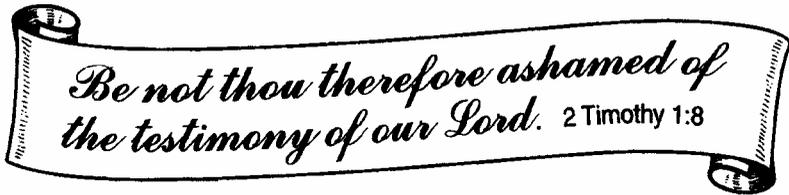


# THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA MENNONITE CHURCH  
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Some people believe that the prescription drug system is a scheme to keep patients reliant on doctors and pharmaceutical companies. Could it be possible that the oil producers and auto makers cooperate to keep anyone from marketing a vehicle capable of high fuel mileage? Some blame the government for starting the swine flu as a population control measure. We should "try the spirits" of reports such as these. Eve's gullible acceptance of Satan's conspiracy theory was fatal.

Conspiracy theories are at times proven to be factual. Hitler really did conspire to conquer and control the world. So did the Communists, and so does Islam. Satan has conspired to overthrow God! However, we should not live under the spell of his fear. Confidence in our sovereign God moderates our perspective of evil threats.

Conspiracy theories sometimes arise due to man's impulse to fix blame for life's distressing problems. Why do we become ill? Why does the gas price rise? False accusations have been perpetuated, at times, to pass blame from one's own failures. Nero blamed the Christians for burning Rome to shift the attention from his own accountability.

Conspiracy theories usually enjoy a receptive audience. Bad news is believed more readily than the good. The gossip grapevine thrives on juicy morsels of suspicion. Contempt and suspicion of those in authority or position strike a resonant chord with our rebellious nature.

Conspiracy theories often incite rebellion. Does political corruption affect our responsibility to honor and obey the king? Since the devil discredits God by inciting rebellion against the leaders of God, we must be suspicious of negative accusations against them. "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses" (1 Timothy 5:19). Those who rebel against the direction of authority often attempt to vindicate themselves by criticism of the authority. An appreciation for the correction and discipline of God and the church safeguards us from the devil's slander.

Conspiracy theories prey on fear. The threat of Communism in the 1960s made some young couples wonder if it was wise to raise a family. Such fear weakens us but faith sparks courage. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). God is in control.

Conspiracy theories often go beyond the realm of innocent controversy. An obsession to communicate the sensational is selfish. It is wrong to carelessly believe an evil report that we have not adequately researched. Disrespect, rebellion, and bitterness can take root and persist on unfounded information. Our attitude toward authority will affect our mentality about God. If we habitually question the intentions of the authorities in our life, we will eventually, as Eve, doubt the goodness of God.

Conspiracy theories find a seedbed in our carnal tendencies. A lack of integrity will result in suspicion of others' motives. A root of bitterness makes us very vulnerable to accept evil reports. Rich fools are easily ignited with the fire of protectionism if their empire is endangered. Gloomy preoccupation with the injustices of life, even if true, will rob us of thankfulness for our liberties and freedoms. We choose whether to count blessings or brood over injustices.

To avoid deception, we must screen all new ideas with the filter of God's Word. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). We should encourage and nurture a logical mentality in our children that questions the validity of sensational reports. They should be held accountable for repeating unfounded negative information. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good"(1 Thessalonians 5:21). Is it innocent to believe a lie? It is especially serious when we, for carnal reasons, are inclined to believe a lie.

The mind is the battleground of the soul. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). —BAS



***THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH (PART 2)***  
***THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCH***

In order to fulfill her mission of edification and evangelism, the church needs Biblical administration. It is impossible to uphold a uniform practice based on the New Testament pattern without an authority structure. "For

God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Let us consider some Biblical concepts of administration.

Christ is the Head of the church. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18). He is sovereign. His body, the church, is His servant. Our leader and our guide is the Holy Ghost. Jesus promised that "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13).

God has ordained human leadership for administration in the church. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11, 12). The leaders of the church are both under-shepherds and overseers. They are directly accountable to the Chief Shepherd.

They are also subject to their fellow workers. They must be sensitive to the counsel and concern of the brotherhood. They serve both God and the church.

However, God has not designed church administration as a democracy. Democracy is government of the people, by the people, and for the people. This leaves no room for a divinely chosen leader. The congregation does not elect its leaders. Because God invests leadership authority in man through ordination, church leaders are His representatives. They must have this delegated authority if they are to effectively administrate and give an account for the spiritual welfare of the church.

Administration requires able leaders. The books of Timothy and Titus contain qualifications and instruction for church leaders. "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5). The church needs men who are able and willing to feed the flock with the pure Word of God. Shepherds are required to make decisions for the long-range good of the flock. This calls for men who will discipline from hearts of love and spiritual concern.

Adequate organization is also required for effective administration. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:28). Structure and order are evident in God's creation and works. Israel's journeying and camping

had a prescribed order and plan. God established an orderly approach to administration through Moses.

Organization clarifies the lines of responsibility. It enables the work of the church to be accomplished without confusion and chaos. The apostle Paul and his coworkers knew the value of organization. They exercised their authority to ordain elders in every church. It is imperative that qualified individuals be chosen to assist in the duty and responsibility of the work.

Working together requires organization, and unless we work together, the church cannot function. Organization helps to curb our native independent tendencies. It draws us together as we labor for a common cause.

The New Testament pattern involved a conferring relationship among congregations. Church function and fellowship extended beyond the local assembly. Churches cooperated in sending relief funds to Jerusalem during a famine. They wrote letters one to another and received one another's preachers (1 Corinthians 16:10-18).

Organization contributes to an ongoing harmonious relationship between congregations. Convictions and regulations are shared and strengthened. A clearly defined standard of faith and practice limits variation between congregations. Unity of administration aids in the redemption of disciplined members.

Scriptural administration safeguards the church against heresy in these perilous times. "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). The spirit of Diotrephes, "who loveth to have the preeminence," must be kept out. Organization is a safeguard against individualism and encourages accountability to the body.

While it is true that organization can be mishandled or corrupted, this in no way discounts its value. Administration must follow consistent procedures. Traditional practice gives a sense of direction to the issues of our day. A written discipline helps administration to be consistent.

If consistent administration is so vital to spiritual church life, why does it tend to wane? The battle to maintain a pure church does not diminish. Leaders are tempted to weary of the increased pressure that they face in these last days. Compromise to satisfy human reasoning and carnal desires ends in frustration. The practice that leaders tolerate becomes the norm.

We must guard against the liberal tendency to ignore personal accountability for life and conduct. This attitude will lead to anarchy. On the other hand, we must avoid legalism, which insists on emphasizing

technicalities to the extent that spiritual sensitivity is quenched. This will lead to formalism.

It is important for the church to respect the administration. This is shown by an appreciation for church direction. Congregations and local leadership must heed the voice of the broader conference.

The blessings of Biblical administration are bountiful. It provides a measure of security as we face the perplexing issues of our day. It enhances the spiritual life of the individual believer. It is also a foretaste of being in the presence of God's perfect administration when we will stand before His throne.

*Brother Dennis.*



## *"See That Ye Be Not Troubled"*

Jesus gave this warning in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. It is part of Jesus' response to the disciples' questions concerning the future. From the context it seems clear to us—though likely unclear to the disciples at that time—that several events are in focus. The first question, "When shall these things be?" refers to the words just spoken by Jesus concerning the pending destruction of Jerusalem. The question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" relates to a more distant happening. We now look back nearly two thousand years to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, while yet looking forward to the coming of Christ and the end of the world.

In this rapid outline of the future, the facts concerning these events are woven together and not easily distinguished one from another. Furthermore, several of Jesus' predictions which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem also apply as signs of Christ's coming and the end of the world. What troubled the disciples can disturb our peace. And so, these comforting words of Christ, "See that ye be not troubled," are relevant to us today. The prophecies will come to pass, but they need not cause despair or bring crippling fear. What are some of the circumstances to which Jesus referred that could trouble us?

***Be not troubled with the possibility of deception*** (Matth.24:5, 11-12 &24). Jesus taught that the evil one will attempt to deceive many, including the

very elect. The "angel of light" is not merely content with gaining the casual or the carnal Christian—he may already have such—but is wilily pursuing the sincerely fervent Christian. The Lord says to us, as He said to His beloved Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat." The spiritual casualties that our generation has witnessed render an "amen" to Christ's prophecy concerning deception.

***Be not troubled with war and unrest among nations*** (Matth.24:7). One look at the ravages and ruins of past wars is dismal. The peace and quietness Americans enjoy today could so quickly be shattered. Would our youth withstand the pressures of a draft and endure as true conscientious objectors? Political upheavals of any nature are potentially unsettling.

***Be not troubled with natural calamities and extremities*** (Matth.24:7). Every generation has stories to tell of those who lost houses, possessions, and loved ones to natural disasters. No one in any place is immune to such threats. Some areas are suffering from drought and low water tables while others are coping with flood damage.

Unpredictable earthquakes and plagues of disease epidemics are also very present concerns.

***Be not troubled with hostility and persecution*** (Matth.24:9-10). Our flesh recoils at the thought of being disliked, especially when that ill will becomes active. Jesus plainly states that some will be afflicted, hated, and even killed, because of living for Him. Our generation in this country has known little of this, but this atmosphere could change. The occasional breezes of ill will today could become forceful winds of antagonism tomorrow. Christians and Jews will be especially targeted.

***Be not troubled with the unknown future*** (Matth.24:42). It is obvious from Jesus' words to His disciples that He could not disclose to them the exact time of His coming. He sufficiently informed them and us to give us an understanding of the times—yet our grasp is limited. Recently a news article, reflecting on the suffering in the Middle East, quoted one person's words, "The unknown is the worst feeling we have."

Having noticed circumstances that could be troubling, we will shift now to the positive side of Jesus' words to His disciples.

Be not troubled, because there is a way to be ready (Matth.24:44). If we are prepared to meet our Lord, we need not fear His coming or the events that mark His coming. God has made provision, through Christ, that we can be ready and stay ready for His return.

Perhaps the most effective means to call the church to constant watchfulness and readiness is for her Lord to leave undetermined the precise time of

His return. The faithful church in every generation has thus endeavored to keep her hands busy, her heart faithful, her face upward, and her ears straining for the trumpet sound. We should be aware that the time is short and that our Lord may return at any moment. We must guard against thinking, "My lord delayeth his coming." That which calls us to carefulness, however, has become to the world the occasion for carelessness and practical unbelief of the coming judgment (Matth.24-50).

***Be not troubled, because there will be an end*** (Matth.24:13). The trials and battles of this life will not last forever. "Time [will be] no longer" and the "mystery of God shall be finished" (Rev.10:6-7). The Scriptures depict the afflictions of this life as light and not worthy to be compared with the glory hereafter.

***Be not troubled, because there will be a remnant*** (Matth.24:13). One can endure, and some shall endure and be saved! While the evil one is set to destroy "the very elect" (24:24), God is working "for the elect's sake" (Matth.24:22). He will not allow the days of evil to be longer or stronger than we can endure. Without this hedge of providence, "there should no flesh be saved." Endurance is possible! Through Christ we can overcome the accuser of the brethren by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:10-11). We can be among those who are cleansed and kept through Him. Praise His Name!

***Be not troubled, because we have the Word of God*** (Matth.24:14). God has given us the Gospel to guide our lives. We also have the Old Testament witness. The prophecies of Daniel (Matth.24:15) and the days of Noah (Matth.24:32) are both mentioned as aids to help us discern the times. God does not want His people to be ignorant, but wise and circumspect in the midst of a generation given to sensual living.

We can cling to the promises. "Peace I leave with you" and "Let not your heart be troubled" (John14:27) are realities through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. For every potentially troubling situation, God gives a reassuring answer of calm from the Scriptures.

***Be not troubled, because a blessing awaits the faithful*** (Matth.24:45-46). We taste of His blessing today, but much more awaits the faithful servant. We look forward to being part of the gathering of the elect (Matth.24:31). As we see the fulfillment of Christ's prophecies in our time, let us "be not troubled"; rather, let us "look up ... for [our] redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28)!

*Brother Kervin.*



## **Keys to Healthy Interpersonal Relationships (Part 2)**

### **Friendly Consideration Mennonite Testimony**

"Good morning," Dale greeted as he opened the door for Brother Henry. "Good morning," Henry returned with a smile. With his cane, he stepped through the door. Likely you have experienced the privilege of brightening the day of an aged brother or sister. In our Western society, men tend to speed past each other, beeping and bumping as they go. Without conscious effort to radiate divine love, we also fall into the trap of rudeness.

Regardless of our age, we should cultivate friendly consideration. 'A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother' (Proverbs 18:24). Consideration for others is taught best in the home. It will then bless our school, church, and society. Friendly consideration is a universal language understood by every race. How is this grace expressed in daily life?

The Golden Rule should guide our daily actions and conversation. "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). We are called to treat fellow men with the same goodwill that we desire. What is our response when others make mistakes? Do we enjoy repeating them to others at their expense? The snare of gossip divides relationships. 'A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends' (Proverbs 16:28). Our responses should be measured by the Golden Rule.

Forbearance is a virtue that friends extend. We accept passing criticism and frank rebukes from friends we know. We should not suspect wrong motives lurking behind every word and action of others. It is considerate to not take others' comments personally but to view them as shared with goodwill. If we consistently relate to others with goodwill, we will find it natural to view the help of others in the same light.

Brotherly aid strengthens relationships. It is easy in the bustle of life to allow our schedules to revolve around ourselves. Others may have needs greater than our own! Visiting in each other's homes provides opportunity to share the joys and challenges of the Christian life. Spending time together alerts us to opportunities of lending a helping hand. "Two are better than one.... For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10). Showing hospitality brings joy when it includes everyone rather than just our family or those with whom we share common interests.

Common courtesies oil the gears of relationships. We should seek to cul-

tivate a friendly disposition. "Good morning" brings cheer, "I am sorry" heals wounds, and "Pardon me" releases one from being rude. Proper etiquette is a seemingly small, yet imperative, aspect of relationships.

When small kindnesses are neglected, misunderstandings result, but friendly consideration will pave the path to accept the bumps of life.

*Brother Mark.*



### PRAYER POINT

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

*Pray for those in Haiti who have lost loved ones,  
homes, and other necessities of life in the recent earthquake.*

*Pray for others who are facing heavy trials  
that they will come forth as gold.*

*Thank God for His love and mercy in providing for our salvation.  
Pray for the revival services that are planned for this spring.*

*Pray for those who do not know Jesus as their Savior and Lord.*



*Who was asked?  
"Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them?"*