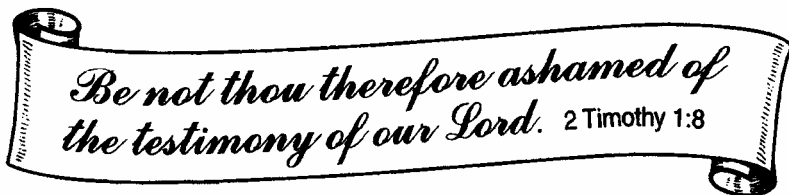


# THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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## Editorial.

### *Proxy Sin.*

The word proxy, is often used in a legal sense when one person acts as a substitute for another. We may be tempted to enjoy the sin of another that we would not do ourselves. The condemnation of God is not only on those who commit sin but also on those who "have pleasure in them that do them" (Romans 1:32). If we enjoy the sin of another, we become guilty of sin. This is another way we can be "partaker of other men's sins" as was discussed in last month's editorial.

Those of us who enjoy reading a good story become very involved in the lives of the main characters. When they cry, we cry. Their laughter may cause us to laugh. This is a good reason to guard our reading material. As we immerse ourselves in the emotions and thought patterns of the characters, we travel with them into their experience. So when the characters are noble, we are inspired to be noble.

However, many books are written to carry the reader into the thrill of sin. Romance novels, graphically describing the sensual perversions of the wicked, feed the lust that lies in our own bosoms. Western novels featuring bravado and violence appeal to our carnal renegade spirits. If we cry when they cry, we also sin when they sin. We cannot read such literature and claim passive innocence. We should feel as dirty, filthy, and guilty as the character. We have sinned by failing to resist the urge to enjoy their sin. Reading the record of sinful acts in a history book is different from reading a book that glamorizes and exploits sin.

When the main character of a book is depicted as good, the deception is especially acute. "Christian" romance novels deceptively condition us to accept sinful conduct in courtship. The logic of wrong is patterned into the mind as we thoughtlessly glide along with the wrong that seems right. Purity is tarnished, and lust is accelerated with the tantalizing mirage of sensuality.

Movies, with the added proportion of sight and sound, multiply the effect of proxy sin. The gripping reality of sight and sound adds vivid impact. The intention of the writers is to be interactive. Sin is seared into the mind. Entertainment always degenerates to appeal to our lower natures. Our forefathers believed that the movie was an unclean vessel that would propagate more evil than good. They were right!

Digital cameras with their movie capabilities are testing the fiber of our resolve. Our position against using our computers with their joint sight-and-sound functions should guide us in the use of other technology. The ability to discern between good and bad movies will prove to be quicksand too treacherous to walk over.

Comedy has always been part of the movie and opera. Innocent foolishness leads to guilty foolishness. The devil delights in getting men to laugh at sin. It is sin to laugh at sin! Abhor that which is evil" Romans 12:9.

Music is another medium that can trap us in proxy sin. Music is a powerful force for good or evil. While Christians sing about their Savior, the world sings about their sin. The lyrics of the world's music reflect the moral depravity of our age. Music is compellingly active and carries us along with the emotion and lust of the singer. Too many assume that listening is only passive. It is sin to feed on sin. "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" 2 Thessalonians 2:12.

Again, it is the music that is called Christian that may carry the greatest threat. Rather than advocating sin, informal contemporary praise and worship hymns pattern us to accept a shallow view of God. (Ain't God good ...") The life of discipleship is incrementally minimized and an emotional, soulful religion glorified. The harmony is so beautiful and the rhyme and rhythm so relaxing that our soul overrides the voice of the Spirit. The red flag that went up the first time we heard "Nobody thrills me like you do" hangs limp.

It should not surprise us that poison is laced into a song with many other good concepts. Meaningless repetition and a driving rhythm do for us what David's playing the harp did for Saul. The overall effect encourages consolation in sin rather than conviction for sin.

"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil" Proverbs 4:25-27.



## *Consider the Lilies.*

Throughout time, God's people have faced many pressures. These pressures have worried even the wisest of men. How amazing, then, that God would choose an object so simple and lowly as a lily to teach powerful lessons about faith. We want to examine this flower and explore the meaning of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:28-30.

This lily is said to be "of the field." Possibly it grew as a volunteer flower in the middle of a regular grain field, thus adding its peculiar touch of beauty to the whole field. We too are growing in the midst of a large field. God is expecting us to show forth the glory of a transformed life to all around us.

Jesus made three profound statements about the lily that He wants us to consider. The first relates to the work of the lily. The two other statements reveal snares to which men fall prey. Following these three observations Jesus points out the superiority of God's handiwork over man's.

*"Trust your hand into His,  
Give your all unto Him.  
Let Him lead you all the way,  
Trust your hand into His. "*

### **"How They Grow"**

A plant grows silently and slowly but is very important to other life forms! God has given plants special ability through photosynthesis to change light energy into stored chemical energy, without which all men and animals would starve. Also, we know that plants take carbon dioxide, a byproduct of man's respiration, and convert it into oxygen, an essential for man's survival.

This work parallels the work of the Christian. We receive nourishment as we bask in the sunshine of God's Word and drink the living waters of salvation. In a sense, God has given the Christian special ability to transform the light of His Word into physical substance for the world to see. Also, our presence should be as a breath of fresh air as we allow the Spirit to purify our lives. How sad it would be for Christian "plants" to fail in this important work of refreshment!

### **"They Toil Not"**

Is Jesus suggesting here that we do not need to earn our daily food by working? Are we to quietly wait for our "manna" to fall from heaven? The answer becomes clearer as we compare other Scriptures. "Go to the ant,

thou sluggard," and again, "Let him labour, working with his hands." However, amid our physical labor, Jesus offers an invitation of soul rest. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

The Bible does give some very basic principles that apply to our material work. In normal situations, we work during the day and rest at night. Even the plant ceases its photosynthesis labor during the night. This work stops soon after sunset and begins again at sunrise. We work with a dual purpose: to meet the needs of our family and to share with others (Ephesians 4:28). Material pursuits must take second place in our lives. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, . . . and all these things shall be added unto you." We do not need to worry about the things of tomorrow. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

### **"Neither Do They Spin"**

This phrase relates directly to being clothed, another basic need of mankind. If the lily glorifies God by its beauty, should we dress to be beautiful? When clothing is used to draw attention, it glorifies man. Our decoration on the outside is a distraction from the beauty of God's Spirit that is to shine from within. The lily allows God to do His perfect work. The resulting beauty of the lily is so striking that man attempts to copy it by creating artificial flowers!

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field ... shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30). What a gracious reminder! So often we get caught up in our God-given responsibility of providing for our own and quite forget this simple promise of God's help. We think. We calculate. The ends just do not come together. We shuffle things around. We recalculate. Still we fail. We cry out for help and the world suggests: "Get up-to-date! You won't succeed without modern technology. You can't afford not to be insured. Times have changed! Take the government subsidies. They are offering . . ." and on and on. Their answers make sense—or do they? "If God so clothe the grass of the field.... shall he not much more clothe [us]?" Did we think to pray? Have we bound God to earthly logic and worldly wisdom?

Another question that may plague our poor human minds is this: Could we not draw more people to the Lord if we would blend in just a little more? Must we really be clothed so differently? Consider the lily. Its beauty lies not in blending in with the grain around it but rather in displaying the distinctive beauty that God has given it. The same is true for us. A

simple outward garb allows others to be drawn by the fruit of the Spirit that is distinctive to the believer. It is very heartwarming to meet a faithful saint attired in plain garb, giving expression to the fruit of the Spirit.

**"Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."**

May God choose to glorify His Name through us as we give Him our undivided loyalty. Listen to God's promise to His people, found in Hosea 14. "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

*Brother Marvin.*



### *The Doom of the Lost.*

"What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

"So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" Matthew 13:49-50.

"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" Psalm 9:17.

While the word doom is not found in the Bible, God in His Holy Word has very clearly revealed the serious condition and end of all those who have rejected His offer of salvation.

God created every man with a living soul. This never-dying man finds his purpose and fulfillment solely in the presence and fellowship of God. Sin disrupted this fellowship and led mankind far away from God. In His great love, God provided salvation, the avenue by which man can be brought back to harmony with his Creator. Only as man turns back in true repentance and by faith embraces this provision can he be reconciled to God. Sadly, many people are unwilling to take this way but persist in their sin and rebellion against God. They have a terrible and hopeless future awaiting them.

The lost are storing up wrath for themselves on God's Judgment Day. Here in time they can choose to live as they please, but after death they face the judgment seat of God. 'And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment' (Hebrews 9:27). At that judgment seat, all will be judged according to how they measure up to the Word of God. The lost have nothing better to anticipate than God's disapproval and His fierce wrath and indignation. Oh, the crushing distress and anguish of soul to hear those final words: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

The lost are doomed to spend eternity in the place that God has prepared for the punishment of Satan and all the fallen angels. Instead of an invitation to enter into the presence of

God, the lost are banished forever into a state of torment. God never intended that people should go to this dreadful place. It was not His plan that man, the crowning work of His creation, should be eternally banished from His presence and fellowship. But the only place for the lost, who have so tragically missed the purpose of their creation, is in the company of the devil, the archenemy of God. The other occupants of this place include all who are anti-God. The beast and the false prophet will be there, as well as all of Satan's demons. Oh, what wicked company with which to spend an endless eternity!

The lost are doomed to suffer the eternal torments of hell. The Bible graphically describes their torments. There is everlasting fire that will not annihilate the lost but will constantly inflict excruciating pain. No water will be present to cool the heat or quench the thirst. No anesthesia or pain relievers will be available to deaden the pain. No one there will offer comfort, sympathy, or support. Hell will be filled with the terrible sounds of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. God's voice will no longer be heard. No singing or words of cheer will ease the suffering. The lost in hell will be plagued by their many memories of the opportunities they had in life to turn to the Lord. All will be sorrow; all things pleasant will be absent. The lake of fire will have no light, no hope, no rest, no relief, and no end.

God is merciful and desires to show mercy. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever" Psalm 103:8-9. God is a patient and long-suffering God. He does not cut people off in their lost condition without first providing them ample opportunity to be reconciled with Him.

But God is also a God of justice, and His justice will be revealed by the

judgment of the lost in hell. He rewards righteousness and punishes iniquity. He is totally fair and shows no partiality in all His dealings with mankind. His justice will be fully satisfied only when all have received according to their works. The lost in hell will know they are there because they deserve to be. "For the wages of sin is death" Romans 6:23.

Thank God, there is a way for all who are yet in the land of the living to escape this terrible doom that awaits the lost. God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" 2 Peter 3:9. May we first of all make sure of our own salvation. We must then be convinced that nothing, this brief life has to offer by the way of pleasure, fame, or fortune is worth trading for our soul's eternal salvation. We need to have a deep burden for the spiritual well-being of our posterity. May we spare no effort in maintaining and communicating the faith to our children. We need to be diligent in sharing the Gospel message with others. Many of our neighbors and regular contacts are men and women who need the Lord. Our mission efforts should not falter for the lack of personnel and financial support. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" 2 Corinthians 5:11.

*Brother Timothy.*



### *"Flee Also Youthful Lusts"*

The apostle Paul gives the warning "Flee also youthful lusts" to Timothy, a young bishop of the church at Ephesus (2 Timothy 2:22). If this exhortation was fitting for a bishop, we also do well to take it personally! Paul knew that some temptations hold more appeal to youth. Young people tend to be guided more by passion and feelings while the mature person is guided more by principles. The responsibilities of raising a family temper the appeal of things such as gadgets and cars. As youth mature, they begin to perceive that the seemingly unimportant decisions of life do set a course. The perspective of life changes as they begin to witness people suffering the consequences of sin.

Young people, however, have relatively little responsibility and have not seen the broad picture of where the choices in life lead. They are full of ambition, and life holds many things with which to experiment. These aspects of youth are not wrong, but we understand that such inexperience



makes a person more susceptible to temptation. Let us look at some specific lusts native to youth.

The lust of self-will is a temptation to youth. A young person may be frustrated with parental rules or decisions he does not understand. A young man may not understand why his father requires him to be home by eleven o'clock. He might think, "My parents don't trust me. Why do they have to be so strict?" But parents know that late-night visiting can become very lighthearted, even if it is not necessarily wrong. They also know that getting to bed at a reasonable time is necessary for rising on time to be alert and productive on the job. By the time they fill parents' shoes, they realize that their parents were not far off track. When Jesus was a boy, He had more insight than His parents did. Nevertheless, He was subject unto them. While explaining the Parable of the Sower, Jesus said, "The lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" Mark 4:19. In our affluent culture it is a strong temptation for "other things" to choke out our love for God. Young people (and older ones too), can get caught in the trap of buying the next thing that promises happiness and fulfillment. This becomes evident when a young man seems to have a never-ending need for new gadgets or accessories for his car or camera. When the newness and excitement wear off, the next option looks very attractive. Furthermore, the money may be available, and he has very little financial responsibility.

Jesus said, 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" Luke 12:15. Mark it down. Things never have brought nor ever will bring true fulfillment. It is found only in a close relationship with Christ and service to Him and the church. Giving five hundred or a thousand dollars in the brotherhood assistance offering is more fulfilling than spending it for hunting equipment. Have you sacrificed in this way recently?

The lust to experiment with questionable or unacceptable things is another temptation that youth face. Many unacceptable tapes and CDs have made their rounds. Young people justify themselves by saying, "It is not mine," or "I was planning to get rid of it." These days it is the availability of digital files containing video clips and comedians that can easily be copied from one device to another. Hairstyles and dress patterns are also things with which youth like to experiment.

Why is such experimentation detrimental? Listening to unacceptable music just to hear what it is like can plant warped lyrics in the mind that stay for life. A taste for unwholesome music composition and a dulling of the

conscience result. We must also reckon with the accountability of influence. One person's experiment can drag others into trouble. Consider also the statement a person makes about his character by such indulgence. If a youth experiments with music that is unacceptable to his parents and the church, he betrays the trust that others have in him. Others may rightfully assume that he may be tampering with more serious sins.

Another challenge youth face is to keep a pure mind. As youth mature physically, they naturally develop an interest in the opposite gender. This interest needs to be guarded, or it can become a source of lustful thoughts. One needs to deliberately choose not to look at the magazine rack at the checkout counter or not to go in that store. We need to refuse to dwell on the suggestive picture we saw inadvertently. Young men and young women need to cultivate a wholesome reserve and respect for each other. Kindness and respect, rather than lightheartedness and foolishness, should characterize their conversation. Games or activities that involve physical contact are strictly off-limits.

Consider these practical pointers to aid in fleeing youthful lusts. First, stay close to God through Bible reading and prayer. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" James 4:7-8. Ask God to deliver you from evil and give you a hatred for the things that He hates. Take advice from older folks, especially parents and ministers. They see life from a broader perspective and have seen where early courses and decisions lead. Keep yourself busy and work hard. Using time wisely will spare you from many a temptation. Giving liberally to those in need helps you not to spend foolishly on yourself.

Finally, let us remember that as long as we are in these earthly bodies, we will need to deal with lusts. Let us keep our guards up and look to "him that is able to keep you from falling."

*Brother Lowell.*



CULTIVATING GODLY CHARACTER (PART 4)  
THE SELFLESSNESS OF MOSES

Down Mount Sinai hurried Moses. God had just informed him that the Israelites were worshipping a golden calf. Had it not been for Moses' intense intercession, God's cup of judgment, brimming with righteous wrath, would have spilled extermination upon these stiff-necked people. Seeing the sinful sight God had described, Moses dashed the tables of stone in dismay, destroyed this golden god, and made Israel taste their sin's loathsome leftovers. The next morning he returned to God, intent on a mission of mercy. Excerpts from this expedition give us a glimpse of Moses' extraordinary example of selflessness (Exodus 32:30-34).

**A selfless person "will very gladly spend and be spent" in helping to heal his brother's failings.** Moses' own words reflect this facet of selflessness. "Now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" Exodus 32:30. Expressing no exasperation and exercising unselfish initiative, Moses then ascended Mount Sinai to intercede for Israel's "great sin." The broken Law, these frustrating rebels, the wearisome climb: none of these obstacles deterred him from seeking God's mercy for his people. Selfless people seek to heal problems even at personal expense. Are you willing to "watch unto prayer" for backslidden Brother Fred even though it costs you some sleep? Will you gladly spend an hour listening to discouraged Sister Carrie even though you feel spent yourself?

**A selfless person focuses on God's direction rather than leaning on his own understanding in time of crisis.** "And Moses returned unto the LORD" Exodus 32:31. Moses' sense of direction in this unsettling crisis was not inward but upward. With such a perspective, ordinary men can become useful men for God. Where do you look for answers in times of test? Counterfeits for God's direction tantalize modern man's selfish appetites. Satan suggests, "Draw on your inner powers" or, "Think for yourself." The selfless person declares, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" Psalm 121:1.

**A selfless person puts the welfare of others ahead of his own.** Listen to Moses' heartthrob: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou halt written" Exodus 32:32. Do you hear the intense language of selfless love? So passionate was Moses' yearning for Israel's forgiveness that he presented this stupendous proposal! Giving priority to the well-being of others springs naturally from a selfless heart. Looking for opportunities to meet others' needs will

give you a satisfaction unknown to self-centered people.

God needs you to help in the great work of the church today. Is your heart a specimen of selflessness, "meet for the Master's use"? *Brother Daniel.*



### PRAYER POINT

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

**Thank God for the showers of blessings He has sent to the earth "that he may bring forth food out of the earth" Psalm 104:14.**

**Pray that the saints may be revived and the sinners convicted as the Word is preached in season and out of season. 2 Timothy 4:2.**

**Pray that those who have received Christ may grow strong in the faith as they are instructed through the Word.**

**Pray that those bereaved of loved ones would find God's grace sufficient.  
"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" Proverbs 18:24.**

**Pray that God would give wisdom to discern His will in establishing outreach locations and efforts.**

