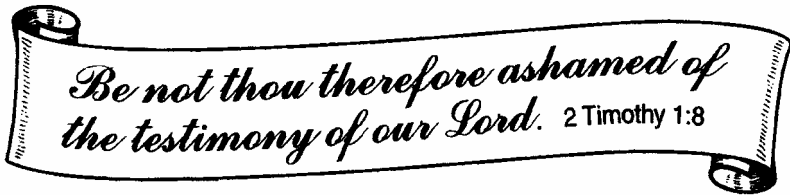


# THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

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OF  
THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA MENNONITE CHURCH  
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## Editorial.

### "The Soul of My Son"

Hamor's father heart shines forth in his plea for his son Shechem, even though the context is muddled with confusion. Jacob, however, failed as a father in giving direction not only to his daughter but also to his sons (Genesis 34). Today (which very soon will be yesterday) is the time to care for the soul of my son. Do I as a father have a greater charge or earthly treasure than the soul of my son?

*"The soul of my son" is a window.* Some display their emotions openly and expressively, and some need to be searched out. My son's emotional expressions deserve my attention "for out of [the heart] are the issues of life" Proverbs 4:23. It takes daily, alert attention to read the mirror of his soul in his actions and attitudes.

Do his expressions reveal that he covets the blessing of his godly heritage? Does he long to partake of the forbidden fruit, or does he find rest in spiritual direction? Who does he desire to please the most? Likely he will rise no higher than my expectations and example.

*"The soul of my son" is impressionable.* Parents train their children in their tastes. Doctors wonder at times whether family physical health traits are inherited or may actually be acquired by influenced habit. Just the same, spiritual strengths and weaknesses are transmitted by parental influence. My soul will in many ways be reproduced in my son just like my physical traits. So the work begins with me.

However, many influences come to bear on my son, but I as a father am primarily responsible to guard those influences while he is under my care. Since not all negative influences can be avoided, part of my work is to help my son discern between the spirits to which he is exposed. This is real life. But it is a critical transition of influence that I as a father navigate with prayer. "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" Proverbs 23:26.

*"The soul of my son" is personal in nature.* Although my influence is great, no formula exists for superimposing my will on his own. The longings and love of his life must be inspired first by command and later by logic. Every soul is a free moral agent that must choose his own course in life. I will not be able at the Judgment to either excuse his failures or take credit for his salvation.

*"The soul of my son" longs for love.* He reads every line of my life, so each one must consistently reveal that love. The costly parental sacrifice of self

that is needed to give discipline in love and correction in hope is too often neglected. I as a father should initiate personal questions and discussions. A concern for his personal purity and freedom of conscience will move me to ask specific questions at times. A willingness to honestly open my own heart with discretion will encourage him to open his.

Honestly admitting my own humanity but offering the solution for victory is better than leaving a false impression of faultlessness. However, exposing a life of constant struggle and defeat is my failure and his discouragement. What I share about myself he likely already knows. An open ear will speak more than an open mouth.

*"The soul of my son " gives hope.* 'A wise son maketh a glad father' Proverbs 10:1. Middle-aged cynicism toward the next generation can actually foster defeat. I enjoy the motivating impetus of trust. I do well to invest it in him. Seeing faith grow in my son encourages my own faith. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" 3 John 4.

*"The soul of my son" is eternal.* "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah" Psalm 49:15. No sacrifice is too great if it makes the difference in the redemption of his soul. "For the redemption of [his] soul is precious" Psalm 49:8. My priorities of life must be evaluated in light of his soul. Can I afford to have a job that deprives me of the precious moments that he needs? They are numbered. I must lead out in family worship. I must be available to give discipline when needed. I must give direction to my wife as we work together in his training.

Do you have a son? Do you know his soul? God bless you with wisdom to gracefully, faithfully fulfill your charge. May we not suffer the judgment of Eli but rather receive the commendation of Abraham.

—BAS



## ***Building Convictions for Social Security Exemption (Part 2)***

*Editor's Note: The following article only reflects on conditions in the USA and should not be seen as reflecting conditions in other countries. JvL.*

We appreciate the exemption from Social Security that the government has granted to us, but this is a favor. It is granted to us on the basis of our convictions, and we must keep them alive and live consistently so that we are worthy of this favor.

We should consider what we promise when we sign the Social Security Exemption Form 4029. First, we state that we are a member of the church. The bishop's signature certifies that we are members and eligible to receive assistance as long as we are members of the stated group. Our personal signature tells the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that we are "conscientiously opposed to accepting benefits of any private or public insurance that makes payments in the event of death, disability, old age or retirement or makes payments toward the cost of, or provides services for medical care (including the benefits of any insurance system established by the Social Security Act)."

Further, we promise to notify the IRS within sixty days if we are no longer a member of the church or we no longer follow the teaching of this church. It is imperative that we remain true to our promise as a church in meeting the needs of our people. And as individuals, we must remain free from insurance benefits relating to health care. "For thou, O God, hast heard my vows" (Psalm 61:5).

Parents should take the initiative and encourage their youth to request Social Security exemption. It is every parent's responsibility to explain the involvements and long-range implications of this commitment. Our youth must be taught to place their faith in God and avoid going to "Egypt" for their help. It is far better to prevent ensnarement in the system than to let them get involved and then lack faith to become untangled. Shortly after church membership is completed would be the ideal time to begin the exemption process.

Exemption from Social Security will have an effect on our vocational choices. A 4029-exempt employee must work for an exempt employer or be self-employed to be exempt from Social Security taxation. The benefit of working in a Christian environment, not found in many of the worldly workplaces, is a priceless investment.

Some state governments have also adopted a waiver of workmens' compensation insurance based on religious convictions. Those who are Social Security exempt also qualify for workmens' compensation exemption. If one works for an employer who provides workers' compensation or health insurance as part of employment benefits, it is inconsistent to receive payments. It is a violation to the promise he made to the IRS by accepting that to which he is conscientiously opposed. Second, one must accept personal financial responsibility and, when additional help is needed, it should come from the brotherhood through the local deacon. God's people have appreciated the Social Security exemption for more than

four decades, but there are ominous clouds on the horizon that could threaten it. The present government administration has signed a sweeping health care bill, mandating that everyone must be covered by a health care insurance plan or pay a penalty. Will this test the Form 4029-exemption plan?

We should review our practice relating to offers of government aid. When filing income tax returns, we cannot conscientiously accept an Earned Income Credit payment. It is a government aid to low income families that is part of the Social Security system.

Are we caring for our elderly without government assistance? Institutional care, paid by the government, is the beginning of becoming subservient to a central government bureaucracy. This will eventually lead us to bow down to national leaders, thanking them for our daily bread rather than worshipping the true God (Rules and Discipline, page 29).

These and many other areas test our worthiness to retain the exemption. In the 1972 Supreme Court ruling on *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, the Chief Justice wrote this about the Amish: "They reject public welfare in any of its usual modern forms. The Congress itself recognized their self-sufficiency by authorizing exemptions of such groups ... from the obligations to pay Social Security taxes." The Bible teaches us to "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" Galatians 6:2.

A conversation with the IRS (Internal Revenue Service USA - Taxation) official responsible to grant the Form 4029 exemption revealed that the IRS is aware of inconsistencies by exempt individuals. He stated that, for now, IRS does not enforce the rules but "the time will come when IRS will stop overlooking the abuses that are being made and will eliminate the Social Security exemption system."\*

Parents should instill financial accountability and responsibility in children at a very young age. We must teach the Bible principle to work while it is day, for the time comes when we cannot work. This includes sharing with those who are already at that place. The admonition "It is more blessed to give than to receive" Acts 20:35 is given in the context of laboring to support the weak and applies to the care of older people. First Timothy 5 gives instruction to care for widows. The family is responsible first. Beyond that, the church family is commanded to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Should pilgrims and strangers, citizens of a heavenly country, put their money into a savings account with the government of this world? Will we allow socialism to rob us of the blessings associated with Biblical alms

giving to meet the financial needs of the brotherhood? The psalmist said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" Psalm 37:25. Our God is able to provide. Is our faith strong enough to trust Him?

*Brother Harold.*



### ***Choosing Our Reproach.***

We cannot go through life without a reproach from someone. Moses looked into the future with commendable, sacrificial wisdom, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" Hebrews 11:25-26. God has graciously given us the agency of choice. Therefore, we must choose whose reproach we will endure.

A reproach is a disgrace from which we tend to shy away. Some attempt to please everyone. This ambivalence is an offense to God. So we must face the issue squarely. We must take the initiative to choose our reproach. Many choose what they think is the easy or attractive way. They avoid the reproach of separation from the world but do not realize that they have come under God's reproach. We would like to think that this is limited to people outside the church, but we must admit that at times we also have chosen the easy way.

Preachers need to choose their reproach when they preach or administrate in the church. When God's Word and God's will are not sought, we instead choose what is easy or accepted by the people. Grandparents may be tempted to compromise their principles from the past to please or fit in with their grown children or grandchildren. Parents may relent and allow their children to be in charge of the home. Courting couples may choose to sacrifice principle for their special friend. Young people may choose to yield to peer pressure instead of following their parents' wishes or requirements.

What will prepare us to choose our reproach wisely? Is it through proper teaching? Theoretically, if parents could do a perfect job of raising a family, their children should have the proper discipline to make right choices. Is it by limiting exposure to the real world or its attractions? Or is it in studying examples of the past to see their successes or failures? We could

suggest other ways, but although all of the above may be wise, they will not be enough, as we can see all around us.

To choose the reproach of living for Christ, we must esteem it as riches greater than the treasures of Egypt. This takes faith—faith to believe that eternity is real, as real as the paper you are holding. Moses and the three Hebrews are in a real place right now based on the choices they made and the faith they manifested. It will take no less for us.

Faith is farsighted. To choose our reproach wisely, we must look beyond the present pressures. Difficulties help us to focus on the future, but in the ease of the North American culture, we tend to shrug off Jesus' teachings on riches and a comfortable lifestyle and to allow these things to distract us from eternal things. This is a lack of faith and is very nearsighted.

How can we help each other to have faith? We cannot pass something on that we do not have. To allow our children to go along with the flow because everyone else is going this way is telling them that we do not have faith that there will be a faithful church in the next generation.

God knew that Abraham would teach his grandchildren. How is it with us? Will our teaching stand the test? Many times the symptoms we see in the younger generation are only showing the problems that live in the parents. This is true in the area of choices. Children will likely follow the patterns their parents set for them.

Choosing our reproach properly can seem negative but there is a positive side if we choose to see it. As we choose for Christ, the blessings we experience both in this life and in eternity will be much greater than all earthly blessings. God's gift is worth far more than the wages of sin.

*Brother Mark.*



## **"But I Say Unto You" (Part 1)**

### **Put Away Anger**

The pleasant conversation over the evening meal was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone.

"Hi, Jim," a bubbly voice gushed. "How are you this evening?"

"Just fine," James answered guardedly.

"My name is Tom, and I'm calling in response to your desire to help Veterans of Foreign Wars," the caller continued.

How dare this man insinuate that he had initiated the call? Besides, this household was on the "do not call" list! James waited impatiently for an opening to speak.

Suddenly, a motto hanging by the doorway penetrated his heated thoughts. "Put off ... anger" Colossians 3:8.

The first "but I say unto you" of the Sermon on the Mount addresses our relations with our fellow men. Anger must be put away. Anger will bring us under judgment Matthew 5:22. We must be very careful when we wish to credit heated emotions to "righteous indignation," or when we think that we have a justifiable reason to be angry. While it is not always wrong to feel anger, many expressions of anger are an uncontrolled response of the "old man."

Anger clouds our vision. The "sons of thunder" were most likely motivated by anger when they suggested that Jesus command fire to consume the inhospitable Samaritans. Jesus rebuked them with, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" Luke 9:55. Have you ever seen someone "blind with rage"? "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly" Proverbs 14:16-17. David's anger with Nabal clouded his vision until Abigail's cooling advice opened his understanding.

Anger is contagious. Therefore "make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul" Proverbs 22:24-25. Godly people will avoid our company if we are prone to anger. Anger "stirreth up strife" Proverbs 29:22. It does not blend with kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving relationships.

Anger must be dealt with in order to maintain a relationship with God. "First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" Matthew 5:23,-24. It is inconsistent to claim peace with God while being upset with our fellow men. "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" James 3:10.

Putting off anger is a prerequisite to becoming more like our Creator "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" James 1:20. Our loving God desires that we would be conformed to His image. "Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" Colossians 3:8-10. Shame follows actions that are done under the influence of uncontrolled anger. By God's grace may we put away anger.

*Brother Ernest.*



*PRAYER POINT*

*“The effectual fervent prayer  
of a righteous man availeth much”*

*Pray for the new congregations  
that have developed over the last several years at various locations.*

*Thank God for the freedom we enjoy to serve Him  
and for the open doors to proclaim the Gospel.*

*Pray for those who have recently been called  
to share in the leadership role of the church.*

*Pray for those who have experienced tragedies because of earth-  
quakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and so forth.*

