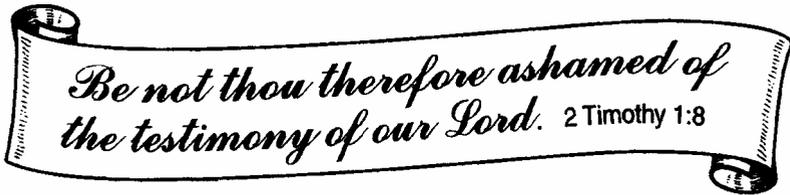


# THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

SELECTED ARTICLES FROM THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION  
OF  
THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA MENNONITE CHURCH  
MARCH 2012



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](http://anabaptistmennonites.org).

The apostle Paul was willing to spend (to serve at his own expense) and to be completely spent (to exhaust his resources for the church). Christ's kingdom has always moved forward by those willing to devote themselves wholly to His work. "And I will very gladly spend and be spent" (2 Corinthians 12:15). As we look back on forty years of mission endeavors, this work has called us to commit our resources in faith to His work.

The March 1972 issue of this publication reported the arrival of two families into the San Juan area of Guatemala, where the Mennonite Messianic Mission had recently bought a small farm to establish a witness in a well-populated Indian community. This new work was being added to our involvement in a mission among the Carrier Indians in British Columbia. This was a faith venture of greater proportion than it now appears to us looking back forty years. This should be a stimulant to our faith as we spend ourselves to support the ongoing mission work.

A study of the statistics shows that in 1972 our church membership minus foreign mission workers was approximately sixteen hundred with two mission congregations—eight hundred supporting members per mission. In 1982 the membership was twenty-three hundred with six mission congregations—just under four hundred supporting members per mission. In 1992 the membership was twenty-eight hundred with seven mission congregations—four hundred supporting members per mission. This does not include the British Columbia churches, since they were largely self-supporting by this time. In 2002 the membership was four thousand with eight mission congregations—five hundred supporting members per mission. In 2012 the membership was fifty-two hundred with thirteen mission congregations—four hundred members per mission.

As our church has attempted to move through the doors that the Lord opened to us, we have always felt on the edge of our resources. While the ratio of supporting members to mission congregations was the largest in 1972, this needs to be seen in perspective. At this time, growing interest in the conservative movement was requiring the purchasing and building of churches. Also taxing the resources was the vision to provide a school for every family within our constituency. This meant providing school buildings in every region of our church. As the supporting churches grew and became more established, we were better able to support a growing mission endeavor.

Another factor to remember when comparing these ratios is that the maturing mission churches in British Columbia began transitioning to a self-supporting work. This transition to self-support has not been as practical in the Latin American countries. However, some of the brethren are self-supporting and some partially self-supporting. This does lower the cost of support to some of our more established congregations.

With the economic downturn in 2008, the decision to enter into the opening doors in Mexico and Argentina was again a very real faith venture. At this time the Mission Board was also renovating the newly purchased Ashland Bible School facility. Yet the brotherhood moved ahead in faith with these new endeavors.

Even with these new obligations, Mission Board expenses (mission churches and other functions) for the year 2011 were still less than one dollar per day for supporting members.

On one hand, a dollar a day is hardly a costly sacrifice when one considers how nonessential categories of our home budgets at times run in the "dollar a day" range. Consider the amount of money spent on tapes, CDs, and equipment to use them. How many "dollar a day" cellular phones does each family own? How many times do we buy lunch on the run, when with a little forethought, we could have taken lunch along?

On the other hand, when one considers the cost of operating our Christian day schools, along with the rising costs of brotherhood assistance, we recognize that the brotherhood has been giving generously to the needs of the church. Each of us should take seriously our personal responsibility to bear our share of the cost as the Lord prospers us.

In spite of a sluggish economy and a growing work, the Lord has enabled us to support the growing demands of the work. Undoubtedly, this is a work of faith that the Lord is honoring with His blessing. We do not know how our commitment of faith will yet test our resources, but we can move into the unknown with confidence if we are willing to spend and be spent for the cause of His kingdom.

—Brother Galen



## The Secret Chambers of the Heart

The physical organ in our chests that pumps blood performs its duties with four chambers. Each chamber has a specific purpose. Though we spend little time thinking about our heart, it is a most vital organ.

Have you ever seen into its chambers? Likely even no human doctor has seen the chambers of your heart. Yet there they are, pumping, pumping, pumping. Your spiritual heart is even more vital.

In the Scriptures, heart most often stands for the thoughts and feelings, or the mind. It is translated from the Greek word *kardia*, which is easily recognized as related to the English word *cardiac*. Springs of affection, reasoning powers, imaginations, and intentions are all consolidated in the heart. "Out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). The character and the heart are inseparable. In short, your heart is the real you.

Even though this heart is very real, it is understandably intangible and invisible. Even a doctor cannot do a surgery or perform a scan to examine the motives of this heart. Hence, the chambers of this heart are secret.

God designed our hearts to be secret. Only one aspect of our threefold being, our body, is visible. But the Great Physician knows what is in the secret chambers of this heart. In fact, the words "which knowest the hearts" (Acts 1:24) are translated from one Greek word: *kardiognostes*, or "heart knower." God has perfect knowledge of the heart. "He knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:21). God's knowledge of the heart is a terror to the sinner. Though he may appear whited on the outside and fool men, he does not fool God.

In contrast, the saints welcome God's knowledge of their hearts. "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." We have nothing to hide, nothing for which to shift the blame, and no judgment to fear.

To say that God knows our hearts better than we know them ourselves is an understatement. Our hearts are finite, and so is our understanding of them. God is infinite. He knows our hearts in the absolute sense, *ad infinitum*. To Him, they have no secret chambers. And His verdict is in. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Let no one think that the heart is just sick. Humanly hopeless would be a more fitting description. But the Great Physician performs heart transplants, so there is hope. "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19). The chambers of this new

heart are renewed to be a fit temple for God.

However, renewed chambers tend not to stay renewed. And there is always the temptation to feign something on the outside that we are not in our hearts. So how can we know what is in the secret chambers of such a potentially deceitful heart?

Since God knows our heart so well, one way we can know our own heart is to know God. The better we know God, the better we can know ourselves. Spend time with the mirror (James 1:23-25). Unlike natural mirrors with skin-deep reflections, this mirror penetrates the thoughts and intents of our secret chambers (Hebrews 4:12). Also, God's Word hidden in our secret chambers strongly deters the harboring of forbidden secrets.

Enjoy the fellowship of God's people. Just as a mother can check a child's ears better than he can, so others often have amazing perceptions into our hearts. A heart with renewed chambers will not resent this. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed" (James 5:16).

Spend time with children. Juveniles are not experienced hypocrites, yet they make excellent hypocrisy detectors. Their candid observations and questions sometimes penetrate painfully. Hearts with renewed chambers will honestly benefit from a child's innocent questions. "For of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

Keep a suspicious eye on other possible areas of secrecy. If the secret chambers of the heart hide forbidden thoughts, they are often party to other secret chambers. Anything that needs the darkness of a pocket, car trunk, or cell phone to survive gives concrete evidence of darkness residing in the heart and must be renounced. To think that such issues can be hidden from God or the brethren is the height of folly.

Expose yourself to Scriptural teaching and preaching. Opening one's secret chambers to this spiritual sunshine is necessary for growth. "Thus are the secrets of [the] heart made manifest" (1 Corinthians 14:25).

Cultivate "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4). Some wear their beauty on the outside, thereby cheapening it greatly. To adorn "the hidden man of the heart" truly counts in God's estimation. "Thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:4). What is on the inside comes out.

Live sincerely and openly. Avoid a double standard. Pray honestly. Spend time with God uttering your heart's deepest desires toward Him. And for the burdens which cannot be verbalized, the Spirit will make "intercession for [you] with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

Exercise regularly and vigorously to keep a healthy heart. Participate in worship experiences, involve yourself in evangelistic efforts individually and collectively, and do good to all men.

We must honestly open our hearts, or God will expose them. The day is coming when all secrets will be over, good and bad. We look forward to the time when we shall know even as we are known and our hearts will tempt us no more.

*Brother Abner.*

### *Redemption*

Mingled there on Calvary,  
All the sin of man,  
Slaying heaven's Majesty—  
How was this God's plan?  
Yet the Father viewed His Son  
In this lowly state;  
By His death the task was done—  
Where was love so great?  
Grossest sin and greatest love  
Met at Calvary;  
Christ subdued the power of  
Satan's victory.  
—Rebecca N

### "Greetings in Jesus' Name"

When have you last heard this greeting? This morning? We often open our public worship services or begin the address of a subject with these words. Are our words of greeting significant? Or is this practice an unimportant routine? We will examine a few questions to help us to evaluate our greetings.

Why do we gather for public worship? We gather as needy souls to praise and extol God for who He is and what He has provided. Our view of God will temper our forms of greeting and presentation. Since the main focus of worship is God, not men, a God-centered greeting is more appropriate than a man-centered "hello."

Who are we greeting in public worship? We greet fellow brethren and sisters who have been washed in Christ's blood and united into His body. We are not just greeting fellow workers on a job or someone we have met on the street. Our greetings ought to recognize our special kinship as members

of Christ's body. Our greetings reveal our understanding of the purpose and function of Christ's body. His Name is sweet to our ears, and we love to hear it often.

What are some examples of greetings from the New Testament? Jesus greeted His disciples, "Peace be unto you" (John 20:19, 26). Many epistles begin by commending the reader to the grace, mercy, peace, or love of God and conclude with a benediction. The grace and dignity of Biblical greetings and benedictions has kept them meaningful through the centuries.

What pressures do we face that militate against this type of Biblical dignity and formality? Nominal Christianity has accepted the contemporary worship of "come as you are" and "say what you please." The influence of this more casual worship may be seen among us in the tendency toward a more informal greeting such as "Hello" or "Good morning." Using shortened names or nicknames when introducing brethren also militates against a reverent atmosphere.

How can we cultivate reverent and meaningful openings and closings? We must be familiar with the Scriptures. Using an appropriate verse or Scriptural greeting is an excellent way to begin. Giving thought in preparation is valuable for all, especially the young and inexperienced. The desire to come up with something clever simply to add spice to a service is sacrilegious. A reverent greeting sets the tone for a reverent service.

Meditating on the sacredness of meeting God in worship is essential. The display of power and glory at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19) was so terrible that the people feared exceedingly. Even though we do not expect a Mount Sinai display, we still serve the same God. This awareness will temper our words and actions.

We should also meditate on all that God has invested in the human race. The gift of His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for our sins, the intercessory work of Jesus to mediate between us, and His indwelling Spirit to enable us to live in holiness inspire worship. In light of God's love for us, it seems only appropriate to begin our worship by acknowledging Him in our greetings. We may vary the names we use (Jesus Christ, Jehovah, Almighty, the I Am, or Creator) to fit our subject, but let us start by honoring Him.

An appropriate verse is fitting when closing. We may also acknowledge our dependence on God for power to live up to His standard of holiness. We look forward to our Father's greeting and also His benediction: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

*Brother Dwight*

## **Separation in Business (Part 5)**

### **Employee Standards**

Hiring is one of the most serious business decisions and should be done carefully and prayerfully. A consistent Christian testimony, the spiritual safety of other employees, and the destiny of one's own soul are at stake. The spiritual safety of one's family and employees is more important than business profitability.

The ideal employee is a fellow believer who shares the same convictions and holds to sound Biblical principles. An unbelieving employee's values, goals, outlook, and expectations can all present a serious challenge. Litigation risks and pressure to provide benefits such as health or life insurance increase when unbelievers are employed. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14). In some respects, those who work together become yoked together.

The use of tobacco, strong drink, suggestive language, or pictures must not be tolerated. Evil is contagious and must be dealt with decisively. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Honesty and integrity are not only desirable business assets but also necessary employee standards. Serious job mistakes or property damage should be reported.

Businesses should represent and support the church's positions. Radios or unacceptable recorded music should not be allowed. Where several contractors are working on the same job site, politely ask other work crews to turn their radios off. Employers should ensure that employees cannot access the open Internet with portable business computers or cell phones.

High moral standards must be required. Consistent, modest dress should be part of employee standards. Warm summer weather does not excuse immodesty.

A work environment with mixed genders must be guarded. Formal business relationships, adequate oversight, and accountability measures are imperative. Men and women should not work closely without others present at all times.

Brother Joel



## Vocal Vices (Part 3)

### Swearing

Scriptural references to swearing always refer to the oath of affirmation. Our use of the word swearing, however, includes profanity, cursing, and slang. These habits are also condemned by our holy God. "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:37).

Like formal swearing, informal swearing is invoked to add force to one's words. Minced oaths and euphemisms that abbreviate God's Name or invoke His attributes should not be heard from our lips. God's holiness, graciousness, goodness, or mercy should never be referenced lightly. Swearing reveals contempt of God. Those who use damn carelessly become guilty of blaming God for adverse circumstances or careless mistakes.

God warned the Israelites repeatedly against profaning the holy Name of the Lord their God by word or action. Profane in the Old Testament means "to wound" or "disgrace." In the New Testament profane means "to step out of that which is religious and holy." Profane language is a trap into which the casual and careless fall. "But let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (James 5:12).

The apostle Paul declared that "vain jangling" (empty talk) is the fruit of those who have turned aside from the faith (1 Timothy 1:5, 6). Jesus warns "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment (Matthew 12:36).

Idle words proceed from carnal minds and carry evil connotations. Many idle expressions originate from characters and wicked conduct observed in movies and television shows, of which we want no part. We should not adopt catchy words that are used improperly. And we should not use words of which we do not know the meaning. We should follow Christ's example of clear, simple forms of speech.

Our words are often repeated by others. Children readily absorb and repeat what they hear. Exemplary speech is a parental imperative.

These words from Solomon indicate the discipline evident in the Christian's speech: "The tongue of the just is as choice silver" (Proverbs 10:20), "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom" (Proverbs 10:31), and "The lips of the righteous knoweth what is acceptable" (Proverbs 10:32).

When blessing and cursing proceed from the same mouth, the cursing reveals the true condition of the heart (James 3:10-12). Profanity characterizes one who will trade eternal values for present fleeting impulses and

pleasures.

It has been said that singing indicates harmony with one's circumstances. In contrast, swearing definitely indicates that one is not in harmony with his circumstances. What flows from our lips when the tire goes flat, the hammer strikes our thumb, the electricity goes off, or the computer program crashes?

"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2).

—Brother Roland



### *PRAYER POINT*

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

*Pray for a heart open to God's searchlight and a will  
to maintain peace with God and all men as far as possible.*

*Pray that the church might be strengthened spiritually  
through the revival meetings this spring.*

*Pray for the guests who reside in the rest homes  
as they face physical difficulties that test their faith.*

*Pray for the workers as they care for them from day to day.*

*Pray for our youth that they would remember their Creator  
in the days of their youth and  
"be spiritually minded [which] is life and peace."*

*Thank God for the peace and tranquility we enjoy  
and for the government leaders who grant us religious freedom.*

