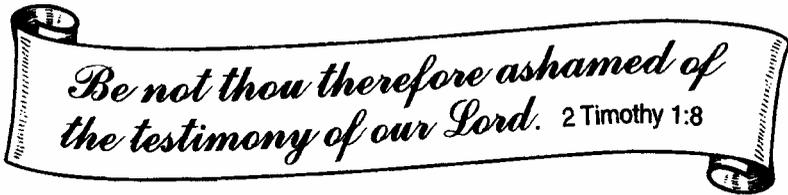


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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Editorial.

Relating to Political Change

During the recent elections much emphasis was placed on the supposed desirability of change. The results of the election were heralded as evidence that society desires change.

Some of the changes being contemplated present challenges to our convictions and the Scriptural applications we make. As we reflect on our changing times and the challenges that we may face, we do well to consider Bible principles regarding the way we relate to government.

Christ's "kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Although decisions made by the kingdoms of this world sometimes do adversely affect the people of God, the believer is not a part of these kingdoms. Their affairs are not the believer's affairs; we are part of the kingdom of our God.

Rather than involving ourselves in the affairs of earthly kingdoms, we are called to present the Gospel message of salvation to the world and to exemplify the power of the Gospel by the lives that we live. We should not have the reputation of being critical of the government and its policies.

God "ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4:17). In sovereignty, God sets up whomsoever

He will to accomplish His purposes. He uses nations to uphold law and order locally, nationally, and internationally, and He is pleased when evil is curbed in a nation. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

As believers, we should find rest in the realization that God is accomplishing His purposes among the nations even when it seems that sin is prevailing. We cannot know what His immediate purposes are, but we surely know that He is on the throne and that His sovereign purposes are being accomplished.

God always provides "a way to escape" for His people (1 Corinthians 10:13). "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1). Sometimes that escape is through death (Acts 12:2); at other times, the deliverance is miraculous (Acts 12:8-10). Still other times, it is through the favor of the king (Nehemiah 1, 2).

Even when government seems favorably disposed toward God's people, a line of tension exists between the government and Christ's kingdom because of their conflicting goals. The current discussions on issues such as government-mandated health insurance simply accentuate those differences. Indeed we may need to contact authorities concerning our con-

victions on issues such as these.

However, we can have the confidence that God will make a way for us, though it may be costly.

We should pray 'for kings, and for all that are in authority,' that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:2). It is our duty to pray for our government rather than to monitor and criticize it.

Our daily prayers should include thanksgiving to the Lord for the freedom of worship that we enjoy. We should pray for those in authority that we might continue to enjoy those privileges, if it is the Lord's will. We should also pray for the salvation of our rulers.

We should "honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17) and "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Mark 12:17). The call to honor the king is unconditional. It is not ours to decide whether or not government leaders are worthy of that honor. It is significant that the command to honor the king was written at a time when the Roman Caesars were very wicked. Some of them severely persecuted the early

Christians.

We should speak respectfully of our government leaders even if they make our situation more difficult. The titles we use in referring to them should reflect this respect. We should pay our taxes without complaining, even though they may seem to be high, or to be used wastefully or for detrimental purposes. We should also honor our rulers by obeying their laws, unless those laws demand disobedience to the Scriptures (Acts 5:29).

Will the current change in government administration result in a further breakdown of conscience in society? Will the offers of government handouts increase? Will we face health insurance mandates in the future? We do not know the answers to these questions, but we do know that God is still on His throne above all (Ezekiel 1:26-28).

Whatever tests we face, God will provide a way for us to remain faithful to Him. For us, the question is, "Will we remain faithful to our Lord who has promised to provide a way for us?"

—GEA



The Doctrine of Personal Accountability

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

Man is answerable to God for his decisions and actions. This accountability was introduced to man soon after his creation. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Personal accountability is not a choice; it is an inescapable fact. As an accountable being, man was given the power of choice and the responsibility to make many choices. However, he does not choose whether or not he is accountable. "Every one of us shall give account." In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve could choose to eat or not to eat, but they could not choose whether or not they would give account to God for their choice.

Satan seeks to delude man into thinking that accountability can be avoided. What are some of the delusions to which man falls prey as he seeks to deny his accountability?

The false accusation that God's requirements are impossible for man to fulfill.

Fallen man reasons that God exacts more of man than what He knows man can do; therefore, it is not required of him. This reasoning fails to recognize that God has made a way for man to fulfill his accountability before God.

The delusion that because the appeals to the senses are natural, they are permissible.

Satan proposes that, because God created the senses, these appetites are natural. Thus, he deceptively suggests that we are not accountable for following these desires. We need to remember that man always had the choice of sinning and that the Fall perverted man's senses so that he is now driven by lust. We need to have our senses exercised by the Word to discern between good and evil.

The deceptive effort to shift blame.

This effort to shift blame began in the Garden of Eden. When the Spirit says, "Hast thou eaten?" or "What is this that thou hast done?" we are tempted to shift blame to those about us and to our circumstances. In attempting to shift the blame, accountability is not evaded; rather, self-deception is being practiced. Examples of self-deception are often evident in child training. Too often excuses are made for disobedience. When an individual chooses wrong, those

wrong choices sometimes are blamed on heredity or environment. Yet God clearly proclaims that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" and that we are accountable to Him regardless of our heredity or environment.

The deception of evolution.

"For 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." Creation reminds us that, since man has a Creator, he is accountable to Him. Removing the recognition of God as Creator darkens man's vision and conscience. Although man's foolish heart is darkened, his accountability to his Creator yet remains.

How can we maintain our sense of personal accountability?

By recognizing that our choices are not neutral.

We are accountable for the deeds done in the body whether they are good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). There is no neutral ground; all of our actions need to honor God.

By trusting the justice of God.

When we are tempted to think that God is unfair, we should say as Abraham did, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" If there is any question of inequality, it is on our part, not God's. Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" (Ezekiel 18:29).

By heeding the voice of the Spirit of God rather than hiding from it (Genesis 3:8-13).

If we flee from His voice and presence, we are seeking to evade accountability. When we come to the light, our deeds can be made manifest.

By being honest with ourselves in trying the spirits.

Because many perversions of truth exist today, we must sincerely desire the truth in order to maintain our sense of accountability. If our heart is not sincere, we will invariably find ways to bypass the truth.

By sensing our accountability to a Scriptural brotherhood.

Our accountability to God includes an accountability to our spiritual brethren. We must be open to the concerns and direction of our brethren.

By being cautious of new names and remedies for sin.

God lists the works of the flesh and also the remedy. These works need to be crucified and our lives brought under the control of His Spirit so that His fruit can be manifested in our lives.

Today the works of the flesh are not referred to by society as sin; rather they are viewed as areas for personal development. The supposed remedies for man to gain control of himself and his actions are things such as transcendental meditation, positive thinking, and

even daily nutritional products. We need to be cautious that these false claims do not undermine our recognition of our accountability to God.

By remembering that all men will give account to God.

Although society denies personal accountability, it will not be avoided. 'As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God' (Romans 14:11). Only those who

truly sense their personal accountability to God will be able to give account to God in that day with joy and not with grief. Men's accounts will then stand in eternity as they did at the end of their lives here on earth. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11).

Bro. David, PA



Understanding Temptation

Temptation is Satan's appeal for us to join his side in the high-stakes conflict of the ages. Unfortunately, he has had significant success in his endeavor. Hopefully, the following thoughts and Scriptures will reinforce our allegiance to God, the predetermined Victor of the conflict.

God created Lucifer as a perfectly beautiful cherub. However, in that pure, celestial atmosphere, Lucifer, growing heady and ambitious, asserted, "I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:14). He then became the first illustration of "pride [going] before destruction,

and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Ever since he fell from his first estate, Satan has vied for man's allegiance because any success in this diabolic effort is a stab at his sovereign Creator.

Temptation began with our first mother. Satan studied her vulnerabilities, crafted his seduction, and raised the question, "Yea, hath God said?" (Genesis 3:1). In the account of this first temptation, several things become apparent.

Satan is subtle! He is a master of deception and disguise. A chameleon can change colors to disguise himself. But Satan, the roaring lion

who goes to and fro in the earth, seeking whom he may devour, can transform himself into an angel of light (1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 11:14)! He can change his appearance from a bloodthirsty stalker to an illuminating guide! As the father of lies, each of his methods involves some element of untruth as he seeks to convince his prey to forsake God. He promised Eve a desirable enlightenment, but instead she received condemnation and the curse of death. With this sort of treachery the human soul is bought and brought to eternal death.

Man is vulnerable. Just as Eve heard Satan's talk, so we hear Satan's voice on the daily battlefield: "It's just a little thing." "You deserve .." "Just this once." "What will people think?" "Look at what you can do!" Our inherited sinful nature is all too alert to these suggestions and myriad others like them. Each of these attacks of Satan necessitates the crucifixion of the old man. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). In the rush of passion, in the weariness of the day, in the unguarded moment of "strength," we

are vulnerable.

Man has a choice in the time of temptation.

Both Adam and Eve chose to ignore God's mandates. And the pages that follow Genesis 3 tell the tale of human failure in the time of temptation. But they also tell of the triumphs of the loyal! They also tell how God sovereignly monitors man's ability to bear temptation, how He establishes the boundaries within which His archenemy is allowed to function, and how He provides the way to escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The Scriptures urge us to give no place to the devil and to distance ourselves from the paths of his people. "Enter not into the path of the wicked.... Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Proverbs 4:14, 15). Applying these Scriptures will downscale the battle so that victory is more readily achieved. Upon our choices in times of temptation hinges the eternal destiny of our souls. Will that destiny be the lake of fire with the devil and his angels or the bliss of heaven, where sin, Satan, and temptation are forever banished?

Bro. Daryl, PA

Yield Not To Temptation

Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;
Each vict'ry will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward; dark passions subdue;
Look ever to Jesus—He will carry you through.

To him that o'ercometh God giveth a crown;
Thro' faith we shall conquer, though often cast down;
He who is our Saviour our strength will renew;
Look ever to Jesus—He will carry you through.

Ask the Saviour to help you,
Comfort, strengthen, and keep you;
He is willing to aid you,
He will carry you through.

—*Horatio R. Palmer*



Transmitting Unfeigned Faith

Transmitting natural things has often become as easy as pressing a button or voicing a command. By contrast, transmitting unfeigned faith has not become easier; perhaps it has become even more difficult in this time of ease and prosperity.

Unfeigned faith is not hypocritical or fabricated; it is a genuine faith that expresses itself in all of life. "Let us lay aside every weight,

and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

Our unfeigned faith is revealed as we respond to the promises of the Gospel and receive forgiveness of sins through grace. It is further expressed as we put on the new man and overcome sin by the power of

the Spirit (2 Peter 1:3-8). Outward manifestations of unfeigned faith include nonconformity to the world, daily self-denial, holiness of life, and proclaiming the Gospel to others.

In the truest sense of its meaning, we cannot transmit the faith because embracing the faith is an individual choice. However, we as parents should be burdened that we are doing what we can to enable the oncoming generations to embrace the faith. Timothy's mother and grandmother are examples of those who did this (2 Timothy 1:5). Abraham is another example for us. God's testimony of Abraham was, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD" (Genesis 18:19).

Although times do change, the requirements for transmitting unfeigned faith do not change. What characteristics in Abraham's life enabled him to transmit the faith?

Obedience to God's call for separation. When God called Abraham to leave his homeland, Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken" (Genesis 12:1-4). This call took him away from the accepted and comfortable lifestyle of his contemporaries, resulting in a simple life—living in tents. We also need to obey God's call of separation from the modern world to live simply and sacrificially. Finery, an

easy lifestyle, and the conveniences of technology can hinder our efforts to reproduce the faith and our desire to inspire our children to look "for a city which bath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

Worship as an integral part of life. Abraham was a man of worship; wherever he went, he usually built an altar to the Lord. Worship reveals the values that are in our hearts. If we are sincere in our worship, our entire life will reflect the depth of our worship.

Personal and family worship need to be times of learning of the things of God, of praising and thanking Him, and of communing with Him in prayer. Our children should hear us pray daily for guidance and for individual members of the family and the challenges they face. They should also hear us praying for safety each day and thanking God for our daily gifts, such as health, food, clothing, and freedom. When embarking on trips, our children should know that we first pause and pray, and when facing major decisions, that we toil in prayer. We too must sense our need for the unchanging hand of God as Moses did when he pled, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Exodus 33:15).

A life that exemplifies faith.

Abraham, by faith, moved from his homeland and sojourned in the

land of promise. At God's command, He offered up Isaac, believing by faith that God would raise him from the dead (Hebrews 11:19).

We transmit the faith best as we, by God's grace, express it in all areas of our lives. This faith is practiced when we entrust our possessions to God rather than buy insurance. Faith is lived as we trust God and do not accept government aid of any kind. It is shown when we trust God to provide as we suffer material losses or are encumbered by high medical expenses.

Faith is also expressed as we prayerfully respond to the Lord's calls. This may include sharing in street meetings or moving to a new outreach congregation. Faith is shown as we answer the call of the church to teach school, to go to the mission field, or to teach Sunday school or Bible school as the Lord leads.

Spiritual communication with our children.

As Abraham and his beloved son traveled toward Mount Moriah, they talked together of the worship they were about to experience. As parents, we need to discuss with our children questions concerning spiritual matters--our beliefs and our way of life. We need to help them understand God's way of ho-

liness and His requirements for man. As we communicate regularly, our children are encouraged to confide in us the questions and struggles they face. As they choose the help of faithful parents, they learn the way of faith. When clear answers cannot be given, we need to seek the will of the Lord together in prayer.

Guidance in courtship decisions.

Abraham gave direction in choosing a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24:1-9). Spiritual parents recognize that marriage will either enhance or weaken faith. We should be concerned that our children's friends and those with whom they desire courtship are giving evidence of embracing the faith. We need to be giving direction both in the initiation of courtship and in the establishment of courtship practices and standards.

Unfeigned faith is the choice of each individual and cannot be transmitted without the choice of the rising generation. However we, as parents, play a great part in making the life of faith appear attractive. As we continue to be faithful, our children will be challenged to faithfully follow us as we follow after God.

Bro. Jay, PA



"In Quietness and Confidence"

In quietness and confidence shall be your daily strength,
What peace and joy this promise brings to weary hearts, at length!

We feel so weak and prone to sin; the tempter's power is strong.
But still we struggle on in faith and triumph over wrong.

Some days we wonder how we'll face another battle sore.
'Tis then we plead to God for grace and, yes, He gives us more.

When great responsibility would strive to weigh us down,
The eye of faith keeps pressing on toward the victor's crown.

Though others seem to far surpass the things that we can do,
It's then we must remember that the Father needs us too.

No matter what the struggle is, no matter what the test,
We find down deep within our hearts His everlasting rest.

In quietness and confidence ... yes, every day we find
By trusting in our Father's strength, our burdens stay behind.

—Sister Rhoda

"For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15).



*Gleanings From
Anabaptist/Mennonite History*

**Personal Testimony of One of the
Swiss Brethren-1538**

While yet in national [Reformed] church we obtained much instruction from the writings of Luther, Zwingli, and others concerning the mass and other papal ceremonies, that they are vain. Yet we recognized a great lack as regards repentance, conversion, and the true Christian life. Upon these things my mind was bent. I waited and hoped for a year or two, since the minister had much to say of amendment of life, of giving to the poor, loving one another, and abstaining from evil. But I could not close my eyes to the fact that the doctrine which was preached and which was based on the Word of God, was not carried out. No beginning was made toward true Christian living, and there was no unison in the teaching concerning things that were necessary. And although the mass and the images were finally abolished, true repentance and Christian love were not in evidence. Changes were made only as concerned external things. This gave me occasion to inquire further into these matters. Then God sent His messengers, Conrad Grebel and others, with whom I conferred about the fundamental teachings of the apostles and the Christian life and practice. I found them men who had surrendered themselves to the doctrine of Christ by Bussfertigkeit (penitence and contrition). With their assistance we established a congregation in which repentance was in evidence by newness of life in Christ.

—*John Horsch, Mennonites in Europe, 2nd ed.* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1950; reprint, Crockett, Ky.: Rod and Staff Publishers, 1995), pp. 343, 344.

PRAYER POINTS.

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

✚ Thank the Lord for His faithfulness during the past year. Pray for direction and blessing during 2009.

✚ Pray for those who have been taught the truth but have chosen what they believe is an easier path to heaven.

Beatitude Series (Part 7) "Blessed Are the Peacemakers"

Do you remember as a child running to your mother with the complaint that your brother was fighting you? Do you remember how frustrating her reply was, "It takes two to fight"? This reality does not stop with childhood. Most people will laud the virtues of peacemaking until their own rights are affected.

Talk of peace is circulating all over this globe—in schools, churches, homes, and nations. In fact, peace is probably a more popular subject today than it ever was. But not many want to pay the price of peace. Not many are willing to say, "You may play with this now" or "We don't need to do it my way this time" or "I'm sorry, I was wrong" or "I see what you're trying to tell me." Thomas à Kempis, the fifteenth-century author of *Imitation of Christ*, said, "All men desire peace, but very few desire those things that make for peace."

To truly become a peacemaker, we must first of all have an inner peace that comes through the Prince of Peace. As we know this inner peace, we will be prepared to pay the price for peace.

So what is this price of peace that so few are willing to pay? If the peacemaker had mottos to live by, I think these would be two of them. Be willing to apologize. "Confess your faults one to another" (James 5:16). The number of times a genuine apology has brought peace is

large. The number of times that a refusal to apologize has fed strife is probably larger.

Always seek to be redemptive. There may be times when we know our relationship with an individual is poor, but we do not know what is wrong. What should we do then? Often there is no easy answer. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city" (Proverbs 18:19). A private discussion with the aggrieved brother may be what is needed to gain him (Matthew 18:15). Also, the brother's awareness that we desire his help may go a long way toward winning him.

It is possible to overemphasize peacemaking. Jesus said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). If our desire to be at peace with all men keeps us from telling our neighbor the truth about sin and its eternal consequences, it is unscriptural. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable" (James 3:17). Telling our neighbor the truth is seeking his eternal peace.

"For they shall be called the children of God." This is the blessing pronounced upon the peacemaker. This blessing goes far beyond the evaluation of our friends and neighbors because they cannot see if there is iniquity in our hearts. But if God, who knows all things, calls us His sons and daughters, that is overwhelming reward. —*Bro. Stephen*



*Another year is dawning,
Dear Father, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year with Thee;
Another year of progress,
Another year of praise,
Another year of proving
Thy presence all the days.
—Frances R Havergal*

