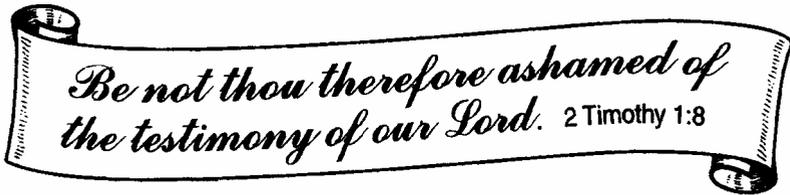


THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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God's secret to happiness (1 Peter 3:14) defies the philosophy of the age. A life of ease and pleasure does not satisfy the soul, build character, or reproduce faith. Only those who choose to be "partakers of Christ's sufferings" know the "exceeding joy" that accompanies His cross.

The cross was more than a philosophical concept to our Anabaptist forefathers. When they consented to be baptized into the church, they knew that their life might end in the mouth of a lion, the flame of a stake, or the dampness of a dungeon.

They fled from country to country to find relief from persecution and to raise their families according to the Bible. They found freedom in the wilderness land of America. Religious freedom tested their faith in ways that persecution never had. The memory of the martyrs began to fade in the rigor of pioneer life. Their songs and messages that extolled suffering did not connect in the absence of persecution. Many lost their Biblical moorings as they prospered and became wealthy landowners. The world began to seem a friend to grace.

Concerned parents and church leaders struggled to make a martyr heritage and the doctrine of suffering relevant and inspiring. Although persecution had ceased, the battle against compromise with the world had intensified. A few survived with a Biblical faith by identifying their new world. They addressed the world's fashionable pride and reinforced simplicity and uniformity in attire. The Revolutionary War also awakened their sense of being a separate, nonresistant people.

Christ calls us to suffer shame for His Name today. Although we live in a land of peace, the warfare between God and Satan still rages. Standing for truth may not cost us our life; but we will suffer others' hatred, rejection, and reproach. "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:22, 23).

Just as a child must learn to work joyfully, so we must learn to suffer joyfully. It is not native to our flesh. But those who choose to stand against the pressure of compromise find God's smile of approval to be as sweet as achy muscles at the end of a hard day of work.

Suffering for Christ refreshes our kinship with our Lord. We appreciate His reproach more as we bear it with Him. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings" (1 Peter 4:13). Our bond of fellowship with the saints is also strengthened. Bearing the cross together binds us together.

The banner of the cross invigorates the church. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. Contemporary Christendom's welcome mat of health and wealth has worn thin, and the exit door is more crowded than the entrance. At the same time, Islam is growing rapidly by offering a works religion of self-denial, hardship, and death. A gospel with a cost is more attractive than one that proffers a carrot.

The revival of the past forty years has come at a cost. Revival will continue only as long as the cross of practical separation and nonconformity is upheld. Many mock the effort to define a line that arrests the drift of apostasy. Satan increasingly eases the step toward the world. Many are deceived into attempting to prove that one can follow Christ just as well without a standard of separation from the world and its accompanying cross. We all are tempted to become battle weary.

On the other hand, we must "suffer according to the will of God." Suffering for our faults holds no glory (1 Peter 2:20). And suffering for our own glory in good works has no merit. Suffering is an offering that we drop into God's basket with quiet modesty. Martin Luther did not find fulfillment in suffering as a monk. If we feel self-righteous in suffering, it may not be "for the Son of man's sake." Ascetic tendencies cloud the issues. Not every way that includes hardship is right. And to "bite and devour one another" is not sanctified suffering either. Many have departed from the faith with a martyr mentality.

May we lift up the glorious banner of the cross with confidence to our communities, churches, and homes.

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator"

1 Peter 4:19.

—BAS



Concepts and Trends That Threaten Our Youth

Wrong ideas, thoughts, or notions in the minds of our youth put them in spiritual jeopardy. These concepts are accompanied by prevailing tendencies, styles, and fads. Some of these trends may at first appear innocent and harmless, but when held in the light of Biblical principles, the danger is quickly detected.

Where there is danger, we warn. While we warn, we do not want our youth to think that we do not appreciate them. Rather, we consider it one of our greatest joys to interact with youth who love the Lord and are growing in conviction. "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you" (1 Corinthians 4:14).

Consider a few wrong concepts and some associated trends of our times then notice the Bible principles that direct us into right thinking and practice.

Wrong Concept: "We can live the Christian life without great cost."

Assuming that the Christian life is easy or appealing to the flesh will deprive us of the joys of service and sacrifice. If our religion is to be worth anything, it must be worth everything.

Trends that reflect this concept may be carelessness in daily devotions, spending on sports equipment and expensive cars and pickups, and missing church services for social functions and camping trips.

The following Bible principle refutes this concept: "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:38, 39). Is your Christian life dull, boring, and lackluster? If it is, did you ever consider that it may be costing you too little? Enter into the joys of discipline and discipleship. When the alarm clock rings, respond. If you are old enough to manage your own money, put a thousand dollars or more in the next brotherhood-assistance offering if you are able. Write an article or a story for a church publication.

Wrong Concept: "If you are spiritual, separation and nonconformity to the world do not matter."

Today we are bombarded on every side with such deceptive thoughts. God's word is still, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Trends associated with this wrong concept are many: wearing of western wear (blue jeans, shirts, and jackets of a western style), belts with showy buckles and stylish weaving, dresses with large prints and bright or con-

trasting colors, shoes that expose the top of the foot, the use of short-sleeved shirts for casual wear, and hairstyles that reflect what is presently esteemed by the world.

The governing Bible principle is "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Notice that this is addressed especially to spiritual young people (verse 14).

Wrong Concept: "In a good home there is no conflict."

It is certainly a good ideal to minimize conflict in the home. But realistically, the task of teaching our children right from wrong is unending, and the efforts will not always be appreciated. Satan's whisperings that parents do not understand must be quickly cast aside. If anyone persists in such thinking, he stands in great jeopardy.

What trends stem from this wrong thinking? Parents try to avoid the conflict by letting their youth run without accountability. Youth spend too little time with the family, complain to peers about their home, or sullenly ignore, walk off, or talk back when a parent tries to counsel them.

Again, Bible principles guide us. "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Colossians 3:20, 21). Parents are to teach, train, and discipline. Young people are to obey and honor their parents. Parents are not perfect, but they are their parents.

Wrong Concept: "We need more social activities for our young people." This idea is expressed in various ways, and some of these ideas can be made to sound right and good and can be quite persuasive. But may God continue to deliver us from the conception that a "fun program" will save our young people. Along with this kind of thinking is the tendency of parents to allow their youth to be caught up in a social whirl which becomes the primary focus of life. When young people gather after church services for frivolous socializing, reserve between genders is minimized, and entertainment and sightseeing are freely pursued.

The Bible teaches us that both young women and young men are to be exhorted to be sober-minded (Titus 2:4). These Scriptures suggest that this is good preparation for solid home building. Those who have been accustomed to giddy get-togethers find it difficult to adjust to the realities of homemaking and parenting.

Wrong Concept: "I know better," or "I will do my own thinking." Thinking like this will show itself. When it shows, true friends and parents will try to help. But if youth resist the help that is given, they stand in great danger.

Disregard for others' ideas and interests, the formation of cliques, disrespect for authority, and rough and smart talk all demonstrate this wrong thinking.

"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:1, 2). Knowledge rightly applied seeks the well-being and happiness of all.

Wrong Concept: "We have too many rules."

Some young men enjoy analyzing human government. They are quick to detect the weakness of big government. But to apply to church government the axiom "He that rules best rules least" and to insist that we do not need a written standard jeopardize the spiritual safety of the brotherhood. Those who follow this concept for very long will soon no longer be a part of a conservative church group.

The related trends toward greater diversity in practice, minimized accountability to one another, and a disregard for the direction of church leaders all direct one toward an unsafe, pietistic church life. The Scriptures show us how the church is to function. Church leaders are to be obeyed (Hebrews 13:17). We are to submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:21). We need to be responsive to the direction of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28). We strive together for unity and uniformity (Philippians 3:16). Where these directives have been followed and an agreement is attained by the brotherhood, we rejoice to have the rules recorded for our benefit.

We all rejoice greatly when our youth are found walking in the truth (2 John 4).

Brother Larry



Separation in Business (Part 1)

Advertising Ethics

To advertise one's business is to announce publicly the desirable qualities, so as to attract potential customers. Christian businesses are more concerned with God's approval than man's admiration.

Advertising may be more justifiable for a start-up business than for one that is already too large for the owner to manage. Evaluate the goals and priorities of business. If family time, church activities, and personal devo-

tional life are suffering, the business should be intentionally downsized rather than advertised.

Honesty and modesty are more important than gross sales. "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips" (Proverbs 27:2). Boasts or overstatements should not be part of advertisement. Contrast the following advertisements for honesty and modesty: "The world's best apple pies" or "Fresh apple pies sold here." "The last car you will ever need to buy" or "Quality cars for sale."

Honesty and integrity never need to be advertised. Quality services and satisfied customers still advertise the best.

Extravagance and show should be avoided. Do large digital signs that flash, flip, and blink give a stranger-and-pilgrim image? Large-scale billboard and newspaper advertisement is flaunted as a way to "get one's name out there," when actually it may indicate a "look-at-me" spirit. If your advertisement stirs pride in the heart, heed the red flag and humbly evaluate your spirit.

Advertisements should be consistent with the separated life. When advertising with business cards, leaflets, or catalogs, a transparent witness is a necessity. Should playground equipment be displayed with inconsistently dressed children? While a mechanic may work on an expensive sport utility vehicle, is it consistent to place such on his business card? If a catalog or newspaper is known to advertise lewdness and indecency, the Christian merchant will leave a better witness by advertising elsewhere.

The world's methods of advertisement such as radio, television, websites, county fairs, baseball caps, or place mats at bars are inconsistent. Is Christ promoted as much as one's business? "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17).

Brother Joel.



**MINUTES OF THE CONFERRING FELLOWSHIP MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22, 2011**

The moderator, Brother Lynn opened the morning session, after which Brother Lester led us in singing "Jesus My Lord, My Life, My All" and "O Saviour, Precious Saviour."

Brother Clinton then led in a devotional meditation from Ephesians 2, emphasizing the togetherness mentioned in this chapter. We have been quickened together, raised up together, made to sit together, "framed together," and "builded together for an habitation of God." Together, we work toward the same goals and bring forth the same fruits of righteousness.

The first message of the morning was brought by Brother Daniel who chose to speak on the subject "The Danger of Deception."

I. Examples of deception in the Bible

A. In Genesis 3, Eve was deceived when the serpent slandered God, implying that God was unfairly holding them back and life would be better if they would disobey. Satan has many tools, but a lie is a handle that fits them all.

B. In 1 Kings 13, the prophet of God was deceived by a false prophet who claimed to have a later word from the Lord. Many are led astray with the lie that what God has once said is no longer binding.

C. In Matthew 7, we find deceived people who talked right but found themselves rejected in the end because they disobeyed Jesus Christ. Brother Daniel warned us against following religious writers who ignore the plain teachings of Scripture against wearing jewelry and fashionable attire.

D. In Deuteronomy 1, the children of Israel were deceived by the ten spies who exaggerated the size of the enemy and accused God of bringing them out of Egypt into the wilderness because He hated them. They had more faith in the lies of popular opinion than in God and the lonely voices speaking for Him.

E. In Luke 18, the Pharisee praying in the temple made some true statements, but he was deceived about his own spiritual condition. We may be deceived about the condition of our hearts and the supposed cleanliness of our hands.

E. In 2 Thessalonians 2, we see the final and worst form of deception,

when God sends strong delusion upon those who love unrighteousness better than truth. Deception is started by man in his own mind, is fed by lies he believes, and is finally finished by God.

II. Common deceptions of our day

A. "I can live as I want in my youth. When I'm older, I will live a godly life." This deception ignores the powerful force of habit and the law of sowing and reaping.

B. Gradualism is a common deception today. Some Mennonites feel that God has different standards for parents and youth. This allows Satan to lead the church to the world by degrees.

C. "If we are really spiritual, we do not need any rules and disobedience will not matter." Spirituality takes form. Spirituality cannot exist without obedience.

D. Many are deceived by counseling that blames their problems on their parents and minimizes personal accountability. God accepts no excuses.

E. Deceptive advertising leads many into the error of consumerism.

E We may be deceived in our view of ourselves. What we call neatness may actually be a cover for pride.

G. We may be deceived in our view of the world. The world has always been the enemy. But we may believe we are rejecting the world when we are actually following a modified practice of the world.

H. We may be deceived by thinking that youth cannot relate together without playing together. So, deceived parents encourage play activities for youth, young parents continue the play, and spiritual life is lost.

After the message we sang one verse of "Fully Surrendered."

Brother Dana brought a message on Article II of the Schleithem Confession of Faith (the Ban).

The ban refers to excommunication, or separation from the church, not to shunning. The Reformers turned church discipline over to the state. In the Schleithem Confession the Anabaptists insisted that, without church discipline, there is no true church. They laid special emphasis on keeping the Communion pure by dealing with sin before breaking bread together.

I. The purpose of the ban

Article II teaches that the church has the authority and the responsibility to exercise church discipline. We looked at the Scriptural basis for the ban in 1 Corinthians 5. The purpose of the ban is 1) to keep the church pure; 2) to ready the church for Communion; 3) to prevent leavening influences; and

4) to help sinners to repentance.

II. The exercise of the ban

A. The ban is to be carried out according to the rule of Christ in Matthew 18: first one-on-one; and then two-on-one; and then, if necessary, the church should be informed.

B. The question of whether a penitent member should come under the ban has created some controversy. Menno Simons felt that since the purpose of the ban is to bring repentance, imposing the ban on a penitent person is wrong. Others have felt that some sins, especially those that tarnished the testimony of the church, require the ban even if the member is repentant.

C. Church discipline has historically had its critics, some accusing church leaders of "playing God" or engaging in power struggles. Menno Simons wisely noted that the sinning member has already severed his relation with the church by his sin.

III. Applications for today

A. The ban must be practiced if we are to be a New Testament church.

B. Decisions of church discipline must not be made by one person.

C. Mercy is proactive. It is not merciful to ignore small deviations and failures, saying nothing until the member is deep into sin.

D. We should work together as a church in discipline, challenging and encouraging each other without becoming critical of each other's administration.

After this message, we sang one verse of "O to Be Like Thee!"

Brother Wayne brought the message "Questionable Statements Regarding the Atonement." He noted in the opening that we have greater exposure to questionable teachings today than did our forefathers with only a few books.

I. What are some examples of questionable statements?

A. Getting saved versus being saved

B. Free grace

C. Faith alone

D. Jesus loves you unconditionally.

E. "Wrath outpoured" and "frown of heaven" on the crucified Christ

E "Clad in His righteousness alone"

G. Salvation is an act of God.

H. Christ became sin(ful) for us.

I. Christ paid our penalty.

II. What are the implications of these statements? A. They imply that God is responsible for our decisions, thus diminishing free will. It is not true that God would save us in spite of ourselves if only someone would pray hard enough.

B. They imply that Christ became sinful to provide salvation. Christ suffered because of sin, but He did not become guilty or sinful.

C. They imply that salvation is a one-time, past-tense experience. Salvation has three tenses. It is better to ask, "Do you have a relationship with the Lord?" than to ask, 'Are you saved?'"

D. They imply that faith alone is sufficient for salvation. The Bible teaches that saving faith is a faith that works through love. Romans and James are not contradictory, but are addressing opposite errors.

E. They imply that we can sin and get by with it. Imputed righteousness does not mean that God is unaware of our sins or that character does not matter.

E. They imply that feelings or emotions are the true test of salvation.

III. How can we safeguard against questionable statements?

A. Refuse to pass judgment by calling false teachers saved.

B. Emphasize Christian discipleship rather than just "getting saved."

C. Look at the broad Scriptural picture of what difference it makes to be a Christian.

D. Remain open to the admonition and correction of the brethren.

Morning session closing song "I Gave My Life for Thee,"

For the afternoon session, Brother Merle led in three opening songs. We sang "Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah," "God of Our Life," and "Open the Wells of Salvation."

Brother Kevin conducted the opening devotional meditation, reading from Joel 2 and pointing out the repeated phrase, "My people shall never be ashamed." We will never be ashamed 1) of our God; 2) of being the people of God; 3) of taking God's way, though some think it radical; 4) of God's Word.

After the secretary's report, Brother Abram spoke on the subject "The Father Sees in Secret." These words occur three times in the Sermon on the Mount. They warn us that our Father in heaven sees our true motives. In introduction Brother Abram noted two key expressions in the Sermon: 1) Our Father in heaven, 2) Reward. Both these expressions call us to God

consciousness, to the recognition that God knows our true motives and will reward accordingly.

What should our motives be? 1) To glorify God. 2) To please God. 3) To pattern after our heavenly Father. 4) To have a single eye, a spiritual vision. 5) To do the will of the Father.

What impure motives may we have? 1) To be admired, appreciated, noticed. 2) To be powerful. 3) To show up someone else. 4) To get a good feeling.

Three times in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus urges pure motives by reminding us that the Father sees our secret motives.

1. Purity of motives in giving—Matthew 6:1-4 Our goal in giving should be to glorify God, not ourselves. We should seek to win His approval, not the approval of men and to pattern after His unselfishness. Our giving should spring from spiritual vision, and be directed by His will.

2. Purity of motives in prayer—Matthew 6:5-15

3. Purity of motives in fasting—Matthew 6:16-18 Our goal in prayer and fasting is to glorify God and please Him, not to win praise and approval for ourselves. Repetition to pressure God or gain His favor is frowned upon. Jesus' model prayer is a model of seeking kingdom interests instead of our own and desiring His will to be done. We should not tell God how to answer our prayers, but ask that He would work His perfect will.

An open discussion period followed this message. We spent some time discussing the danger of deception, especially on how to relate to Protestant influences and writings. Doctrinal errors concerning the atonement were also discussed.

After the discussion period, we sang two verses of "O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee."

The concluding message of the day was "Understanding What We Ought to Do" (1 Chronicles 12:32), brought by Brother Wilmer.

1. We must do what we know to do, in order to know what we ought to do. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." We know we are to be meditating on the Word and praying daily. Are we storming the gates of heaven?

2. We must address issues in a timely fashion in order to know what we ought to do. When Uzzah died for touching the ark, David did not know what to do. But David's bewilderment and Uzzah's death could have been avoided by Scriptural teaching. Lax preaching and indifferent administra-

tion make for lost sheep and baffled shepherds. When we no longer address little issues, the battle is lost. We will not know what to do because there is nothing we can do. In an effort to be kind, we may become so fearful of disciplining wrongly that we do not discipline at all.

3. We must carefully address spirits if we want to know what we ought to do. We do this by comparing fruits with the Word of God. The same Spirit that directed Abraham to dwell in tents directs us toward simplicity and frugality in our houses. The Spirit of God directs us in counseling the needy among us. An approach that focuses overly much on past parental failures produces confusion and is contrary to the Scriptural pattern of forgetting the past while pressing on to victory.

4. To know what to do, we must recognize the body of Christ and keep rank. We must see our brothers and sisters as essential to our spiritual success. We must question our own wisdom, recognizing that every person thinks he sits upon a pinnacle of truth and insight.

How can I decide whether to submit my conviction to my brothers or to stand on my conviction regardless of my brothers? By asking some questions: 1) Has this decision been arrived at by careful and prayerful input or by incremental default? 2) Is a Biblical principle at stake? 3) Will the position jeopardize the maintenance of Biblical principles? 4) Am I viewing the issue objectively or subjectively? Do I have enough distance to see the big picture? We must be careful not to make reactionary moves or accept reactionary statements.

We stand today in the tomorrow of yesterday and in the yesterday of tomorrow. This is our day.

Following a kneeling prayer led by Brother Wilmer we sang "Channels Only." Brother David then pronounced the benediction.



"But I Say Unto You" (Part 5)

Turn the Other Cheek

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39). Although this verse is well known, do we know what it truly means? And more importantly, do we practice it in our daily lives?

In simple terms it means "do not hit back." Not only must we resist the

natural urge to retaliate, but we also must be defenseless and "harmless as doves."

The Law gave direction for just retribution while restraining man's unjust revenge. If a man in anger struck out his neighbor's eye, his neighbor had the right to strike out one of his eyes, but not two. The "eye for an eye" clause was God's judicial decree that restrained anarchy and encouraged carefulness of life.

The Law was "just and good," but Jesus raised the standard much higher. The state is now charged with civil justice, and the church by His grace is called to "resist not evil." Jesus further explained His command by making it practical.

Forgo judicial rights. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also" (Matthew 5:40). If a judgment of the court would go against us, we should cheerfully seek to provide full measure even if we believe it to be unfair. We are called to "[take] joyfully the spoiling of [our] goods."

Surrender civil rights. "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (Matthew 5:41). How do we respond when civil authorities seemingly infringe on our freedoms? If they "compel [us] to go" with seatbelt laws, child-seat laws, zoning laws, tax laws, or municipal ordinances, we should "go." And we should not be provoked to express unsanctified responses of grumbling and complaining. Only the higher law of God can override the law of the state.

Relinquish domestic rights. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matthew 5:42).

Do we lend even to those who misuse our goods? If we consistently "turn the other cheek," then others will not fear to borrow from us.

If our brother, sister, neighbor, coworker, employer, employee, the service person, or even a stranger takes advantage of us, can we truly "resist not"? If we have faith in God as "the avenger of all such," we will not only accept mistreatment but also extend love. Do those with whom we deal know us as gentle or as "quick to anger"?

Our Lord turned His cheek. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50:6). May we respond like Christ.

Brother Ernest.

