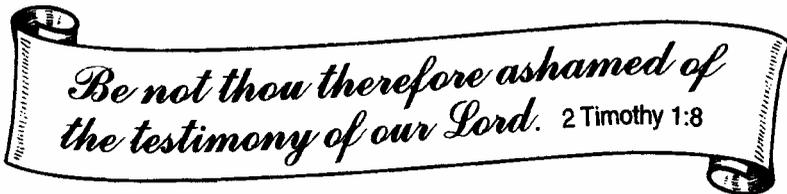


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

SELECTED ARTICLES FROM THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION
OF
THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA MENNONITE CHURCH
MARCH 2009



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.

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The Publisher, AnabaptistMennonites.org.

The New Testament Day of Rest

How do we know that God intends for us to worship Him on the first day of the week rather than on the seventh day? We may be tempted to dismiss this question as unimportant. Some even suggest that the day of the week on which we worship is not important, because the primary principle is one day of rest in seven. However, the question is an important one and deserves a Biblical answer.

The progress of Creation culminated with the seventh day, the day of rest (Genesis 1, 2). Since man was created on the sixth day, the seventh day of Creation was the first full day for Adam and Eve. What a blessing it must have been to worship God in this state of perfection!

However, that perfect and holy state was marred by the Fall of Man (Genesis 3). The purity, serenity, and fellowship were broken. Guilt and the fear of death replaced tranquillity. The promised Redeemer was the only ray of hope in that account (Genesis 3:15). As God revealed truth throughout the Old Testament, the Scriptures increasingly pointed forward with anticipation to the "fulness of time" when that ray of hope would become the Light of the world. As

Adam and Eve rested on succeeding Sabbath Days, they must have been keenly aware of the painful separation that occurred through the effects of the Fall.

The word Sabbath is first mentioned in Exodus 16:23, where the context clearly refers to the seventh day. But not all Old Testament references to sabbaths refer to the seventh day. The first day of the seventh month was to be observed as a sabbath, and so was the tenth day of the same month (Leviticus 23:24, 27-32). In Hebrew, sabbath means "intermission or rest." Many people misunderstand sabbath to mean seventh, and to the Old Testament saints, it was indeed the seventh day. But to a New Testament saint, the first day is the true sabbath of rest.

The Law foreshadowed the significance of the first day of the week. The Feast of First fruits was held on "the morrow after the sabbath" (Leviticus 23:10, 11). This pointed forward to the great event of the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, which occurred on the morrow after the Sabbath (Matthew 28:1)! "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The Feast of Pente-

cost was also observed on "the morrow after the seventh sabbath" (Leviticus 23:16). It was "when the day of Pentecost was fully come" that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

Jesus came to -fulfill the Law, including the Sabbath. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). To fulfill

is to bring to completion or full fruition. The glorious Old Testament was put away, and the more glorious New Testament replaced it. This putting away included the putting away of the Ten Commandments, the part of the Law "written and engravers in stones" (2 Corinthians 3:7). The New Testament institutes a higher standard than the Ten Commandments.

Because of Jesus' power and authority, He could rightly make this claim: "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day" (Matthew 12:8). Jesus is Lord, and, as Lord of the Sabbath, He was qualified to fulfill the Law and change the day of rest and worship to the first day of the week.

To worship on Sunday is a tribute to our risen Lord and His new creation in the saints, through redemption (2 Corinthians 5:17). The seventh day marked the completion of

the Creation, upon which the curse from sin fell. But the first day marks the final accomplishment of redemption, God's new creation. Those who insist that seventh-day worship is a Creation principle that supersedes the Law de-emphasize the momentous provision for eternal redemption!

New Testament saints regularly gathered on the first day of the week in worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). For a Jew to worship regularly on the first day of the week was to clearly identify with Christ.

The apostle John "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). Critics contend that no one can prove that the Lord's Day was the first day of the week. But why would the seventh day be called the Lord's Day when Jesus was in the tomb on that day? We serve a risen, living, and interceding Lord!

In conclusion, promoting seventh-day worship minimizes the pre-eminent work of Christ. It also creates religious confusion that undermines regard for any established day of worship. Worshiping on the first day of the week gives Christ His rightful place and recognizes Him as the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament foreshadowed.

—JTB



Tokens of God's Goodness

"Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast helpen me, and comforted me" (Psalm 86:17).

The entire human race benefits from God's goodness. From the gift of life to sufficient daily food, mankind enjoys daily evidence of God's goodness. These signs are not limited to righteous people, but the righteous should be the ones who recognize the Giver of these gifts and use them to His glory.

The psalmist was asking for tokens of goodness that his enemies could see. These signs could bring shame to them as they realized how God works for the righteous. These signs were also meant to encourage the righteous and strengthen them for the conflicts of life. In the New Testament era the tokens of God's goodness are largely spiritual.

What are a few of the many tokens of His goodness that God has given His people?

God gives peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

Peace is available to all those who prepare their hearts to receive it. It comes initially as a result of freedom from the guilt of sin. Maintaining peace includes being free from sins such as using tobacco, strong drink, feeding immoral feelings, and all carnal living. As peace continues to flood our lives, it is possible to have calmness in the face of calamity and reverses. These expressions of peace very accurately point men to God.

God gives love. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Love grows in our hearts when we realize all that God has done for us. He not only provided salvation through Jesus but also continues to freely give us all we need to live victoriously each day. We express our appreciation for His love in our devotion to Him and in our relationship to our fellow men. That may involve listening to those with burdened hearts, giving words of encouragement, or lending a helping hand. In this day of increased independence, we must guard against the possibility of neglecting God's command "that he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:21).

God provides the avenue of prayer. "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).

Prayer is an integral part of our relationship with God. It is a great privilege to have this direct access. As we avail ourselves of this opportunity, we are better able to understand ourselves and contribute to the needs of others. Thankfulness must characterize our prayers, as well as our whole life. The power to live thankfully amid disappointments and reverses is enhanced by a meaningful prayer life.

God blesses with answered prayers. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

We can be certain that God answers our prayers according to His will. He has promised to supply all the resources that we need to serve Him faithfully to the end. Sometimes God sees that it is best for us to wait for our requests to be answered. He desires that we learn patience in these times of waiting. God's goodness can be seen more clearly as we look back on situations where we have needed to wait for an answer. We often need to marvel at God's perfect timing.

God gives words to speak in times of need. "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak" (Matthew 10:19).

Two keys to receiving this gift from God are a close relationship with Him and a working knowledge of the Scriptures. God's children have frequently been able to put to silence their critics because of words "fitly spoken." Claiming the promise of God's direction helps us to overcome the fear of man.

God gives a day of rest. 'And [God] rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made" (Genesis 2:2). With the resurrection of our Lord, this day of rest is the first day of the week.

God set the example of rest for us. He intends for this day of rest to be for our spiritual and emotional well-being. This can be accomplished when Sunday activities promote spiritual refreshment and worship. God understands our makeup and gave us this day for our good.

God gives the rainbow. "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth" (Genesis 9:13).

God established this token with Noah after the destruction of the Flood. He said it should stand as a reminder to successive generations that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. This was especially meaningful to Noah and his family after having seen the destruction of the Flood. When we see a rainbow today, we receive the reassurance that God is a covenant keeper. His promises, though given centuries ago, stand firm yet today.

God gives daily food. "Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:25).

We are thankful for the daily food God so graciously provides for us. Many times we have such abundance that we are not as conscious of the Giver as we should be. Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). God has promised that He will not overlook our daily needs. We are instructed to keep our priorities right and allow God to provide for the rest (Matthew 6:31-34).

We will never be able to exhaust the tokens of God's goodness, because God is good. May we be inspired to look for His goodness today.

Brother D. S.



Watershed Issues of the Twentieth-Century Mennonite Church (Part 1)

The Background to the Twentieth Century

A watershed is a dividing point. In the natural world, rain that falls on a mountaintop forms rivulets that flow in opposite directions and sometimes into different oceans. In this review of church history, watershed issues are the dividing points. On one side, rivulets of thought and habits flow in one direction; on the other side, they flow in another.

Our discussion of this period of church history will focus on the (Old) Mennonite Church in the twentieth century. Our focus will be on watershed issues that were major factors affecting the course

of the (Old) Mennonite Church as well as leading to the formation of the revival groups, including the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church.

In order to understand the twentieth century, we need to begin our considerations in the nineteenth century. Factors in the last half of the nineteenth century laid the groundwork for developments in the Mennonite Church in the twentieth century.

When the Mennonites first came to America, they were separated and isolated both spiritually and culturally. The rigors of colonial

life confined them to eking out a living at home. Educational opportunities were limited, and those that existed were provided by the church. The German language served as a natural barrier to their English neighbors. The persecution in their mother country fostered an air of suspicion regarding the surrounding society. Therefore, outside religious influences met stiff resistance and did not easily penetrate the church. However, three factors in the last half of the nineteenth century helped to change this.

1. The Westward Movement

"Go west, young man, go west" was the spirit of the age. Some historians believe that the Mennonites had somewhat caught this spirit.

While we cannot be sure what drew them west, certainly the desire for more and cheaper land was a significant motivation.

However, as generations passed, changes took place among Mennonites in the West. My grandmother, who was born in the 1890s, observed that the Mennonite Church west of the Alleghenies was different from the church in the East. Several factors contributed to the development of these differences.

Many who went west were more adventuresome and independent in spirit, resulting in a less church-oriented mentality. In general, the

scattered, sparsely populated settlements were more loosely organized, and some had no resident ministry, making them more open to occasionally relating to neighboring Protestants. These frontiers had settlers from various older American Mennonite communities as well as some Mennonite settlers who came directly from Europe. These factors tended to make the church in the West more open to change and created an influence that helped shape the Mennonite Church of the twentieth century.'

2. The Public School System

With the advent of the public school system in the United States, starting in the 1830s, and its acceptance among the Mennonites, succeeding generations of Mennonites were more exposed to the prevailing influences of worldly culture. This affected the church's ability to communicate the faith as the Mennonite children received more influence from secular teachers than from religious sources. These children became proficient in English and less familiar with German, distancing them from their German Mennonite literature and from understanding the church's teachings. Mennonite youth, at times, married those they met in public schools, and often responded to invitations to attend Protestant Sunday schools and revival meetings. Public school

teachers urged Mennonite youth toward higher education.

As a result of these influences, many Mennonite youth were being lost to the church. It has been suggested that, by the 1900s, the Mennonite Church had only one-tenth of the membership that she would have had if she had kept all her youth. This loss sparked much concern within the Church.

Some concerned brethren promoted Sunday schools, revivals, missions, and schools of higher education as means of reaching the youth. These brethren also translated German Mennonite literature into English, established church periodicals, and provided Mennonite-oriented Sunday school material.

Much of this was initiated in the West and had some Protestant influence mingled with it. The East sorted these various options and sought to adopt these new methods while maintaining a more Mennonite emphasis.

This concern for the loss of Mennonite youth opened the Mennonite church to new innovations. While some of these changes were positive, these changes partly moved the church from her traditional base and made her more susceptible to further changes.

3. The Mennonite General Conference

In 1898 the (Old) Mennonite Church initiated a conference of

conferences, known as Mennonite General Conference. This conference was advisory in nature.' Various church-wide boards and committees were under its direction.

Several of the conferences of the East participated in this conference but never joined it. They feared that a mass organization would reduce their standards to the lowest common denominator. George Brunk, Sr., a bishop in Virginia Conference who at first supported this effort, later favorably quoted a fellow minister, who stated, "We are getting an elephant upon our hands—if it ever gets down for us, we will never get it up!" Although in its earlier years Mennonite General Conference promoted nonconformity and addressed other current issues through various pamphlets and writings, by mid century this conference had become an avenue for promoting the agenda of the progressives.

The three factors discussed above initiated a transition in the last half of the nineteenth century from the older forms and methods of previous generations and laid the groundwork for the overwhelming changes of the twentieth century. By 1900, most congregations had Sunday schools, revival meetings were being held in many places, publishing interests were influencing the church, and interest in higher education was stirring. Four-

part singing and the English language were in use. The Old Order divisions, which were a response to these innovations, were nearly complete: the Jacob Wisler division had occurred in 1872, and the Jonas

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Martin division in 1893. The new approach in Mennonitism had already begun to shape the Mennonite Church.

Brother L. M.



PRAYER POINT

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

Pray for the aged and the afflicted.
Pray that they may be granted daily strength for their needs

Pray that our youth will develop an awareness of the
Presence of God in their lives.

Pray in these last days for parents to be rooted and
Grounded in the faith so that our youth will receive proper
Nourishment from a good spiritual root system.



Prayer of Humility

Almighty God of lofty realms
And Sovereign over all,
How dost Thou stoop to humbly view
The heav'n and earth so small?

The greatness of Thy Majesty,
Man cannot comprehend,
Yet to a contrite sinner's prayer,
Thy lofty Ear doth bend.

Teach us to see Thee as Thou art
And hate our foolish pride,
For only in humility
May we walk by Thy side.

Teach us to serve, and not to strive
The heights of fame to climb,
For exaltation and reward
Thou givest in due time.

In reverent quietness we come
To worship at Thy throne,
And humbly kneel, imploring Thee
For grace to be Thine own.

Help us to choose humility
In actions, words, and dress.
Thy hatred for a vain, proud look
Upon our minds impress.

Help us to choose simplicity
In all that we possess.
Let useful service be our aim—
Not status or excess.

Through humbleness of mind, may we
From conflict find release;
In love, forgive; in meekness, bear
Offense and live in peace.

We thank Thee for Thy faithful church
And in submission heed
Thy faithful servants called to watch,
To nurture, and to lead.

By Thy omnipotent decree
All pride shall be cast down,
But they who humbly wait on Thee,
With honor Thou shalt crown! --LWM

Ambassadors for Christ (Part 1) *Loving the King*

As Christians, we are ambassadors, representing our heavenly country to the world. To fulfill this calling, we must be convinced of the supremacy of the kingdom we represent. We must possess a deep love for the King, the one who commissioned us. Our genuine love will be expressed by our actions.

Our love to the King is based on His love toward us. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Oh, the love that God showed in providing a way for sinful man to be redeemed to Himself! The degree to which we love the King is in direct proportion to our realization of the seriousness of sin and the vastness of the forgiveness we have received. If we sense our love waning, we must ask ourselves whether we are truly thankful for the pardon we have received.

Our love to the King causes us to turn toward Him for direction. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, . . . so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God" (Psalm 123:2). A servant can detect the will of the master by observing his expressions and gestures.

Our love to our King will cause us to look early and look often for our daily guidance.

With the songwriter we cry,

"Thou art my portion, O my God; Soon as I know Thy way,
My heart makes haste to obey Thy Word, And suffers no delay."

Our love to the King will be evidenced by our frequent thoughts about the King. How often do we think about the King and His affairs throughout the day? It has been said that our lives should be like a compass. Whenever we are not concentrating on a task at hand, our thoughts should immediately turn toward God.

Our love to the King will be portrayed by our frequent fellowship with Him. No earthly ambassador has the instant communication lines with his king as the Christian does. How frequently do we avail ourselves of this privilege? God's telephone line is never busy-, His office is never closed.

Our love to the King will keep us focused on our mission. We will guard our lives that we do not become unduly entangled with the affairs of this life. We will view kingdom work as our primary occupation, and our earthly occupation as a means to finance our heavenly commissioning.

Our love to the King will cause us to pray fervently, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). We enjoy our present relationship with our heavenly Father. However, we eagerly anticipate the day when we can continually be in the very presence of the King.

Our King is coming!