



## Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage

### Introduction

By David Kirkwood

Welcome to the third issue of *The Awakening!* In 2024, with God's help, we hope to publish four issues, twice as many as last year. I have been encouraged by all the good feedback from (1) already-born-again Amish folks, (2) those who are seeking to recover their Anabaptist spiritual heritage and be born again, and (3) those who have just recently been born again. Here's an excerpt from a letter from one of the folks in that third category:

Good morning, David. Beautiful fall day here.

I thank God every day that I received the first copy of "*The Awakening!*" so that my eyes could begin to see the Light.

I grew up in a typical OOA [Old Order Amish] setting, not as

conservative as some, but very traditional as far as Ordnung, shunning, believing that I can only hope to get to heaven, believing that anyone who left the OOA church was being misled (even if you still worshipped the same God but now in a different denomination), not separating church membership from baptism into the OOA church etc.

I see it as nothing but God's hand involved here, as I remember receiving the first edition of "*The Awakening!*" and placing it into a drawer, whereas I would typically have trashed it right away without even reading it.

A month or two later when I hit bottom and after praying earnestly every day for some answers, depressed and in the midst of serious conflict... I remembered the copy I received and stashed away, and started

reading it and things began clicking.

I read through it several times before I really started believing there might be some truth to what you printed. I was intrigued and immediately got ahold of and read some of the book titles you authored and published, to get a better picture of who is behind this project. (BTW I really appreciated your book *Forgive Me for Waiting So Long to Tell You This*. [Note: *Forgive Me for Waiting So Long to Tell You This* is a book I wrote more than 30 years ago. We would be happy to email you a free copy. Just request it, either by postal mail or by sending an email to David@HeavensFamily.org.]

The man who wrote that letter is still Amish and we have encouraged him to remain Amish for as long as he and his family can. A big factor will

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## Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage

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be the Amish community in which he lives. From all the feedback we've received so far to *The Awakening!*, we have certainly learned that, in some Amish communities, being born again is looked upon very favorably. In other communities, however, it is grounds for excommunication.

The undeniable fact is that being born again is the spiritual heritage that belongs to all Anabaptists. It was the centerpiece of the spiritual lives of your ancestors and all the original Anabaptists. It is not a "new teaching." It is mentioned more than once in the 1632 Dordrecht Confession to which all Amish people subscribe. And the original Anabaptists did not think for a second that everyone who was baptized was born again by virtue of their baptism. That is why all of them were re-baptized once they truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is why they were labeled "Anabaptists" (which means "re-baptized") by the religious people who persecuted them. The original Anabaptists believed that the sign of the new birth is a transformed life and a person in whom the Holy Spirit lives and bears fruit for the glory of God.

In this issue of *The Awakening!*, we've included the incredible testimony of Eva Troyer, who was miraculously healed by faith in Jesus after a seven-year debilitating ordeal with Lyme Disease. Her story will encourage anyone who needs a miracle from God. Eva was born again during her ordeal, and she and her husband continue to live an Amish lifestyle.

Eva's bishop is Norman Yoder, who wrote an article for the previous issue of *The Awakening!* Bishop Norman told me that he received quite a few phone calls from our readers in response to his article. He also told me about six adult Amish couples, all from the same family in another state, who were all born again after reading the first issue of *The Awakening!* that we published last year. They have since visited his church in Ohio at least two times. Bishop Norman told me that he is still very open to receiving phone calls from anyone who would like to discuss being born again. His phone number is (330) 275-0825.

(By the way, we have only published articles in *The Awakening!* that have been written by authors who wrote at our request for *The Awakening!* If we edited what they wrote, we received their approval of our edits before we published their article. If we published their name and contact information, it is because they gave us permission. We have written proof for all these claims.)

Also in this issue of *The Awakening!* we've included the inspiring testimony of Ben King. Ben was certainly not an exemplary Amish man, but he was dramatically born again about seven years ago. You will be amazed when you read of all that God did for him. Being born again saved his life, marriage, family, and business.

A few months ago, I received a letter written by a young Amish man in New York named Ben Coblentz that he had written to his parents and relatives. Like the original

Anabaptists, Ben was questioning what he had been told all his life, and he was asking the same questions that every Amish person asks within their hearts. Also like the original Anabaptists, Ben was comparing what he had been taught with what the Bible says.

Ben's letter was so gracious and well-written, that I knew it deserved to be read by more people. Ben also shares his contact information so that any reader can reach out to him.

Finally, we greatly appreciate your feedback. Your letters of encouragement and financial help are what keep us encouraged to continue publishing *The Awakening!* (*The Awakening!* is one of many outreaches of the ministries of Heavens Family. Please address all correspondence to *The Awakening!* address of P.O. Box 611, Punxsy, PA 15767 rather than Heaven's Family's general mailing address.)

If you would like to speak to former Amish minister Jonas Kurtz who was born again about two years ago, you can reach him at (814) 952-7758.

We publish *The Awakening!* because we are compelled by the love of God. He loves you, and He wants you to be included in His eternal kingdom. The door to that eternal kingdom is through being born again by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—as has been experienced by all the original Anabaptists, and also myself, Jonas Kurtz, bishop Norman Yoder, Ben King, Eva Troyer, Ben Coblentz, and thousands of others who have been born into Amish families—many of whom are still living an Amish

lifestyle. Together, all the born-again people around the world comprise the church over which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head, the church whose members are children of God and who know Him as Father. They don't all agree on everything, but they hold one thing in common, and that is that Jesus is their Lord, Master and Savior.

If you are unsure if you have been born again, that is probably an indication that you have not. Anyone who has been born again will tell you that it changed their life dramatically, because that is when God's Holy Spirit came to live in them and through them. Our goal is that this issue of *The Awakening!* will result in your spiritual rebirth. Please read with an open heart and mind!

## My Incredible Healing by my Lord and Healer, Jesus Christ

By Eva Troyer

When I was thirteen, I started having pain in my face, neck and head. So my parents took me to our doctor, who diagnosed me as having a sinus infection. Following five or six prescriptions for different kinds of antibiotics, which didn't help, he sent me to have a CT scan and then to an ENT specialist. The specialist ran tests, checking for allergies, and then prescribed narcotic pain medication and weekly allergy injections which I did at home.

As time went on, the headaches became so severe, sometimes I could not move due to the excruciating pain. The weight and movement of someone sitting beside me on the bed caused so much pain

that I could not stand it. I also began to hate school because of the pain.

At one of my ER visits the Dr. suggested I see a different doctor. I was referred to a different ENT who then referred me to a neurologist who ordered an MRI, which indicated that I had Trigeminal Neuralgia, one of the most painful diseases known in the medical field. The trigeminal nerve extends past the ear into the face where it branches out into three, thus the 'tri', into the forehead, the cheekbone, and the jaw. I was told that the myelin coverings on these nerves were eaten away in places, causing something like an electrical shock pain. My nerves were damaged in all six branches.

Despite the bad news of this diagnosis, the neurologist reassured me that with the medications he would prescribe, I would be feeling a lot better in six months. I felt so happy! This was the best news I had received since my symptoms began.

The six-month period came and went. Nothing was better, in fact they were worse. I was now having pain in my joints, muscles and bones. I was suffering from extreme fatigue. My whole body hurt.

I was then tested for lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, and other similar diseases. The results of all the tests came back negative. I no longer cared what they called this pain; I just wanted it to be gone. My life was so miserable that sometimes I did not want to live anymore.

Almost everything I did hurt. Every little jar or bump while riding in a car was painful. When my teeth touched each other, it felt like knives. Swallowing felt like broken glass in my throat. I would sit in the car trying to keep my teeth from touching, holding a towel to my mouth because I could not swallow. Words cannot describe how miserable

I was. Some days were completely pain-free, even sometimes a week, but it always came back.

One night when I could not sleep because of the severe pain, my mother was concerned about me and slept with me in my bed. It was winter and cold with a little snow on the ground, but I got up, wearing only my pajamas, and I ran outside. I remember thinking if only I could outrun the pain! I was very weak from years of being sick, and I slipped and fell into the snow at the edge of the yard. I lay there crying, thinking that perhaps I'll freeze to death in the snow.

I don't know how long I was outside before my mom woke and could not find me. She was frantic, as she searched through the house for me. When she couldn't find me, she opened the door and came outside. She heard me crying faintly and found me lying in the snow. She picked me up and carried me inside, wrapped me in a warm blanket, and held me a long time. After this experience my parents decided to begin looking into alternative treatments.

My mother and I went to a clinic in SC for three months called Curae'Lase Laser Medical Center. Here they treated TN with lasers. When that did not relieve my pain, they diagnosed me with Myofascial Pain Syndrome. With this diagnosis, new treatments were added to my schedule.

The treatments were almost physically unbearable. The nurses would press hard with their thumbs into the pressure points and nodules on my back and chest area. Sometimes the pain was so great that I would thrash about and squirm and get away from the nurses because I could no longer bear it. For three months my day would begin with these horrid treatments. Making the experience even worse, the treatments did not help. I wanted so much to leave that place and return home.

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## Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage

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When I did return home, my parents arranged counseling sessions for me to deal with my depression. The sessions helped some with my depression, but the pain continued. I remember crying a lot during that time in my life. I felt very alone.

Following the death of a very close friend who was about my age, I began feeling sorry for myself. Satan bombarded me with feelings of self-pity. I saw other girls our age living happily, with no pain. I wondered why God would hate me so much that He would take my best friend and allow me to suffer in pain every day. The pain was getting so bad that I would sometimes cry and groan all day and night.

When my neurologist saw that he could not help me anymore, he referred me to Cleveland Clinic Pain Management. They helped me some by using biofeedback therapy, which taught me some relaxing techniques to help get through the pain. It just didn't help as much as we hoped. I almost gave up expecting to feel well again. Then someone mentioned that I might have Lyme Disease. That thought gave me hope again. With this diagnosis, maybe they could cure me and I would have a normal life again!

Also during that time, the Lord was convicting me and drawing me closer to Him. I wanted to respond to God, so I decided to be baptized in my parents' Amish church. (*See the gospel at the end of this testimony.*) Attending that church was the kindest, most tender-hearted young man I have ever met. Even though he saw that I was barely able to sit on a bench for the church service, but usually headed for a chair, or bed to lie down, he still asked me out! Of course, I said, "Yes!"

Next we went to a clinic in Florida that treated Lyme disease. It was scary for us, and we felt very alone. Even though we were often worried about how

things would turn out, God was with us and we relied on Him for everything. I was diagnosed with Stage Four Lyme Disease. I was excited about the diagnosis because now I was finally at the right place and they were going to cure me. I just knew it!

They administered four bags of IV medication to me each day. The treatments made me very sick, but I did not care. It was all part of getting better! The IV treatments made me so sick they had to give me nausea medication almost every day, and I began having tremors which sometimes turned into seizures which I was hospitalized for.

The IV drips, which made me very sick and miserable, continued for four months. I was not getting much better. My blood work showed no signs of improvement, and the pain continued to worsen. My doctor prescribed morphine, Percocet, and Vicodin, and he continued to treat me. He was a good man and really wanted to cure me.

My bodily functions were not working correctly anymore, probably because of all the medications prescribed to me. I took seizure medication, muscle relaxants, sleeping pills, nausea medication, anti-depressants, anxiety meds, along with the narcotics and IVs. I needed to be taken to a colonic facility two to three times a week, where they cleaned out my colon for me. I was taking more than a dozen different prescription medications, including artificial hormones, as well as lots of herbal remedies my doctor also prescribed.

Many nights I had trouble falling asleep because of the misery I was in. My mother would give me my sleeping meds, then fill gallon zip-lock bags with ice. She would arrange them around my head and all my joints to enable me to fall asleep.

After all this, I was becoming less and

less optimistic about my ability to ever get well or have a normal, healthy life. Merlin, my amazing boyfriend, seemed to be the only one preventing me from sinking into deep despair. He always kept looking forward to brighter days ahead. I remember saying to him on several occasions, "Merlin, just forget about me. I'm hopeless, and we are never going to be able to get married." People would caution him about marrying such a sick girl. Merlin would always calm my fears and reassure me that everything will work out. He would say, "If God wants us to be together, it will all be okay."

I also went to an upper cervical doctor in Tampa, where my atlas was aligned and I was given a neck brace. After being in the Lyme clinic for six months, I was sent back home to Ohio. We were glad to be home, but I was sicker than I had ever been before. Sometimes I was in so much pain and so weak and shaky that I could not walk on my own. My joints hurt so much that my mom sometimes had to help me walk.

I traveled to UCC in Columbus for a while. From there I was sent to New York to another spine specialist. Here I got a special kind of MRI on my neck and brain. The results were that my atlas was pinching my brain stem, cutting off blood flow, and reducing the flow of spinal fluid and pinching nerves. Following the first treatment, I felt quite a bit better, but after arriving home I felt worse. This pattern continued, so we went to New York for a week of treatments. The extended period of treatment time seemed to help, so the next time we stayed for a month of treatment. The extra time helped, but not as much as we had hoped.

The amount of morphine and fentanyl I needed to survive the pain continued to increase. My addiction to, and my reliance on, the medications continued to grow. My final trip to the ER caused great alarm to my family and me, when

the nurse stated that I was on the strongest pain medicines allowed for home use, therefore they really could not give me very much more. The doctors then tried to sedate me so I would be less aware of the pain.

Feeling very groggy, crying and still in pain, I was sent home at 3:00 AM. My boyfriend, Merlin, had been praying for me almost all night, so when my mom texted him that I was still crying and miserable after spending most of the night in the ER, he was extremely disappointed and frustrated. Merlin texted my mom back and asked, “Why doesn’t God hear us when we pray?” Mom wasn’t quite sure how to answer that question. She did tell him that we know God hears us when we pray, but we just don’t know why God is allowing Eva to suffer so much.

It was becoming clear to all of us, God was going to have to step in and do a miracle if I was ever to be well again. Some time before this, a man from Romania who worked with Merlin’s brother-in-law, heard about my condition. The man kept telling our brother-in-law, “God can heal that girl.”

We had always known that God *could* heal people; we just never expected God *to heal me*. After we met the man from Romania, our expectations began to change! That man, along with several of his friends, fasted and prayed before he came to meet me. One of the most remarkable things he said was that he saw me in a deep, dark pit at rock bottom. That was exactly how I felt!

On that first visit to our house, he told me not to look to him or any other human for help. “You need to just look up. Look up to Jesus.” He said, “When you are healed, don’t tell people the name of the person who prayed. Just say, ‘God did it, God healed me.’”

He taught our family how the blood of Jesus has obtained victory for those

born again into God’s family, who have been made new creations, and joint heirs with Christ! We learned to resist the devil with the Word of God (Ephesians 6:10-20), just as Jesus did when the devil tempted Him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).

Our friend also asked me to search for anything in my life that might need to change. Would God, who knows our hearts better than we do, heal someone who would use their strength and energy to serve the devil? That really gave me something to think about. I repented of everything I could think of and totally rededicated myself to serve God.

He also asked me if Jesus is the Master/Lord of my life. This also convicted me, and so I invited Jesus to come and be Lord in my life.

The second time our Romanian friend came, he brought a friend, Gary, who also ministered to me and my family. He spoke the scripture in Mark 16:17-18. “And these signs shall follow them that believe... They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.” He instructed me to answer people with this confession whenever I was asked how I was doing. “Believers laid hands on me, praying in Jesus’ name, and I shall recover.”

I had never met anyone before who took the Bible so literally and totally believed everything it said! It really excited me, and with all my heart I wanted to believe like that too! Gary’s eyes shone with tears as he told me how God healed his wife from her pain and sickness.

The Holy Spirit directed Gary to tell me how much God loves me. God knew that was exactly what I needed to hear, as my experiences of the past seven years had made me think He did not love me very much. As Gary talked, I began to cry. My heart broke, as at last I began to feel the reality of God’s love

for me.

My dad felt the need to have the ministry of our church involved with all this. He invited them to meet our friends. We are so grateful to them for coming and showing their love. As my dad went to the Bible for answers, he said that we had never actually done what the Bible says to do when a Christian gets sick—call for the Elders of the church and be anointed with oil, and the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up (James 5:14-16). I agreed, so he called our Bishop and Deacon. They and their wives came, prayed over me, anointed me with oil, just like the Bible says to do. And just like the Bible says, the prayer of faith saved the one who was sick! And the Lord did raise her up!

One night after I had been prayed for and received my healing, the pain came back. But this time I knew how to deal with it—I knew to resist the devil with the Sword of the Spirit! I told the devil, “I resist you, devil, in Jesus’ name.” I rebuked the pain and commanded it to leave. I said out loud, “I am healed by the stripes of Jesus, and sickness and pain have no right to be in my body!” Guess what? By believing what the Word of God says, all the pain left that night and I slept very well. Praise God! Bless His Holy Name! “He sent His Word and healed me” (Psalm 107:20).

Sometimes the pain would try to come back, but I knew I could stand on God’s Word and resist the devil because of the authority that was given to me by Jesus (Luke 10:19). It was very important for me, during this time, to read the Bible a lot and meditate on healing scriptures. I learned, and now know, that the more I fed on God’s Word, the more I felt healed every day.

Jesus promised, “Whoever says to the mountain, be removed and be thou cast into the sea, and does not doubt, he shall have what he says” (Mark

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## Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage

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11:23-24). So, I began to speak to the mountain of sickness and tell it to leave. I understood that God gave me the authority to speak in His name, and if we will begin to use that authority, the mountains in our lives will begin to be removed.

Since we walk by faith not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), my sight and feelings sometimes seemed to confirm that I was still sick, but I would always choose to believe the Word of God instead of what I felt in the natural (my sight). Once I understood that the Bible says sickness is oppression from the devil (Acts 10:38), after seven miserable years of oppression, I began to find freedom in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus has set me free, and I am free indeed. (John 8:31-36) These verses convinced me that it really is God's will to heal me. Jesus said, "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me... The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what things He sees the Father do" (John 5:19-30; 6:38). And then Jesus healed every person who came to Him. He never said, "It's not your time" or, "You haven't learned your lesson yet." He just did what He saw His Father do. He healed multitudes, drove out devils, preached the gospel, and made people whole. The Bible says, "Remember, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Isaiah 53:5 says, "And with His stripes we are healed." 1 Peter 2:24 says, "By whose stripes we were healed."

Satan was able to steal my health, destroy my friends' and family's finances, and kill my joy (John 10:10) for seven long years, due to my "lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Now, because of the truth of His Word, and by believing God's promises for health and healing, I began to experience the abundant life that Jesus said He came to give us (John

10:10).

Several months later I was able to walk with absolutely no pain in my joints! I slept though most nights with NO pain! Most days were pain free! Looking back, I remember the pain of a simple task, like pulling a dress on over my head. But now, getting dressed is a breeze!

Often just turning my head, coughing, yawning, eating, riding in a car, going outside in the wind; any of those things would have caused a pain attack that lasted from half the day to an entire week. Now I could do all those things and MORE, with NO PAIN! Praise my Lord Jesus! My joy came back and the Lord gave me a wonderful hope and a very blessed future! (Jeremiah 29:11)

I now echo the words of Peter in Acts 3:16: "And His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." All glory and honor and praise to the Lord of lords and King of kings, Jesus!

Today I am married to my best friend in the whole world. We have three of the sweetest little children on earth. God has blessed us beyond our wildest hopes and dreams! God really is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think! (Ephesians 3:20) All honor and glory to God.

I am praying for every person who reads this testimony, and I wish to say that, although the benefit of health (Psalm 103:3) is wonderful, there is something else that comes first, and that is far, far more wonderful. That is Jesus Christ's power to save! "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). Healing of the body is "things on earth." While we honor and glorify God for healing, we

must remember that is not the entire, or the most important part of Jesus' redemption. So, I encourage you to read and take to heart this gospel message, because if you are not born again and made a new creation, you will never see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3-7; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

True conversion is life-changing, so seek God until you know you are born again. "Examine yourself, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). The book of 1 John was written so we can test ourselves, and so we can know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). **"The gospel" means "good news" and it is simply this:** (1) Jesus died to cleanse us from sin by His blood. (2) Jesus was buried to prove that He died. (3) Jesus rose from the dead, which proved that He was the Son of God who defeated death. (4) Jesus appeared bodily to many people to prove that He rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-6).

We have all turned from God in sinful rebellion (Ephesians 2:1-3). Because God is "Holy, Holy, Holy" He, as a judge, must punish sin, sentencing sinners to death. We have all earned the death sentence. To satisfy God's law we must live an entirely perfect human life, which we can never do, so, because He loves us, He sent His Son, Jesus, who is part of triune God Himself, to earth. In fact, Jesus is God Himself, come in the flesh.

Because Jesus, being fully human, lived a sinless life, He could carry the whole world's sin to the cross and sacrifice His life for ours. Jesus bore the full fury of God's wrath, shedding His blood to cleanse us of sin. He died a brutal death on a Roman cross, the death we deserve, to save us from the wrath of God. **When we sincerely repent, confess our sin, and turn away from it toward God, and ask Jesus to save us, He will!** We will be 'born again' and receive eternal life the moment we put

our faith in Jesus.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Jesus is the only way to the Father. He is the only Savior. We are saved by grace through faith in Him. The good works we do after we're saved are the wonderful fruit of the Holy Spirit who then lives inside of us (Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 5:9). We do have a responsibility, once we are born again and filled with the Holy Spirit, to continue to follow the inward-dwelling Spirit. But once we are empowered by the Holy Spirit, living a godly life is no longer impossible—as it was before we are born again and when we were still slaves to sin.

Don't wait another second to be born again! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!

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If you would like to contact Eva or her husband, Merlin, with questions about being born again or divine healing, they would be happy to serve you. Their address is: 30561 SR 206, Walhonding, OH 43843. Their phone number is (330) 600 5452. Please remember that Eva is a busy mother of three young boys!

## My Amazing Transformation by the Lord Jesus

By Ben King

I was born in 1982 into an Amish family in Lancaster County. As a young boy, I was very afraid of God. In my mind, He was this Big Man way up in heaven who might punish me the moment I messed up. I was very afraid of dying and getting cast into hell, because I just

couldn't do right no matter how hard I tried. I would pray to God that He would please not let me die before I could be right with Him.

When I was 12 years old, an older Amish boy showed me images from a pornographic magazine. That sparked an unhealthy desire in me that I didn't understand. It was not long after that I worked for two different English men who often spoke about perverse sexual things, and that led me into a downward spiral of sexual sin and imaginations. I know now that my experience was not unusual for young Amish boys and men.

Beyond the downward sexual spiral of my youth, for most of my childhood, I felt like I was not accepted by others. I so wanted to be loved. I tried to please everyone. But I constantly felt as if I did not fit in.

When I turned 16, I joined the youth group like all Amish youth do. I resolved that I would not do the things that so many of the youth were doing—smoking, drinking alcohol, driving cars, and listening to music that promoted sin. My resolve evaporated very quickly from all the peer pressure, and I fell deeper into sin and rebellion. Trying again to be accepted, I still didn't feel that I was, and my guilt before God weighed down my conscience even more.

In my late teens, I twice moved out of my parent's home to live by myself and escape all the domestic tension. The first time, it ended in a vehicle accident and a DUI (Driving Under the Influence of alcohol) charge. I moved back home and tried to get my life back together. My life was a cycle of trying hard to do right, failing, and then wreckage.

When I was 20, I started dating a young woman named Fannie Ruth. I began to think that if I would join the Amish church, get married to her, and settle down, I could get my life in order. But my lifestyle contradicted my desires. I

could not find freedom from my desire for alcohol and other women.

Still, when I turned 22, I joined the Amish church and was baptized, and Fannie Ruth and I married that fall. It was not long before I started to feel trapped in our relationship, and I regretted joining the church and getting married. I felt like my life was over. I also owned a construction business that had failed, and we were facing a financial crisis. We struggled under the debt of that failed business for many years.

Fannie Ruth and I had five daughters and a son, but by 2015, everything in my life had only gone from bad to worse. I started to spend time with another woman. I was only at home as much as was absolutely necessary, because that was where I had my shop and office. As far as I was concerned, our marriage was over.

I knew that I was not good enough to go to heaven, and I thought if I'm going to go to hell, then it doesn't make any difference how I live. I decided I would leave my wife and children and go live for myself since I was going to hell anyway. I felt like they would be better off without me anyway.

When my father learned of my intentions, he came to my office one morning to try to talk me out of it. His own father had made a similar decision, and he had lived all of his life with the consequences. When he talked to me that morning, he broke down in tears and pleaded with me not to leave my family.

His concern broke my heart, and for his sake I once again decided that I would get my life straightened out. I asked my father for help because I didn't know what to do. He suggested that I admit myself to Green Pastures, a counseling center operated by Plain Communities. I agreed.

At Green Pastures I was placed on antidepressants, and I received a lot of

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## Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage

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counseling. During that time, Fannie Ruth and I tried marriage counseling, but our counselor soon gave up, saying I wasn't mentally able to handle it.

I stayed at Green Pastures for about three months. When I was sent home, although I felt a lot better, and I had made a decision to stop seeing my former mistress, I knew I had not found the real deliverance I needed. I tried to make myself believe that I was OK, but none of my struggles had changed.

After I returned home, the church excommunicated me for my previous driving and adultery. Although I had confessed everything to my wife, I was expected to confess it to the church and accept its discipline. I did of course, and I was restored as a church member after six weeks.

Things seemed to be going OK for a few months. I was still on antidepressants and at least six other psychiatric medications. Whenever I started to get discouraged, they would just add another medication. I was seeing a counselor every 1 to 2 weeks and a psychiatrist regularly as well. Fannie Ruth and I also had a support group that consisted of three other Amish couples, but before long, there was division among them. It seemed to me like my destiny in life was to be a messed-up mental case.

After about eight months, all my medications started to catch up with me. One of the possible side effects is suicidal thoughts, and I was seriously considering taking my life. I felt trapped, because I knew that if I took my life I would go straight to hell, but my life was also hellish. But I also thought about how my wife and children would get a fresh start if I was gone. Maybe Fannie Ruth could find someone who would truly love and care for her. Maybe her new husband would be a good example for my children. It seems like there were two parts of me that were fighting each other. The one part of me wanted to do what is

right, but couldn't. The other part of me wanted to destroy me.

At the height of that crisis, my support group tried to get me admitted to a long-term rehabilitation facility, but they couldn't find one that would take me. I pleaded with them to do something, because I was afraid of myself. They called a crisis hotline number, and I was admitted to a crisis-intervention center in Lancaster, PA. I stayed there for about 10 days while they adjusted my medication again and started me on a new counseling program with different counselors.

While there, I started reading the Bible and seeking God. For the first time in my life, I started, limitedly, to understand that God loved me and wanted to save me from my sinful life. He did not want me to go to hell. But I still had more to learn. How could I change so that God would accept me? I had tried so many times and failed. What about all my past sins? After my discharge, I still found myself frustrated, and a few months later another crisis landed me back at the same crisis-intervention center.

One day while I was sitting in my room, I was feeling the weight of the guilt of all my sins. I realized that, even if I lived a perfect life from then on, I still wouldn't be able to go to heaven. The sins of my past were too much. I knew that I was separated from God. I started crying out to God for forgiveness. I asked Him to please show me the right way, hoping He would reveal to me the church denomination that had the truth.

As I was praying, God spoke to me. It was not an audible voice, but a clear revelation. I was asking God to show me the way, and I heard these words of Jesus in my heart: "I am The Way, The Truth and The Life, no one comes to The Father but through Me."

I then asked, "How, Lord? What about all my sins?" He revealed Himself to me

as hanging on the cross...the cross that I deserved to be hung up on! He said in my heart, "Lay down your weight of sin at My cross! Your debt has been paid! You are forgiven!! And suddenly, the weight I had been carrying all my life was gone!

"Now what, Lord?" I asked? "What about my church? What should I do with my business? What about my wife and children?" His response was clear in my heart, "Give everything to Me." I said, "Yes, Lord, from now on, everything is Yours." I meant it, and since that day, I have never looked back.

I walked from my room that day with a spring in my step and a smile on my face. One of the staff members met me in the hall and asked, "What happened to you?" The moment she saw me, she recognized I had been changed.

I met with a counselor later that day, and he said I could go home in a day or two if my wife and our support group were in agreement. I talked with Fannie Ruth on the phone and tried to tell her what happened to me. She agreed that I could come home, but naturally, she didn't believe that I had actually changed. Looking back, I myself did not know that I had been born again and had become a "new creation in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17). All I knew was that the weight of my sin was gone. I was a new man, and I was trusting the Lord Jesus Christ for my salvation! I went home and, by the grace of God, within a week I stopped all my medication, and I visited my counselor for the last time.

I heard about a small group of people in our area who were meeting for Bible study, and I decided to attend. Some were excommunicated Amish, and a few were still Amish and secretly attending. I knew that I could get excommunicated for joining them, but I was so hungry for truth that it didn't matter. Besides, I had surrendered my Amish church membership along with everything else. I count-

ed the cost and accepted it. My old life had ended back at the crisis center, and I was now living a new life in Christ.

Life was far from perfect, but I could face it now because Christ was in me and leading me. Any struggles I had I could take straight to the cross and let Him handle it. I had inner peace and strength that was not of myself. I didn't know if my marriage would ever work out. My wife had every reason to never trust me again, and I was starting over. For a long time, she expected that I would fall back to my old ways. Slowly, however, she began to see that the old Ben was dead, and a new Ben had been born.

I tried my best to not hurt my Amish church membership, but a situation arose that was unavoidable. The church was about to excommunicate a young man for several infractions against the ordnung, but the focus was on his forbidden cell phone. From prior conversations I had with him about his faith, I learned that he was definitely a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Plus, I myself had a cell phone, as did quite a few others in the church. So, when I was asked to agree with his excommunication, I told the church I could not agree. How could we condemn a Christian brother for doing what we were doing? How could we excommunicate someone in whom Christ lives? That would be like excommunicating Christ! Regardless, the young man was excommunicated. I think everyone still thought that I was mentally challenged.

During a later meeting with some of the church ministers, I told them that Christ had forgiven me of all my sins. One of them exclaimed, "You can't know that your sins are forgiven!" I said, "I know that mine are." He asked, "How do you know?" I thought a little and replied, "First, because the New Testament repeatedly promises forgiveness of sins to everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Second, I have no desire

to do those things anymore. Christ takes away our sins and we don't even want to do them anymore." That meeting did not result in my excommunication, but it seemed like it was inevitable.

My wife was born again herself in 2021, and our marriage has been completely restored and redeemed. That summer we learned how to truly love each other like never before. There is no way to truly understand love if we have not experienced the love of God, which is in Christ. We have since renewed our wedding vows which I had broken. Now, when we think about our marriage, that is the day we consider that ours began. I asked her if our past was worth going through in order to gain what we now have in our marriage. She said "yes."

When the church voted to excommunicate me in August of 2021, my wife was one of five people present who objected. She was asked to explain why and she said, "He is a changed man, and I wish all the men in this church would find what he found!" Many were amazed that a woman who had every biblical right to leave her deadbeat husband was publicly defending him and declaring that she would stand with him. She was eventually excommunicated herself.

Since that day our family has continuously grown closer. The Lord has blessed us with a new life in Him, which has enabled us to extend grace and love towards one another.

Now we all work together in our family business, which the Lord has also blessed. As I briefly mentioned earlier, before my rebirth we always struggled financially. Before I was born again, I owned a discount store that was failing. I gave my business to the Lord, as I did everything else, and I put a "going out of business" sign out front. God had other plans. From that day forward, our business has grown exponentially, and we are just now opening a second location. I don't say this to boast, but to declare

what the Lord has done. He deserves all the glory.

In fact, none of this testimony is to tell you about me, but to declare the marvelous doings of the Lord. If you are facing any of the struggles I once faced, if you feel like you are stuck in a downward spiral of sin, if you feel dirty inside, there is hope. If you will repent of your sin and turn to our Lord Jesus Christ and commit your life into his hands, He will cleanse you and change you, just as he did for me.

We appreciate our Anabaptist heritage and love all of our Amish family and friends. Although some are shunning us, we will never shun them. We always pray that all of them will, like us, rediscover the spiritual heritage of our ancestors, who rejected man-made rules and doctrines and faithfully followed the Lord Jesus Christ.

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If you have any questions, or want to know more, I would love to talk to you. You can call or text me at (717) 519-7060, or feel free to write to me at Ben King, 163 Magnolia Drive, Holtwood, PA 17566. My email address is BenJKing82@gmail.com.

## Thoughts About My Amish Culture

By Ben Coblenz

Below are a few concerns I have with some of our Amish traditions, concerns which I respectfully and humbly submit to my Amish family and friends for their feedback. If there is anything I'm not seeing or understanding correctly, please help me see what I am not seeing.

There are, of course, many very good things about the Amish lifestyle and that

## Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage

I love about our culture. I could write a long list of those things, but that's not what this letter is about. My concerns might seem harsh, but I don't mean for them to be harsh. I am only interested in truth, and I apologize to any whom I might offend. I'm certainly not trying to say that I'm better than anyone else, because I'm definitely not. I think I have probably sinned more than most.

We have always been taught that if it was good enough for our forefathers, it's good enough for us. But there is a problem with that kind of thinking. Our forefathers questioned what they were taught! As a result, the Anabaptist movement was born!

Sadly, today we have strayed such a long way from the convictions of the original Anabaptists. They baptized each other based on their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they rejected the Catholics' and Protestants' manmade traditions that couldn't be found in the Bible. I'm afraid, however, that over the years the Ordnung has become so important that it has become an abgött (idol) in many cases, and worse, an idol that is esteemed more highly than the Bible.

Today, the primary purpose of the Amish seems to be the preservation of the Amish way of life, rather than bringing people to Christ (as it was with our forefathers). Recently, the bishop said during his sermon that if we don't observe Bahn and Meidung when people go to other churches, the Amish church will be in trouble, because other people will follow those who leave if there aren't repercussions to leaving.

I've heard people say that God has let the Amish way stand for hundreds of years, so it must be good. Think about the fact, however, that Islam been around a thousand years longer than the Amish. We don't consider Muslims to be right! The Catholic church has been

baptizing babies for even longer. That doesn't make it right.

We hear in church all the time that following Amish rules won't get us to heaven. That is surely true. So why then is it a requirement to agree to follow the man-made rules in order to be baptized? And why are believers who start going to a different church shunned? Especially in more conservative communities, a person who dies in the ban is almost certainly considered to be going to hell. Interestingly enough, Jakob Amman, the founder of the Amish, died in the ban!

### Baptism

An Amish person cannot be baptized without pledging, on their knees, allegiance until death to the Amish church and the Amish rules. In order to get to that point, it is necessary to (1) decide to join the church, (2) attend 9 instruction classes over an 18-week period, (3) agree to the rules at the 4th class, (4) get a unanimous vote from the church members that you have sufficiently followed the rules, and (5) meet with the preachers for a few hours usually the Saturday before Baptism Church.

If a church had practiced all these steps during Jesus' time on earth, how do you think He would have felt about it? How does He feel about it today? Ironically, as new converts are about to be baptized, the bishop preaches from Acts: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." There were not five steps to baptism that required months to accomplish. Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch immediately on

the profession of his faith.

When the Anabaptists started, they baptized on a person's profession of faith, just as did Jesus' Apostles. Over the years the Amish have drifted further and further from the founding principles. Some say, "But the Amish way wouldn't survive if we didn't handle baptism and church membership the way we do!" That should help us see that something is wrong! God's will and ways are more important than any of the thousands of cultures and human traditions that have existed throughout history.

Hundreds of years of Amish culture has clouded our view of the gospel. We are taught that we are not to question what our parents and grandparents have taught us, under any circumstances. We of course love and honor them, but they were just humans. Are we so sure that they got it right that we are willing to base our salvation and where we will spend eternity on it?

I cannot help but think about the Pharisees of Jesus' day. They were very careful to keep every minor detail of the Law of Moses, even adding precise requirements to it to make sure that they didn't overlook anything. Yet they crucified Jesus! I wonder, would the Amish of today crucify or otherwise cast out Jesus because He taught something other than the traditions that their parents and grandparents passed down? The fact is, believers in Jesus who leave the Amish for what they perceive to be a more Bible-following church are ostracized, shunned, gossiped about, disinherited and otherwise looked down upon. But Jesus commanded; "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

### Shunning:

I don't think I am alone in believing that it is a sin to shun members of the church only because they left the Amish culture. Secretly, many Amish people agree with me.

The decision to shun someone is usually put to a vote among the church members. We've all seen what happens when someone votes against shunning someone who started going to a different church. That dissenting person's life is scrutinized, and he is attacked by people finding all the things he does that don't conform with the rules. People immediately report to the bishop, informing him about different things that person is doing that they perceive to not be in the Ordnung. When I joined the Amish church, I thought I had a vote. I soon learned that the vote had better be "Yes, I agree."

If a member leaves the church to live an immoral life, the Bible certainly supports shunning them. Many times, however, church members leave, and they do their best to live a Christian life, and they attend a Christian church that believes in the Bible and preaches God's Word. The result is always that they are shunned the same way a man would be if he left his wife and family and became a thief and a murderer. How can that be right in the eyes of God?

Driving a car or having electricity doesn't equal living an ungodly life. Technology is merely a tool. A truly born-again Christian will not be interested in using tools, such as a cell phone, for evil. It is the same as owning a rifle. A rifle can be used for evil or good. Good people only use them for good.

I understand why the Amish put some of these rules in place, but over the years they appear to have become more important than the Bible itself, especially in more conservative communities. Fortunately, in some more liberal Amish churches, the shunning is reconsidered

and lifted after the person who left has been a member of another Christian church for a period of time.

There is no doubt that shunning is necessary in order to preserve the Amish way by causing other members to be afraid of leaving for fear of losing their relationship with their family and friends. That is, however, another example of the Amish considering their culture to be more important than following Scripture. Most never explicitly think of it that way, but "by their fruits you will know them."

Some say, "But the Bible says that faith without works is dead and cannot save anyone." That is true. But what are the "works" that the apostle James was writing about? They aren't following hundreds of manmade rules in order to keep people happy and keep them thinking that you're a good person.

True faith always produces works. Genuine faith in Jesus Christ always results in obedience to His commandments. I believe that leaving the Amish can be an act of repentance and a "work" of obedience if done to follow one's conscience and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing what I know now, how can I continue to affirm my agreement with the rules twice a year? How can I, with a clean conscience, vote "yes" when a person is being shunned for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? How can I join in the persecution of a person who loves the Lord Jesus and is following Him?

### **Evangelism:**

The Bible commands in many places to evangelize and spread the word of God to unbelievers. For some reason the Amish ignore this commandment almost entirely. Most Amish will be hesitant or unwilling to even talk about any Scripture at all with a non-Amish person. Why? I truly don't know the answer.

The early Anabaptists were very vocal about their beliefs and earnestly shared the gospel. Many gave their lives for the gospel. Yet, since 1950, only approximately 75 people from the outside are known to have joined and stayed with the Amish. Since the Amish are such a different type of church, it probably wouldn't be feasible to attempt to recruit people to the Amish church itself, but we should still try to spread the good news of the gospel!

### **In General:**

When word comes around that someone has left the Amish, we always hear the preacher say, "They took their faith under their feet," meaning that they abandoned their faith. Certainly, sometimes people leave and do just that. They leave so they can pursue sinful pleasures. In many cases, however, that simply isn't the case. If people leave and start going to a Christian church, they haven't abandoned their faith. They may have abandoned Amish culture, but not their faith.

We should be happy that they found a closer relationship with God. We shouldn't be offended that they found it somewhere other than with the Amish.

Are we upset that they are no longer under our control? Certainly, it's very possible to have a close relationship with Jesus as an Amish person, and I believe many Amish people do. The fact that someone was better able to understand Scripture with another group isn't something to be upset or angry about. All that matters is that people become closer to God and obey Jesus' commandments.

We, as the Amish, have come full circle. Just as the Catholics persecuted early Anabaptists who left the Catholic church to follow Jesus, so now we persecute people who leave the Amish church to follow Jesus. We speak badly of them because they are sometimes rebaptized. But that is precisely what

## Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage

our forefathers did after being converted from the Catholic and Protestant churches. They were all rebaptized! We all know that the name, “Anabaptist” translates to “rebaptizer.”

Is it not possible that, because of human error, we have drifted away from the important things over the last three hundred plus years?

I don't believe that, on judgment day, God will accept the excuse, “I did what I was taught to do.” And that is why I have decided to follow Jesus and do what He taught. I know some will say to me, “But you made a promise to stay with the Amish church on bended knee”. Yes, I did, and now I'm repenting for the mistake of making a vow that might require me to disobey God.

If you have any questions for me, or want to discuss these matters further, I would love to hear from you. You can write me at:

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### Letters From Our Readers

We receive so many letters from our readers, and I wish we could publish them all. As you might imagine, those letters span a broad spectrum of opinions! Some are very encouraging and others are very discouraging. Some send us names and addresses of Amish relatives and friends to add to our mail list as well as generous donations to help us continue publishing. Some request to be removed from our mail list.

Below, first, is a well-written, spiritual letter from a humble, sincere, born-again Amish man from Ohio that, like so many other letters, left a good impression on me.

David, hello, greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus.

I am a \_\_\_-year-old Old Order Amish man from Ohio, and we received your first two issues of *The Awakening*. I decided to write to you with some concerns and comments about your articles. I recognize that these are my viewpoints and if I'm wrong I hope the Holy Spirit will reveal it to both of us.

First of all, I'd like to thank you for the time and effort you put into this project, it seems like you are sincere in your motives in this. Some of the things you have written have struck deep, while in my opinion I question if you have the right grip of a few things concerning the Amish? I will touch on these later.

About being born again and Amish, it saddens me very much that our fruits are evidently not showing this to sincere believers outside the Amish church. In a perfect world I feel that every Amish church member should be born again, as we are all baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost upon our confession that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We all (as far as I'm aware) go through an instruction period lasting 18 weeks, or 9 times at church services. In this we are repeatedly taught about being born again, and strong encouraged to daily Bible study.

In only one of those 9 instruction classes is Ordnung even mentioned. My understanding of Ordnung is that it is only something we decide we want to have, not have to have, to help us in our Christian walk. We repeatedly hear in sermons that we are NOT saved by works or our Ordnung, but only by the blood of Christ. Therefore we are absolutely not saying you have to be Amish to

be saved, it's just a choice we made to hopefully help us in our Christian walk.

But back to my comment about feeling that every Amish church member should be born again, I very much realize that we do not live in a perfect world. I am sure that some Amish people join the church simply because most of their family and friends are Amish or because they would like to get married. And sadly they never really do make that true change into a born-again Christian? I realize it is also not up to us to judge that (Matt. 7:1). But we are also known by our fruits (Matt. 7:16).

So I hope these are in the minority, but only the Lord really knows that? And I'm sure that it varies from one community to the next. I think some of the more conservative churches might discourage reading the Bible in English, and you hear of people having limited understanding because of that. I would guess those are mostly Swartzentruber Amish, not to point fingers or to say none of them understand German.

But I do ask you, please be careful of how you criticize Ordnung, as far as I know you have never been at a Council church? I don't know if you understand the Amish language and have been in Amish church services? I can say I have been in multiple states in Old Order services and I have never heard anybody claim to be saved through the Ordnung, but in a great majority of them John 3:16 is quoted.

But I also absolutely do not want to try to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit, and if you are being led by the Holy Spirit in this, I wish you His richest blessing.

One article in your last issue was

very shocking, and that was the letter from the former Amish man who wrote about dreading to see Easter come. That is always a precious time to us and I've never heard anyone in this area saying they feel otherwise. Just the fact that you actually feel that will resonate with readers is why I wrote earlier that I question if you have the right grip on a few things concerning the Amish.

All in all, I do recognize that we Amish are very large group of people and we are very human, and I'm sure you see inconsistencies. Maybe we need some criticism to help us re-examine our roots and motives. I know it has been humbling to me to read some of your views, especially where you write that your heart is heavy when you encounter Amish people and why that is so.

Two of your views I wanted to touch on are shunning ex-Amish members and concerning missions work.

The shunning is probably the most controversial subject in Amish history. And I'm not making any claims to be an expert on that, your articles are definitely mind-provoking on that. I know that if a member leaves the Amish church and later joins a different church that seems scripturally sound, most Old & New Order Amish churches do lift the ban.

And concerning mission work, that is definitely a little bit of a struggle for me too, I finally decided that we need people to support mission work too, don't we?

We definitely support mission work financially, can we not try to live out our faith in this country where it seems a lot of people sat one thing and do another? Where a lot of the

population go to church but call issues like homosexuality and divorce OK? Can we not quietly try to live out the commandments of Jesus and try to generously support missionaries and their work with money and prayers? After all we are not saying everybody should be Amish?

I've said everything here out of love and concern, and I wish you God's richest blessings and His empowering Holy Spirit. Could you please leave out my name if you use any of this material for future articles? Also would you care to send us your "Tale of Two Ordnungs" article? Thank you, God bless!

**Note of response from David:** I did of course reply to him with a letter and thanked him for his contribution of \$100 that he gave to help us publish the issue of *The Awakening! Magazine* that you are reading right now. I also sent him the article he requested, "A Tale of Two Ordnungs."

Moreover, I explained my perspective on the Amish world that I have gained through my Amish and Amish-background friends, and through the hundreds of replies we have received from readers of *The Awakening! Magazine*. Many former-Amish readers of his letter would tell us a very different story about their experiences when they were Amish. (Some, sadly, have had horrific experiences.) One fact above all others is revealed by every letter that we receive, and that is that there is a broad spectrum of belief and practice in the Amish world, and it seems the majority of Amish people are not aware of how broad that spectrum is. So they sometimes write to us and say, "You are misrepresenting the Amish! Because what you described does not describe our family or our community!"

We, of course, don't mean to misrepresent any Amish communities. But please remember that there are 370,000

Amish people in North America and hundreds of communities, and there are also tens of thousands of people who were born into Amish families and who have left the Amish culture. Some of them are following the commandments of Jesus as His followers and some are not (which is also true among Amish folks). Some are born again, and some are not (which is also true among Amish folks). Some *think* they are born again and are not (which is also true among Amish folks). Just as there is great diversity among North America's 370,000 Amish people, there is even more diversity among the tens of thousands of ex-Amish people. So, none of us should make generalizations about either group.

Shunning, for example, is something that is practiced by all Amish groups, but with greater and lesser severity from one group to another. The author of the letter above does not seem to have much exposure to the more severe forms that are practiced in some Amish circles. I believe that shunning is biblical, but that it should be practiced based on the Bible and not on human tradition. It breaks my heart to observe Amish folks shun members of their own families who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and who have only transgressed human traditions.

For example, below is a heart-breaking letter that an Amish mother sent to her adult daughter, whom I will refer to as "Lily." Lily left home as a wayward teenager because she was in love with a young "English" man. But she and her husband were eventually born again, and they were transformed, becoming "new creations in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17).

In her letter, Lily's mother informs her that Lily, her husband, and their children will no longer be welcome to come and visit as they had been in previous years, and if they do come, they will not be allowed to come inside the house. Here is part of her letter:

## Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage

“...Therefore we feel it is best not to have any meals with you.... It is not that we don’t love you. I think you understand and you know our rules.... Do remember that this is part of our religion, and we do not want to lose more children to the modern world. So I feel we have to do our part. Also when you come we would rather not have you come inside. As I hear you have no plans to come back [to the Amish] and you feel it is not wrong how you live. This is out of love from your dad, mom and family. We feel this is GODS LOVE!!” (emphasis hers)

Imagine how heart-broken Lily, her husband, and their children were to receive this terrible news. But what is most tragic is that Lily, her husband, and their children all love the Lord Jesus Christ and are His followers. Read this reply to Lily’s mother that Lily’s husband wrote:

Mom and Dad,

Hope this letter finds you all well.... I just wanted to write this in response to your letter. We love you all and pray for God’s blessings on all of you. I really want to tell you the truth about your daughter. I want to tell you what a godly, loving, and wonderful woman she is. If you could see how these other young wives, young moms, and new young Christian women look up to her, you’d be so proud. Not the proud you automatically think of though. The kind of proud where you just thank God for giving her to you as her parents.

She’s been an amazing wife, the best mother, friend, and daughter that anyone could ask for. I can say “daughter,” because I know how much she loves you. If my kids have a love for me like that when they grow up and spread their wings and become their own adults, I’ll be

tickled to death.

She’s stuck by my side and helped me through some of the worst times in my life, loving me when I did not DESERVE it, SACRIFICING her wants, needs, time, and energy to make sure that me and these kids are taken care of and loved. She’s always willing to SERVE in some way. And as you know she is a passionate person, when she sets her mind to something she is going “all in”. Well she has gone all in for the Lord.

And then there’s the children.

\_\_\_\_\_ is a natural leader, loving, kind, selfless, and loves the Lord. She’s been baptized, repented, and accepted Jesus into her heart as her personal Lord and Savior.

\_\_\_\_\_ nearly always reminds us to pray as a family before bed because he too loves the Lord and wants to get baptized next summer.

\_\_\_\_\_ always has someone or something that he wants to pray for or about, he’s also a very gifted boy with lots of talent and a big heart....

I say all of that to say this.... GOD’S LOVE shines bright through your daughter and her children. Lily has tried her best to respect you both, she has gone through a ton of hard times with this, the same as you have. She’s always loved you unconditionally even though spiritually you are not on the same page. She didn’t have the world’s greatest situation growing up, but never have I heard her complain about her family or hold it against anyone. We love you both and pray that you all stay well. If you need us you know how to reach us.

Ephesians 2... that is GOD’S LOVE.

What a gracious reply! Lilly’s husband is lovingly sending a message to her mother to provoke her to stop and think about her and her husband’s decision to shun their wonderful, selfless, godly daughter, and do it under the guise of “GOD’S LOVE” and in the name of Christ. I don’t think I could ever be as gracious as he was. But how tragic the entire situation is. All because of human tradition. And nothing to do with the Bible.

Lily’s mother is fearful that, if she allows Lily’s family in her house, it will send the wrong message to her other children whom she might subsequently “lose to the modern world.” Yet Lily is a shining example of a follower of Christ! (Yes, Lily probably drives a car...something her mother pays to ride in all the time.)

Amish leaders often warn their people that those who leave the Amish always end up leading terrible lives, but that is an unfair generalization. It would be just like me making the unfair generalization that, because some Amish children grow up to be Amish pedophiles, all Amish children grow up to be Amish pedophiles. Or because some Amish boys grow up to be abusive husbands that all Amish boys grow up to be abusive husbands.

Lily and her husband and children, and thousands of other Amish-born people who are no longer Amish, prove that we should not make generalizations about those who leave the Amish. We must all one day stand before the Lord Jesus Christ to give an account. What will Lily’s mother say then if Jesus welcomes her daughter, her son-in-law, and her grandchildren into heaven—whom she shunned while on earth? Will she have any regrets? Are we really to believe that Lily will be cast into hell because she didn’t return to an Amish lifestyle, something that would require her husband and children to do the same?

Most every Amish reader has relatives or former friends whom they are shunning to some degree. Are they being shunned for God-given biblical reasons, or for reasons related to human traditions? How well has that shunning worked to “bring those people back into the fold”? Is the “Amish sheepfold” the only sheepfold that is on the way to heaven?

I am not asking these questions to condemn anyone, but to serve as a “peacemaker” between family members and former friends who are unnecessarily estranged from each other—something that everyone on both sides hates within their hearts. Everyone longs to be reconciled.

I realize that there is much more that could be said from either side of this debate. Hopefully we can address both sides in future issues of *The Awakening!*

Here is one of the discouraging letters we received regarding the last issue of *The Awakening!*

Your magazine, *The Awakening!* is horribly, terribly devilish, I do not want one more magazine to enter my mailbox. If it does, I know for sure that you come from an evil world. I hope you will think again before you start something like this. You are out to deceive people and lie to them. It is just a horrible cult. I already heard before of people like this. No one is “Heaven’s Family” except Jesus and God. Our church believes in real, true things. Keep your stuff to yourself please.

A friend (or an enemy)

And here is a similar discouraging letter:

Please remove my address from your mailing list. The *Awakening* is so far off the right track it is now called Hells Family, don’t send 1

more letter to this address, you are Satan’s workers and maybe if you would read the Bible you could see you need to be awakened, you are the devil’s trash man going to hell according to the Bible (running down Amish). Address to be removed now.

**Note of response from David:** If our publication—which is full of Scripture and fundamental biblical teaching that hundreds of millions of godly Christians around the world would whole-heartedly agree with, including many Amish Christians who financially support our publication—is devilish, please explain how it is devilish. If we are Satan’s workers, please explain in what way that is so. It is easy to make accusations without offering any evidence.

“Heaven’s Family” is simply the name of the nonprofit organization that I founded 20 years ago that has assisted tens of thousands of extremely poor Christians in over 80 nations of the world—using tens of millions of dollars given by thousands of Christians, including some who are Amish. The name “Heaven’s Family” is based on Jesus’ words in Matthew 25:31-46 about the future judgment of the sheep and goats. That passage teaches us that there is a family of people who are going to heaven. We know they are a family because they love each other, and we know they love each other because of the sacrifices they make for those within their family who are suffering. God’s family consists of everyone around the world who has been born again, and those are the only people, according to Jesus, who will see or enter the kingdom of heaven (see John 3).

In contrast to those two letters, here is a letter from an Amish woman who graciously thanks us. As the apostle John wrote, “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does

not love his brother” (1 John 3:10).

Hi, Thank you for all your hard work in sending out *The Awakening!* Me and my husband love reading them. Could you send us copies of your three articles and also the April Awakening copy?

Thank You. May God bless you

Finally, here is an encouraging letter from Ohio that represents many like it:

Hello. I would like to request that my friends be put on your mailing list for “The Awakening.” They have not received any issues yet. [He then gives their names and address.] And our donation of \$100 is to help you keep printing and mailing the next issue. Praising God for the spiritual awakening going through our Amish community!

## Please Write to Us!

Please write us to request any of these articles: (1) “A Tale of Two Ordnungs,” (2) “Amish or Ahamish?,” (3) “Born Again and Amish,” (4) “An Honest Look at the 1632 Dordrecht Confession of Faith.” Our address is P.O. Box 611, Punxsutawney, PA 1767. Or email me [Jonas] at [jonas@heavensfamily.org](mailto:jonas@heavensfamily.org). You can also request to receive future issues via email to save us postage. We do honor all *individual* removal requests, but no one has the right to censor others from hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ or censor us from telling them (Acts 4:19-20). The original Anabaptists sacrificed their lives for the gospel!

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- (1) Eva Troyer's Incredible Healing by Her Lord and Healer, Jesus Christ**
- (2) Ben King's Amazing Transformation By the Lord Jesus Christ**
- (3) The Questions of Ben Coblentz**
- (4) Letters from our Readers**