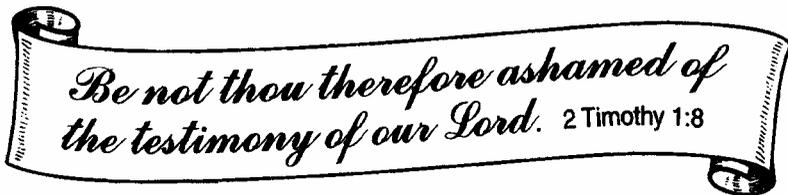


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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Editorial.

"He That Hateth Gifts Shall Live"

Gift sharing is a big part of the worldly tradition of celebrating Christmas. Although many groan with the burden of buying gifts for all their associates, the tradition continues. Aside from commercializing a sacred event, this practice is a negative influence in other ways. It encourages the lust to receive rather than cultivating the grace of sacrificial giving.

"He that is greedy of gain [plunder] troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live" (Proverbs 15:27). Both parts of this proverb reveal the snare of a desire for what is free. Our covetous nature delights in a break from the normal law of working for our reward.

Satisfaction and fulfillment are found in giving rather than receiving. This "wisdom that is from above" is contrary to our human impulse. We need to identify our covetous nature and take steps to develop distaste for the misleading, tantalizing draw of the free.

Beware of the offer of free. Advertisers prey on human nature with this effective ploy. Few consumers recalculate the true cost that accompanies free. The purpose of marketers is to convince buyers to buy more. Nothing is technically free because everything has a cost that is paid by someone.

Crucify the aspiration to receive. Many sad souls bemoan and fret over how they have been shortchanged and mistreated. Victorious saints find life in the joy of sacrifice and service. The rich treasure of peace with God should never be spoiled by self-pity.

Those who have grown up under a gift-receiving mentality struggle to find fulfillment without praise, recognition, or reward. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.... Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6: 5, 6).

Use discretion in giving gifts. Our method of giving should encourage the joy of the giver more than the fun of the receiver. The way we give to our children will feed or moderate their addiction to gifts. We should give useful, practical gifts. This encourages the concept of giving for needs rather than fun.

We may unwittingly feed a lust for receiving by showering our children with gifts on birthdays and holidays or for countless rewards for their efforts. The fulfillment they find in faithfulness should supersede the token of appreciation with which they are rewarded.

Guard against schemes to receive more than is given. Invitations circulate at times, especially for girls, to be part of a recipe tree, sticker tree, or card-sharing tree. The solicitations promise that if the chain is kept going, each person will receive much more than what he gives. They take a form as innocent as the following:

"Let's have some fun. Please send a recipe to number one on the list. Make six copies of this paper. Put the person that is number two up to number one, and put your name and address beside number two. Give a copy of this paper to six friends. You should receive thirty-six recipes! If you cannot do this within a week, give it to someone who can or the fun will be spoiled!"

How could it be right or logical to give one card and receive thirty-six? Such schemes mislead children to believe that it is possible for everyone to give a little and receive a lot.

These schemes are also unethical because they are unsustainable. If everyone participated, by the time the fourth level of persons received recipes, it would have involved 9,331 persons.

Parents need to take the initiative to "spoil the fun." The fun violates Scriptural principle. These schemes are also a form of illegal fraud. Ponzi schemes that rely on new investment to pay off old debt have swindled unsuspecting individuals and corporations of billions of dollars. Victims are often needy individuals that are looking for an easy way out of financial difficulty. The government and the church have needed to step in and arrest these schemes that prey on the vulnerable and gullible.

These practical observations have additional spiritual implications. Jesus stressed the cost of discipleship while the devil flaunts the seemingly free pleasures of sin. What he advertises as free and easy will cost us dearly. Satan's offers are deceptive. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17). May we gratefully and humbly thank the good Giver.

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Parents Commanding Their Children.

"Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 32:46). Moses was nearing the end of life. After commissioning Joshua as his successor, he exhorted all Israel to faithfully command and instruct their posterity.

Since the beginning of time, God has been commanding and instructing His people to obey Him and live righteously. Likewise, they were to teach their children the ways of the Lord. The spiritual success of future generations is dependent on parents answering this call and taking their God-given place of authority in the home. This calling is very grave, and the Scriptures use a very serious word: command.

The word most often translated command is from the Hebrew word sawah. The Renn Expository Dictionary describes its primary sense as "to enjoin, to give a charge, or to put in order." It further connotes a mandatory obligation to obedience and devotion as a strict requirement. The English word command means "to direct with authority or with urgent admonition, to give orders, or to dominate as if from an elevated position." These definitions help us to see that commanding is a very serious responsibility.

The military gives us a good example of this concept of command. There is a command structure with a chain of command. This clearly defines who may command whom. It makes clear the responsibilities of the commander and of those who are under his command. A private obeys his sergeant, who obeys his commanding officer. The commanding officer and sergeant expect immediate and thorough compliance to their orders.

Ideally, the soldier will develop respect for and trust in the authority of his superior. This will assist him in swift and complete obedience to orders. At times the tactical or strategic purposes behind these orders will not be fully understood. Nonetheless, they must be obeyed. More often than not, the orders will not be pleasant or comfortable to execute. Nonetheless, they must be obeyed. To successfully meet the strategic objectives of the highest commander, all commands must be immediately and thoroughly obeyed.

Swift and complete obedience is necessary for military and secular institutions to achieve their goals. It is just as needful for the eternal and spiritual objectives of our Lord. When the Lord gave Moses specific instructions to deliver to the people, He frequently used the phrase, "Command the children of Israel." This left no doubt that a mandatory and

unavoidable obligation had been assigned and that obedience was expected.

God has established a chain of command for the home. "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). This chain of command extends to children. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). We now see clearly the full command structure: God, Christ, father, mother, and children. Any attempt at tampering with this God-ordained hierarchy is folly. It is equally foolish to neglect the responsibilities that we as parents have been called to fulfill.

We must require our children to obey our commands. If we fail in this area, we will fail to instill in them a proper sense of accountability to authority. This sense of accountability is critical for children. It will serve them well for their earthly lives and for eternity. We are preparing them to respond to God's call. They will need to understand their accountability before God and receive Christ as their Saviour.

The Bible records many examples of parents fulfilling or neglecting this responsibility. Eli was a priest and judge of Israel, yet his own sons were "sons of Belial." As young men, priests no less, they were guilty of dreadful public sins. Eli was properly appalled at their transgressions and confronted them. His rebuke was ineffective, for "they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them" (1 Samuel 2:25). Eli had neglected to require obedience of these sons from their childhood. He was so derelict in his duties that the Lord had to "judge his house ... because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Samuel 3:13).

Timothy was a faithful Christian leader and a fellow missionary with the apostle Paul. Little is recorded of his early life, but he must have been commanded well as a child. His mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois were faithful Christians. They nurtured and instructed Timothy in the faith from his earliest years. His faithful life yielded good fruit that all parents would desire to see in their children.

Abraham was commended by the Lord with these words: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (Genesis 18:19). This tribute was not based on Abraham's teaching of doctrine, theory, or head knowledge. By His omniscience, God knew that Abraham would "command his children" (require obedience with authority). His posterity would then be able to "keep the way of the LORD" (be fervent in

spirit and devout in worship). Abraham's children were to "do justice and judgment" (live righteously, love mercy, walk humbly). These are the very same things we wish for our children today. Abraham's example shows us the way.

"Command the children of Israel." This was God's way with His chosen people. To his credit, it was Abraham's purposeful habit with his own household. Parents, it must also be our way today.

Let us faithfully follow this example and rely on the Lord's indispensable help.

May God receive the glory and may others be able to testify, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father" (2 John 4).

Brother Miles.



"Remove Not the Ancient Landmark"

"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Proverbs 22:28). Earlier, God had also given this instruction to Israel: "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance" (Deuteronomy 19:14). With these commands, God in wisdom provided for the peace, prosperity, and preservation of the families of Israel.

These landmarks were usually a stone, a stake, a tree, or some other outstanding monument. Their purpose was to mark the boundaries of family plots of land. Their effectiveness was in their simplicity, durability, and immobility.

What was the value of such landmarks?

Palestine was divided by lot to the various tribes and families of Israel. By marking the borders of each tract of land, the landmarks made room for each family. They served to preserve a man's living, his life, or his home. Though generations came and went or vegetation altered the landscape, the landmarks were a silent yet constant reminder of things that did not change.

The landmarks also identified a heritage. Each succeeding generation of landholders was keenly aware that God was the provider of their lot. Thus, the land was a gift, a trust, and a heritage to be treasured as affirmed in the account of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21).

Landmarks enhanced rest and productivity since each generation did not need to resurvey the land or question whether they were tilling their own soil. Each generation could more easily pass on to their children what had been given to them.

"Who was concerned about landmarks?"

God was concerned. He viewed the land as a sacred trust. "Every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers" (Numbers 36:7). The eternal God was teaching Israel to appreciate things that do not change.

Parents were concerned. The portion of land allotted to them was often the greatest part of the natural heritage that they could pass on to their children. This concern had spiritual implications as well. "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Psalm 16:5, 6).

Spiritual young people were also concerned. Would a portion among the people of God be preserved for them and their offspring, or would it slowly erode? The blessing of God in basket and in store was a treasured part of their heritage.

What are some spiritual landmarks today?

Spiritual landmarks today also remind us of the principles and teachings of the Word of God. The Christian ordinances (outward ceremonies with spiritual meaning), the written standards of our church, and traditions that help to keep us separate from the world are all spiritual landmarks. Some specific examples would include church-prescribed garb such as the plain suit and the cape dress, dark-colored automobiles, semi-annual council and Communion services, congregational singing, and kneeling prayer in public worship.

Who is interested in these landmarks?

God wants His people to enjoy the stability of Biblical practices from generation to generation. Parents want their children to appreciate what they themselves have been taught. Young people do not want to lose their way by exchanging Scriptural, time-proven practices for a set of practices closer to the world. The elderly, who have seen the devastating effects of disregard for practices that have proven a blessing for many generations, are also concerned.

Why are we concerned about preserving spiritual landmarks?

Just as a traveler will also depend upon landmarks for his direction, so the Christian will depend upon spiritual ones for his guidance to heaven. In

observing these, he avoids the disorientation that follows when one takes a careless attitude toward time-proven applications to Scripture. It is much easier to keep a landmark in place than to try to reset it after it is lost.

It is also true that "way leads on to way." For example, church groups that have lost the vision for simple, basic education and have embraced higher education usually give up the Scriptural directives for ordination and move on to a salaried ministry as well. We want to "prove all things" and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). In doing so, we provide substance to the teachings we want our children to embrace.

How can spiritual landmarks be preserved today?

We preserve landmarks by respecting them. No plowman carelessly plows over a landmark and then looks back to see what happened. He rather aligns his furrow with it and tills the field accordingly. We do well to maintain respect for time-proven practices such as the plain hat and bonnet that have helped us to maintain separation from the world.

We preserve landmarks by reclarifying them at times. This is done by keeping our applications current. New forms of government handouts, modern means of communication, varying hairstyles, and the pressure for more recreation are examples of opportunities to reclarify the historical applications of the Word.

We preserve spiritual landmarks by reducing the threats to their well-being. Close Communion, godly courtship standards, and resistance to changing styles of headship veilings help to preserve the ordinances.

We preserve them by reviewing their purpose. "What mean ye by these stones?" is a question children still ask. When parents utilize such an opportunity to explain and to teach how the Bible applies today, they instill a fear of God and a respect for the landmarks He provides.

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her:
tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bul-
warks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it
to the generation following" Psalm 48:12-13.

Brother Jerry.



The Glory of the Cross.

A white cross on the peak of a steeple juts into the bright blue sky. An oak-grained cross is posted on the wall of a neatly decorated church. A small ornamental gold cross dangles from a delicate chain. These are a few symbolic representations of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. Although we would acknowledge some earthly beauty in these symbols, the cross as an instrument of cruel death was not glorious. Rather, glory resulted from the eternal work of Christ while on the cross.

A cross speaks of suffering, of giving up self, and of dying. Although bloodshed and death were a very essential part of the Old Testament sacrifices for pardon, little did the disciples expect it of Jesus. However, a few did anticipate His suffering and death. The wise men presented to Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Myrrh was used as a perfume for embalming. Simeon in the temple declared to Mary, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again for many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34, 35).

Jesus took His cross willingly. In the agony and sorrow of Gethsemane, He pled with the Father that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. But He committed His will to the Father as He prayed, "Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt"(Mark 14:36).

Jesus had submitted His will to the death of the cross. As He hung there and bore our sins in His body, He had compassion for the repentant thief, concern for His mother, and love for those who drove the nails. He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Although men nailed Him to the cross, they could not take His life. Rather, Jesus willingly laid it down (John 10:18).

Jesus took His cross voluntarily. He went to meet His betrayer in the Garden. The men coming to capture Him came with swords and staves as if they were chasing a thief. Yet Jesus had within His power more than twelve legions of angels that could have delivered Him from His enemies.

Jesus took His cross humbly. He meekly bore the rejection of His own people as they cried, "Crucify Him!" and asked for Barabbas in His stead. He endured the pain of the stripes on His back and the beating reed upon the crown of thorns on His head. He accepted the disrespectful spitting in His face and the shame of being undressed by those mocking Him. All this He experienced without any retaliation.

Is the glory starting to shine? As those that loved Jesus mourned and

teetered on the brink of giving up hope in their Messiah, the most marvelous thing happened. The perfect, innocent, sinless blood flowed that atoned for vile mankind. God was satisfied that it was just to forgive all mankind of all generations. The temple veil rent, and we now have a Daysman to stand between God and us.

This is only the beginning of the glory. As He lay in the tomb that was sealed with earthly power, another glory burst forth. On that marvelous resurrection morning, Jesus broke the chains of death as He rose from the dead. We now have a living Lord! Through Him we can be free from sin and have access to the Father. The victory of the resurrection promises new life and power as well as eternal life.

The battle is finished, the victory is won, and Satan has received His deathblow through the cross! The prophecies have been fulfilled. Another sacrifice for sin is not needed. This is everlasting glory!

What does the cross mean for us as Christ's followers? Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Self-denial is a very vital part of taking up the cross. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" appeal to our carnal nature and must be denied (1 John 2:16). The carnal living of society beckons our attention with its glamour and pleasure. But John further says, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." We must remember that the wages of lustful living is death, but the cross of self-denial delivers us from this death!

Dying to self must be a daily experience. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). As we put everything on the altar, we can be a living sacrifice that is pleasing to God.

The cross brings peace. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29, 30). Accepting the cross of meekness brings rest to our souls. Meekness absorbs the mistreatment of a world that at times despises us. Jesus said, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Mark 13:13).

Can we find joy in bearing the easy yoke of Christ, or do we chafe under it? Satan is continually presenting us with compromises to sidestep the cross. Let us be discerning of their outcomes. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

Cross bearing yields many blessings. Through Christ's power we can live above the reproach and bondage of sin. God blesses us with peace that

passes all understanding. We have fellowship with God personally and collectively within the brotherhood. We share in the holy ordinances. We claim the promises of God's children. Above all, we are joint heirs with Christ in the crown of the cross.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:9-10).

Brother David.



Church Committee Report

Publication Board Report

"The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Psalm 68:11). Truly, the work of publishing requires a great company. Ten years have passed since Eastern Mennonite Publications moved to Wood Corner Road. The building has met the needs very well. It serves as a bookstore, a warehouse, and a distribution center. It also provides a place for numerous meetings. A dozen committees function under the Publication Board. More than ten brethren serve in editorial work, and over two dozen help review publications before printing. Scores of people are involved in writing. The periodicals constantly need new articles and stories. Your volunteer submissions are welcome.

The Board recognizes the dearth of Spanish material in our church. Eastern Mennonite Publications works with Quetzaltenango Mennonite Publishers in Guatemala to meet these needs. The "Sendas Derechas" our Spanish periodical, has been a blessing. We plan to enlarge this work in the near future. The Mennonite Rationale for Church Discipline has been translated into Spanish and will be printed shortly. Other books in the translation or editing process include Lovers of the Truth, Godly Heroes of the Past, The Great Cloud of Witnesses, and Samantha's Gift.

Over the years, Eastern Mennonite Publications has helped Rod & Staff with numerous projects, especially school curriculum. Rod & Staff has an important place as a pioneer of conservative Mennonite publishing, and we

desire to continue to work together. Various joint meetings have been planned to keep the communication open. We realize the value of combined strengths, and anticipate working together.

Several new books will be printed soon. A Church for Charlotte tells of the beginning of a new congregation and one family's part in church building. Konrad's Choice recounts stories of suffering Christians from Anabaptist times into the twentieth century. The Little Farmer, a children's book, teaches safety for children on the farm. An Ordination Record Book gives details concerning the ordination of each brother who has served in the ministry of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church.

The bookstore also sells used books. These out-of-print books hold a wealth of Mennonite history. Books, although sometimes costly, are a worthwhile investment.

Thank you for your contribution to the publishing work of the church. Truth in its printed form is important to our church life. It involves many people.

The Word in its practiced form is even more important. It involves all people.

Brother Philip, for the Publication Board.



Ordering the Child (Part 5)

Moral Purity.

Is it possible for our children to safely cross the bridge from childhood into adulthood without moral regret? Is it realistic to expect our children to reach maturity with a pure life in the midst of a morally corrupt society? "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.... For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).

Discreet parental conduct fosters moral purity.

Parents must guard their expressions of intimate affection between each other. Children who observe an open display of affection between parents will develop a cheapened understanding of the sanctity and exclusiveness of marriage.

Safeguarding personal privacy shields moral purity.

Closed doors mean "stay out." Restrooms are used one at a time. Shared bedrooms demand discreet dressing habits. Children who learn to keep

their hands to themselves will respect the "personal zone" that every individual deserves, including their own peers.

Modesty enhances moral purity.

Our children are growing and so must their wardrobes. Trousers that do not accept hands in the pockets or dresses a size too small do not conceal the body form sufficiently. Girls must be taught to keep their dresses down and to avoid boyish antics. Boys must learn the habit of keeping the zippers up, the shirttails in, and the hair combed. Proper posture avoids the suggestive and is becoming to modesty.

Parental supervision protects moral purity.

When the cousins get together at Uncle Michael's place, wise fathers take a stroll occasionally, to observe the conduct of the group. Children should not be left at home in the care of siblings for extended periods of time even when parents are gone on worthy causes. And children's conduct and whereabouts after church require monitoring.

Guarding the pipeline preserves moral purity.

Parents can help to satisfy the natural curiosity by explaining some details about the facts of life. But too little knowledge is usually safer than too much information too soon. A child's questions need to be directed to parents and not to friends. Newspapers should be screened or eliminated. Children's eyes need to be trained away from unwholesome sights along the highways. And parents must tune an ear to the nature of children's discussions with their friends.

Satan has a tremendous ally in the fallen nature of our children. But God has an even greater ally in the conscience of a child who has been nurtured in the truths of moral purity. Dear parents, you have a strategic place to fill in this momentous nurturing process! Moral purity is a necessary ingredient for our children to realize the promise of "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

Brother Philip. (end of series)



Conviction

God, through His Word, had revealed to me
That in my heart there some change must be ...
But self-defense filled me through and through
And I dared asked, "What shall this man do?
For his misdeed is much worse than mine;
To others it surely mine outshines."

Then God, in love, through His Holy Word
Spoke instantly to my heart. I heard:
"What that man's done, what is that to thee?
What you have done—It is known to Me!
I've shown you light on the path ahead,
And it's the way you will have to tread
If you will stay walking in My Light
And not be found in the dark of night.
Take heed, my child, lest the light you know
Will cease to shine and the darkness grow."

I struggled long. (Oh, my foolish will
Would not give up, wanted my way still.)
But, oh, what sweet, undeserved, rich peace
Came flooding in when in full release
My heart cried out, "Oh, forgive me, Lord!
I want my life to uphold Your Word!
Give strength to walk in the light that's shown,
To walk the way that You have made known.
Regardless what other folks may do,
Keep me, O Lord, faithful unto You.
Your precious light keep within my soul
So I each day will Your Name extol."

Sister D. B.