



Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage

Introduction

By David Kirkwood

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, once said, “I do not like that person. I must get to know him better.” What a wise perspective! Too often, we form opinions about others based on a rumor we’ve heard, or because of a few actual facts we know about them. If we would take the time, however, to sit down and get to know the people against whom we are negatively biased, we would discover they aren’t so bad after all. We might even become friends.

With that in mind, we are once again publishing another issue of *The Awakening!* This will be our third of four issues in 2024. We continue to be thankful for all the positive response that we’ve received from Amish folks across North America, as well as for all the financial support that makes it possible to print and mail 60,000 copies each quarter. There are, however, still some people who are suspect of

our motives and our means. If they only got to know me, or Jonas Kurtz, or any of the other past and current contributors to *The Awakening!*, I’m sure their suspicions would melt away. They would find that we are in many ways just like them. I suspect we would become friends.

If you remain suspect, please get to know us better. Give Jonas Kurtz a phone call at (814) 952-7758. Or his brother-in-law, Mervin Detweiler, who was also born again about two years ago during the early days of the Johnsonburg Awakening, at (719) 371-0250. Or Ben King, at (717) 519-7060, whose incredible testimony we included in the Winter 2024 issue of *The Awakening!* Or contact any of those contributors to this issue, or past issues, whose addresses and phone numbers we’ve published. They are all good people from an Amish background whom you would love if you got to know them personally.

Speaking of some people who are often

mis-judged, this issue contains the story of several Swartzentruber Amish families who experienced a spiritual awakening last year. It is written by one of the Swartzentruber men named Hans who was part of that awakening. Jonas Kurtz has traveled to Missouri several times to visit them all, and I was personally blessed to visit them with Jonas a few months ago. Although Jonas is originally from a more liberal Amish background, he found the very-conservative Missouri Swartzentruber families to be a wonderful group whom he now counts as friends. More than that, Jonas and I both count them as brothers and sisters in Christ, because they’ve been born again and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. They are still all living an Amish lifestyle (but a little less Swartzentruber-ish).

Also in this issue of *The Awakening!*, we have included a letter that originally was 8 hand-written pages from an Amish man in the Midwest, as well as my reply to his letter. It is an example of two people who were

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somewhat at odds but who made an attempt to communicate and better understand each other's viewpoints. We've titled that article, "Two Views of the Ordnung." I think you will enjoy reading our dialogue, and it will hopefully help you clarify your own opinion.

Finally, in this issue we've included two additional ways that we can interact. One is an opportunity to join us as we teach very poor, failing subsistence farmers in East Africa how to double and triple their crop yields during their very next harvest through a program called "Farming God's Way." Through the ministry of *Heaven's Family*, a nonprofit I founded more than 20 years ago, we've already helped tens of thousands of poor East African families lift themselves from extreme poverty by not only teaching them revolutionary agricultural principles, but by introducing them to the Lord Jesus Christ and the new birth. If you want to serve some of the people whom Jesus referred to as "the least of these" (Matt. 25:31-46), getting involved with Farming God's Way is a great way to do that. See the info on page 15.

A second way we can interact is through a new book we are offering called *The Amish Papers*, subtitled, *Encouragement on the Journey from Amish to Ahamish*. It contains 22 articles I've penned over the past five years, written just for Amish folks who want to discover their special spiritual heritage. We can email you an electronic copy for free, or an actual book for our price to print and mail it. Do look for the advertisement for that book on page 15.

In conclusion, let us all strive to be like the "Bereans" of whom we read in the Bible, who "were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness,

examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Your Bible holds the answers to the questions that are in your heart. Do compare what you read in this issue of *The Awakening!* with what is written in your Bible. You will be blessed! And that is our prayer.

An Awakening in Osceola, Missouri

By Hans Gingerich

I was born into a rule-following, letter-of-the-law, Amish community. My family was a typical Amish family there. Rules were rules, and they weren't meant to be broken. At times, my father seemed a bit harsh to us kids, but in retrospect, he did the best he could—in light of his own upbringing—to raise 12 unruly children. He was the oldest of 19 children, and my mother had 13 siblings.

When I was 8, we moved to another state to start a new community. I didn't understand then why we moved, but now I suspect it was because of conflict in our community. (Why else do Amish people move?)

The new community was very exciting, with lots of new things for me and my brothers to try. One of our nearby neighbors was an English family with a boy about my age named Jerry who soon became our good friend. His father was a pastor of a fairly-conservative Christian church. We had always assumed that English people had loose tongues, but Jerry always used very clean language. So my brothers and I educated him with our little stash of Amish-boy dirty words. When Jerry's parents and our parents discovered our secret, all of us got a lesson we would never forget. If you've ever had your

mouth washed out with soap and water, you know what I'm talking about!

Another thing we noticed that was different about Jerry was his aversion to smoking. Our Amish community permitted smoking pipes and cigars (without filter tips). Chewing coarse tobacco (not fine snuff) was also permitted. Most adult men in our Amish community used tobacco in some form or another, and wanting to appear mature, we younger boys would steal the cigar stubs we'd find in the ash trays used by our older brothers, and we'd smoke what was left of those stubs. Jerry, however, would have no part in it. And his conviction, learned from his father, got our attention and respect.

On the other hand, Jerry did teach us how to ride bicycles and watch TV, both of which were of course forbidden in our Amish community. We succeeded in not getting caught, but I always felt guilty for enjoying those prohibited activities and for disobeying my parents. I was beginning to think about my sinfulness. To compensate, I made some attempt to improve and do what was right. Unknown to anyone, I started whispering a prayer each night at bedtime, hoping God would hear me. I wanted to have a relationship with Him, but He seemed so far away.

One evening after my father read our daily family prayer, I asked him and my mother what was the meaning of the Lords' Prayer, which I had often heard, but only in German. They seemed to think it was odd that I would ask such a question, and they didn't really give me a good explanation. Maybe they didn't know themselves. They, like most everyone in our community, struggled to understand German.

When I became aware that one of my older brothers and some of my cousins were secretly breaking some of the

rules of our community, I became a watch dog and reported them. But my older brother remained on a path that, at age 16, lead him away from home into a life with no restraints. I noticed the same trend among other pre-teen boys in our community, and as I grew closer to my teenage years, I worried about being accepted by them. I feared they would make fun of me for being a “goody.” So I started to comprise in order to be accepted. It didn’t help when I reached puberty—something I was completely unprepared for, as no one had ever talked to me about it. But I began to understand the things that the older boys at the sawmill (where I worked) and church often talked and joked about. Impure thoughts became part of my life, which only increased my level of guilt.

I became so depressed and discouraged at times that I prayed that God would just let me die. I only hoped I was good enough to go to heaven, but I doubted that I was. Obviously, God did not answer that prayer. Eventually I decided that He must have some plan for my life, and I would just have to wait and see what it was.

My rebellion grew worse. I started listening to a radio and driving a side-by-side every chance I got at my job. But I was gaining favor with my like-minded, rebellious friends. I slacked on my bedtime prayers because I figured God didn’t hear them anyways.

When I reached the age when I started attending the bi-weekly Sunday evening singings with all the other teens, I was wild and becoming wilder. At age 17, I wrecked a truck that I was secretly driving to buy a hamburger for lunch. Of course, such a deed can’t be covered. Everyone knew I was headed in the wrong direction.

I probably would have left the Amish

then had it not been for a young woman named Elizabeth who captured my eye. The problem was, she was not a rebel, like I was, when it came to the Ordnung. So, once again, I tried to clean up my life with a little less partying. And I did want to go to heaven if I died, which gave me a little extra incentive to try and do better.

I decided to enroll in church membership instruction classes with the intention of making vows to the church and being baptized. I believed that was what it would take to accomplish both goals of getting married and going to heaven. So I started getting rid of anything I had that was forbidden by the Ordnung, like my portable, secret DVD player. I started praying again at bedtime. But impure thoughts still plagued me.

Instruction classes turned out not to be what I had imagined. Due to our limited understanding of German, we candidates could only understand small portions of what we were being told. The exception was the third lesson, at which the rules of the Ordnung were enumerated. We were told that we would be expected to follow them in the weeks ahead as we approached the day of baptism, and we were warned that other church members would be watching us. Breaking rules could jeopardize our being baptized, requiring us to wait another year, a real humiliation.

We also learned that, when we would make our vows to the church, the questions would be asked in German. Even though we only understand about half of what was being asked, we knew we had to answer “yes” to each one in order to move on to the next question and get through them all. When the day of my baptism arrived, that’s what I did, and so I was baptized and officially became a church member.

Between my baptism and my marriage, I kept the rules fairly well other than slipping a few times and drinking with an old buddy. When caught, we would be punished with a two-week shunning, as that is what tradition required. The punishment was no different if you came to the ministers and confessed or if the ministers discovered your sin and made you confess. If you argued with them, however, your shunning would be increased from two to six weeks.

At 21 I married Elizabeth, the love of my life. I figured my purity problem would end with marriage, but it didn’t. I wasn’t able to get rid of it.

During the first year of our marriage, Elizabeth began suffering badly with a tick-related disease. We eventually found a doctor who helped her some, but she never regained her previous level of health, and she still suffers with some of the effects. She also struggled with post-partum depression after having children. Her struggles certainly didn’t bring out the best in me.

Going into business for myself, I frequently used the phone of an English neighbor who lived about four miles from us to make business calls. I did so with great caution, not wanting to be seen by others in our community. That neighbor always told me that I needed to get my own phone, and that I needed one to run a business. She didn’t understand Amish ways. I knew my wife wasn’t open to having a phone, and I didn’t really want one either.

However, shortly before our second child was born, my wife was having pregnancy complications and not feeling well. I was always running to the neighbor to keep up with doctor appointments plus try to run my business. I grew very tired of the constant four-mile trips to use the

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neighbor's phone. So, without telling my wife, I told my neighbor to go ahead and get me a phone, but to get a flip phone.

Soon after, the neighbor showed up with a smart phone she had bought on my behalf! She said it was the same price as a flip phone, plus I would have access to the internet. I had only wanted a phone to make calls! But I accepted the phone. Before long, I was using it, not only to make phone calls, but to view porn.

My wife had no idea I even owned a phone, and I knew she would be very unhappy if she discovered that I did. After our second child was born, she detected that something about me was off. She noticed how unthinking and unthoughtful I was. I would sit at the table during meal times and not even notice when our children would ask me for something

I eventually told her about my phone, but I didn't mention the porn. I promised her I would hire an English guy to use the phone for my business, which I did. He, however, proved to be undependable, so I fired him and started using the phone again myself, all without her knowledge. My guilt was growing heavier.

I decided to confess to our bishop, which I did regarding the possession of a phone but not about the porn. He told me that I could not hire an English man to run my phone. A younger minister, however, counseled me differently, so I ignored my bishop. And, as previously, I had to fire an undependable English employee.

Observing these repeating patterns, Elizabeth said, "If we aren't going to live up to the rules, why don't we join a more liberal Amish church where it will be easier to follow the rules?"

I never expected my devoted Amish wife, of all people, to make such a suggestion. We were Swartzentruber Amish, and I was convinced for most of my life that I would always be Swartzentruber. I had, however, been entertaining the idea of making a switch for several reasons, and when my wife made her suggestion, I was afraid to show too much enthusiasm for fear of giving her second thoughts.

For a baptized Swartzentruber to leave the Swartzentruber Amish is viewed as no different than backsliding into the world. Just the act of visiting a non-Swartzentruber Amish church (with the intention of searching for a different church and community to join) is grounds for being placed under the bann until one repents. Swartzentruber Amish folks can only move to a different Swartzentruber church, and it must be within the particular group of Swartzentruber churches into which one was baptized!

There is, however, one exception to that rule. If two Swartzentruber bishops in same group disagree and split, then every person in either church is free to join the other side without fear of being put under the bann. Everyone is also given a window of time to leave the Swartzentrubers altogether without fear of any disciplinary consequences (other than maybe some lopsided looks). In fact, members of other similar Swartzentruber churches can chose to side with either of the disagreeing bishops and take advantage of the same window.

All of this is to say that Elizabeth and I, and several other local families, took advantage of such a window so that we could escape without fear of being shunned and find a more liberal Amish church. I considered it to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Our entire community was shocked by our decision, and my wife was worried that I would leave the Amish altogether, following in the footsteps of my other siblings. But our little group began reaching out to other families who had left years earlier, as well as visiting their communities.

We did find a group where we felt fairly welcome and that received our interest. And on off-Sundays, someone in our little group started having a Bible study to which my wife and I were invited. At that Bible study, the group used the Pennsylvania Dutch translation of the Bible. I was hesitant about that at first, because I had always heard that parts of it had been twisted by the translator, although no one knew which parts. I was surprised, however, how much more easily I understood it in comparison to the German or KJV Bible. I began to realize that what I needed more than anything was an understanding of God's will that was based on His Word. I turned to God in sincere prayer, asking him to give me a thirst for his Word. He answered that prayer.

I started regularly reading the Pennsylvania Dutch Bible, and I enjoyed it very much. Other books no longer held my interest (whereas in the past, I had no interest in the Bible). There were times when I would be reading Scripture and be shocked by what I read. I would get my German Bible and compare the same verses, and I would be surprised that they agreed perfectly. For the first time in my life, I was grasping the meaning of the Bible. Suddenly I understood why others who had left in the past were claiming a spiritual transformation. I was experiencing a transformation myself! I started studying the Bible even more and sharing what I was learning with the other former Swartzentruber families.

Then we all received this paper in the mail called *The Awakening!* I read it and was surprised how well it aligned with what I was learning. A year earlier I might have read it and then just forgot about it. But *The Awakening!* got my attention. I had to call Jonas Kurtz, whose phone number was listed in the magazine. We had a great phone call, and Jonas told me that he would soon be traveling through Missouri on his way to Colorado. He offered to stop in and visit with us. I was a little concerned about being deceived in some way, but I agreed.

Jonas brought his wife and four children, and they spent a few days with us. We had several Bible studies in our house along with about five other newly born-again Swartzentruber Amish families in the community. We used a format Jonas shared with us that helped us to make sure we not only correctly understood each Bible passage that we read, but that we would also commit to apply it to our lives. It was really inspiring! After that we started a mid-week Bible study for our group. Everyone seemed to enjoy it.

Jonas has continued to help us on our spiritual journey. He has visited us several times. He is always honest and straightforward if we ask a question, hiding nothing. He always encourages us to find our answers ourselves in God's Word. Through all this we learned to really appreciate him and his zeal to serve the Lord.

I cannot pinpoint the exact day, week, or even month that I was born again, but I know it happened because I am born again! I am a new person, and everyone who knows me knows it, especially my wife, Elizabeth. Our marriage has never been better. Just like the apostle Paul, I can now say, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

And like Paul, I am no longer striving to earn my place in heaven, because Christ has become my righteousness. He is the one who died for my sins on the cross, making the forgiveness of all my sins possible, and He is the one who was raised from the dead, making my own spiritual resurrection possible. I was spiritually dead, but I am now spiritually alive (Eph. 2:1-7)!

And I have the promise of eternal life through Christ: "And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11). I have been saved "by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8-9). I love God because He first loved me (1 John 4:19), and because of my love for Him, my greatest desire is to obey and please Him (John 14:21, 23)! I have discovered the "treasure in the field," and it is worth giving up everything to gain! (Matt. 13:34).

Our family is now settling into another Amish community where we intend to focus on building God's kingdom and bring glory to His name. It is the least we can do for Him in light of all He has done for us. All that matters to us now is God's Kingdom. One day it will be the only kingdom, so we must do all we can to help others be ready for it.

We always pray for those within our former community, that they would discover the truths that have been in the Bible all along, truths that were cherished by our Anabaptist ancestors hundreds of years ago. Many gave their lives for those truths, including the truth of salvation by grace through faith, and the truth of the new birth. My hope is that all who are reading this right now might also rediscover their spiritual heritage. If you would like to write to me or talk about your spiritual journey, my contact details are below. I would be honored to help you possess the greatest treasure!

In Christ's service,

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Two Views of the Ordnung

By David Kirkwood

Many of the letters we receive from our beloved readers concern the Amish ordnung, which, as everyone knows, is the centerpiece of Amish life, and what makes Amish culture distinctive.

One of the longer letters we received on that topic was eight hand-written pages, sent to me in October of last year, from a thoughtful, sincere, gracious, born-again Amish man who lives in Michigan. 90% of his letter, and my replies to his various points, follow below. The 10% of his letter that I have not quoted was either redundant or focused on a topic other than the ordnung.

The author of that letter, whom I will call "Andy," certainly gives indication that he is part of an Amish community that consists of many born again people. He closed his long letter with the gracious words: "We need an awakening. Thanks for your efforts. May God give you understanding. May God bless you and keep you."

My replies to all of Andy's points are in italics and contained within the text of his letter that follows.

Dear David,

Christian greetings are sent your way. We just received the 2nd issue of *The*

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Awakening. I really appreciate most of it, especially how you brought out the fact that we can't save ourselves with doing good works, we are saved through faith in Jesus. And also if we are saved we will do good works! I so appreciate that you brought out that if our lifestyle doesn't reflect righteousness, we are not truly born again.

Then of course must follow that even if we are truly born again we can stumble, fall into sin, and yes, if we don't repent we could end up in hell. If it were not possible for us to fall away from grace, that would be like saying, "OK, you made it now; now you can do as you want." As I said, I appreciate how you explained that.

Andy, I very much appreciate these first two paragraphs of your letter. We are in full agreement on the necessity of being born again, salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-10), that faith without works is dead and cannot save (Jas 2:14-24), that God's grace is not a license to sin (Jude 4), and that God does have a standard of righteousness that we must attain to ultimately be saved when we stand before Him in judgment (Matt. 5:20; 7:21-23; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph 5:3-5; Gal 5:19-21). These are the important things, and these are things we have tried to focus on in past issues of The Awakening! magazine.

I am troubled by some points however. Please hear me out. You seem to think that an ordnung is unscriptural, just something to fight over and cause divisions. You say if we're born again we don't need any laws or rules. There may be some weight in your viewpoint if it [the ordnung] is abused, but what good thing doesn't get ugly if abused?

Andy, let me affirm that I have never said that if we are born again we don't need any laws or rules. I have consistently said that, in regard to our relationship with God, we don't need any laws or rules beyond what He has given to us in the New Testament. No one can rightly argue that an ordnung, that is, a list of hundreds of extra-biblical, manmade rules, is scriptural. You can search the book of Acts and all the letters to the church written by various apostles, and you will not find anywhere the anyone created hundreds of additional rules for Christians to follow beyond the commandments that Christ gave us. That is irrefutable.

I believe that believers should belong to a church. I didn't say they need to all be part of an Amish church, but we need to belong to a church. I expect you agree on that point. So next question, Does your church have an ordnung? Any agreement or rule could be called an ordnung. Do you have a set time to start church, or to stop, or what day?

Andy, yes, of course. But setting a church service starting time for 10am on Sundays is hardly comparable to an Amish ordnung, which in every Amish community consist of rules, many of which have no relevancy to anything taught in Scripture, and that regulate every area of life down to the smallest details. Again, there is no comparison. Beyond that, people who arrive at 10:05 at any church on Sundays aren't worried about being shunned and excommunicated. Your example of is simply not a good comparison.

If somebody brought a dog in church that barked and distracted and upset the people, would that be OK? Or if a number of women started coming to

church in bikini suits and the elders (and the born-again congregation) would sense that it is having a detrimental effect on the purity of the young men, would not something be done about it? If so, then your church has an ordnung. And if not than I can't see a church surviving any length of time.

Again, there are several problems with your comparison. First is that it is a little far-fetched! No one brings barking dogs into any church services. No one wears bikinis into any church services. Which is why no churches have any rules regarding such things. In the event that someone did bring a barking dog into a church service and the dog-owner did not voluntarily take the dog out, no one would say, "Our ordnung does not allow barking dogs." They might say, "In consideration for everyone who is here to listen to the sermon, could you love your neighbor as yourself and treat others as you want to be treated (as Jesus commanded) and take your barking dog outside?"

Second, you are comparing a giant pumpkin to a tiny pea. Your examples are nothing remotely close to an Amish ordnung which, as I have already said, consists of hundreds of rules that regulate every aspect of life, down to the smallest details.

Moreover, many ordnung rules have nothing to do with ethics or morality. They are based on no biblical principle. If any church did actually have a rule against bringing barking dogs or wearing bikinis in church services, at least those rules would be based on the biblical principle of loving your neighbor as yourself. But what does shaving off your God-given mustache have to do with any

moral, ethical, or biblical principle? Everyone understands the simple reason why all churches must have set starting times for their church services—as a starting time is necessary for any meeting of people. But who understands why women can't have buttons on their dresses, or why pleats on aprons must be an exact width?

Back to bikini suits. If bikini suits are not allowed in your church, then you have an ordnung about dress.

Again, no church has any rule forbidding bikinis in church services because such things never occur. Even if a church did have such a rule, they still would have nothing remotely close to an Amish ordnung, that regulates people's attire down to miniscule details, most of which have nothing to do with any biblical, moral, or ethical principle. Not wearing a bikini in a church service is a rule that is based on a moral/ethical principle!

Oh but you say, a true believer will never come to church like that. True. But the fact remains that there will always be some among us that are not true believers. Jesus had a traitor among his apostles, we can't get away from people like that. In the bikini suit case, by not allowing those, we are starting a dress code. So what will be allowed now? A swimsuit that covers just a little more? You see what I am getting at. What I'm saying is that there needs to be an agreement among a group of believers as to what is allowed and what is not. Some lines will eventually need to be drawn. Then you have an ordnung.

Please consider what you have written, because it is so informative. You just declared, in your own words, that no true believer will

come to church in a bikini. So, you have just admitted that no believer needs a rule restricting her from wearing a bikini to church. Thus, you are saying that the anti-bikini rule is for unbelievers, so that they will behave like believers. And that reveals something about what happens when churches have ordnungs.

Using your bikini example, here is what happens: The believers don't wear bikinis to church because they are born again. They love God and thus keep His commandments, and they follow the indwelling Holy Spirit. The unbelievers, however, don't wear bikinis to church because of the social pressure exerted upon them by the anti-bikini ordnung. So, like everyone else, they keep the anti-bikini ordnung as well as the hundreds of other rules in the larger ordnung. But they've never been born again, they don't love God, and they are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

When they die and stand before God's judgement seat, He judges them according to their deeds, which of course also includes their motives. And He takes into account that they: (1) only kept the ordnung because of social pressure (and they often disobeyed it when they could get away with it), (2) limitedly kept some of God's commandments, but again, only because of social pressure and not because they loved Him, and (3) didn't keep quite a few of God's commandments because they found a way to keep their disobedience hidden from the church, or because the entire church ignored certain commandments because it elevated the ordnung above God's Word. And so, God casts them into hell.

I've just described what happens

when a church has an ordnung consisting of hundreds of extra-biblical, manmade, non-moral rules. And when an ordnung is passed down from generation to generation for hundreds of years, it becomes the central focus of a religious culture. Everyone is obeying the ordnung purely because of social pressure. They may not be born again. They may not actually love God. And when they die, God casts them into hell. And that describes many (not all, of course) Amish churches.

You wrote, "There needs to be an agreement among a group of believers as to what is allowed and what is not." Please show me anywhere in the New Testament where the believers created hundreds of extra rules upon which they agreed. You won't find it. And why not? Because Jesus has already determined what is allowed and what is not—the behaviors that are important to Him—and those who are born again all agree that they should be submitted to Him and obey His commandments. And in areas in which Jesus didn't give clear direction, the early Christians, as individuals, did what seemed best to them, and they all walked in love towards those who held different convictions. For example, the early church consisted of Jewish believers in Jesus who kept all the dietary laws of the Mosaic Law, and Gentile believers, who generally didn't. They all walked in love towards each other. They didn't establish an ordnung.

I do believe that Scripture supports having an ordnung. You compare an ordnung to the Law of Moses [in your article "A Tale of Two Ordnungs"]. We must realize that when Paul wrote his letters and he wrote about the "law," he was speaking about the Law of Moses.

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He was writing to them that keeping the Law of Moses can't get them into heaven, it is by faith that we are saved. The Law of Moses said, "Do this and you shall live." Jesus says, "Believe and you shall be saved." So Paul had some explaining to do to explain that the works of the Law (of Moses) cannot save us, but faith in Jesus can. Then he went on to say what works go with faith in Jesus. Thus you see Paul wrote about 2 different sets of works, the works of the law, and the works that come with being born again. And he wrote about maintaining those good works. See Titus 3:8, 14.

Andy, you wrote that Scripture supports having an ordnung. If you are speaking of any ordnung beyond Christ's commandments, I must disagree, and I challenge you to show me the scriptural support for your claim. You will not be able to.

Regarding the Law of Moses, we could say that it was an ordnung given by God to the people of Israel, the Jews. Jesus perfectly kept that ordnung. But He was the only one. God had promised the Israelites, "Do this, and you shall live" (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12) but no one did it, and so it brought death instead of life. As Paul wrote, "This commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me" (Rom. 7:10).

God, however, mercifully made a way for the people of Israel to pass from death to life, and as you know, that way was through Jesus, who not only provided a way for law-breaking Israelites to be forgiven, but provided a way that they could be empowered to obey God through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

God never gave the Mosaic Law to the Gentiles, but He did give them

an ordnung that He gives to all people—an ordnung that He has written in their hearts, and what we call our "conscience." Paul wrote:

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus (Rom. 2:14-16).

Jesus, of course, died for the sins of all Gentiles (which includes all Amish people), so that they might be born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit to live obedient lives for His glory.

You wrote, "Paul wrote about 2 different sets of works, the works of the law, and the works that come with being born again." Personally, I think there is a better way to divide all the laws that God have ever given—into laws (1) that are moral/ethical (such as loving your neighbor) and laws (2) that are not moral/ethical, such as the Mosaic Law's dietary restrictions.

The law that God has written on every conscience of every person who has ever lived, both Jew and Gentile, is 100% moral/ethical. It teaches us to always treat others as we want to be treated.

The Law of Moses was a combination of both moral/ethical and non-moral/ethical, and the moral part, of course, included the "law of conscience" (recall that the commandment to love one's neighbor

as oneself is first found in Leviticus 19:18).

Finally, the Law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2), which includes everything Christ commanded, of course also included the "law of conscience," plus every moral/ethical law in the Mosaic Law, plus a few special, new commandments related to the new covenant. The Law of Christ did not include any of the non-moral laws found in the Mosaic Law.

All of that is to say this: All three "ordnungs" that God has given (the law of conscience, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Christ) overlap to some degree. They all include the same moral/ethic laws, which can all be summed up in one law, which Jesus said was the 2nd-greatest commandment, which is, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

And by keeping that 2nd greatest commandment, we in a large way also keep the greatest commandment, which is to love God with all our hearts. Unlike Amish ordnungs, all three of these ordnungs that we find in the Bible were given by God, and none were created by people. And as far as the New Testament is concerned, the only ordnung that Christians need to obey is the Law of Christ (which includes the law of conscience and the moral/ethic laws of the Mosaic Law). It is the Law of Christ that the indwelling Holy Spirit helps born-gain believers to obey.

I do agree however that if we were to believe that we can get to heaven by only obeying our ordnung, then you could definitely compare it to the Law of Moses. Just obeying the strictest ordnung in the world will never make you righteous in the eyes of God. We need to be born again!

I am unsure of exactly what you are saying, but I am fearful that you are implying that we can get to heaven if (1) we are born again, and (2) we obey the ordnung. But regardless of what you are saying or personally believe, what I have just written describes many Amish people, who are convinced that they can't get to heaven unless they obey the ordnung, whether they believe in being born again or not. That is, obeying the ordnung is perceived as either the sole means to getting into heaven, or as an additional requirement—along with being born again. Either view is unbiblical. The biblical truth is that getting into heaven requires the new birth and then an ongoing faithful devotion to the Lord, obeying His commandments, with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit, until death or Jesus' return.

But as I said earlier, a born-again congregation will need some sort of ordnung. Then some will have an extremely long or oppressive ordnung and others not much at all. Let us be careful how we judge each other.

Again I ask, please show me in the New Testament an example of an ordnung other than the Law of Christ? You will be unable. The early church had no ordnung that resembles an Amish ordnung because they had no need for one. They had the new birth, the commandments of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Millions of Christian churches around the world today and down through the last twenty centuries have existed and thrived without anything that resembles an Amish ordnung. Many of them, unlike the Amish churches, do not ignore Christ's commandments to spread the gospel to the entire world and make

disciples of all the nations (Matt. 28: 19-20).

You seem to think it is unscriptural that we excommunicate or shun those who refuse to comply with the ordnung. Let's look at the bikini suits again. I know it is an extreme example, but that helps us see the point. What do you do if those bikini suit wearers refuse to comply with any dress code and say an ordnung is not needed? They know they are an offense and a stumbling block and yet they refuse to change. Does this not point to much deeper heart issues than just a disagreement on how to dress?

Again, your bikini example, not only is extreme as you admit, but it is actually unapplicable because it is so unrealistic. You have already admitted that no true Christian woman would wear a bikini to church (much less a non-Christian woman). In any case, how does your example compare to excommunicating an Amish woman who might wear a capp that is just slightly different than what is required by the local ordnung? There is no comparison.

Regarding excommunication, there is no example in the New Testament of anyone being excommunicated or shunned because they refused to obey any part of an ordnung, simply because there were no ordnungs in the early church. Excommunication was reserved for people like the man in Corinth (see 1 Cor. 5) who was living in a sexual relationship with his stepmother and who was professing to be a follower of Christ. He was sinning by biblical definition of sin. His lifestyle stained the church. He obviously was not a true believer. Paul wrote:

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves (1Cor. 5:9-13).

Excommunication is also reserved, according to Jesus, for those who commit a sin against a fellow believer but who refuse to repent after being confronted three times, first by the offended person, then by one or two others, and then by the entire local church (see Matt. 18:15-18).

In both cases I've mentioned, a transgression against God's commandments is what results in the excommunication, not a transgression against manmade rules that can't be found in Scripture.

The liars and those who persist in a sin after several admonitions should be shunned – according to my understanding of Scripture.

I agree with you 100% on that last sentence. But notice you said, "those who persist in sin." The definition of sin is to break one of God's commandments. If you elevate to the level of a sin a transgression against

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some rule in the ordnung that is not a rule given by God, you elevate man's rules to be on par with God's rules. That is dangerous, as it makes men equal with God.

Also read Romans 14. Paul writes how important it is that we don't do anything which causes others to stumble, to be offended or be made weak. How is it that you call it wrong for us to get the ones who are getting baptized to promise to support the ordnung, which basically is a list of things we believe will cause to stumble, be offended, or be made weak if not kept?

I have read Romans 14 many times over the past 50 years of my Christian life. In the early church, some Christians would not eat any meat, fearful that it might have been sacrificed to idols, and they didn't want to offend the Lord by any association with idol worship. Other Christians had no scruples about eating meat, knowing that they were not committing idolatry if they happened to eat some meat that was sacrificed to an idol. Paul told both groups to walk in love towards each other; an application of Jesus' commandment to love one another. Note Paul's advice to both groups:

One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. The one who eats [meat] is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat [meat], and the one who does not eat [meat] is not to judge the one who eats [meat], for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand (Rom. 14:3-4).

Did you notice that Paul didn't create an ordnung rule, forcing

everyone to only eat vegetables, or forcing everyone to eat meat? Since there was no divine commandment regarding eating meat sacrificed to idols, Paul applied one of Jesus' most basic commandments to the situation—those of different personal convictions should simply love one another. So everyone should respect the convictions of others. And that is what biblical churches around the world have been doing for 2,000 years when there is no clear scriptural commandment. Everyone has respected each other's convictions.

Moreover, in the early church's debate regarding whether or not it might offend God to eat meat sacrificed to idols, the issue had a biblical association, as we know God is offended by idolatry. How does that compare to so many things that are forbidden by Amish ordnungs? How is shaving one's God-given mustache (and hundreds of other prohibitions in Amish ordnungs) related to anything biblical?

If the early church had been like modern Amish churches, they would have said to new converts before they baptized them: "The leaders have decided that none of us should eat meat, so you must promise that you will never eat meat from now on." But clearly, that is not what they did.

And remember, most of the things our ordnung is against did not exist when the Scriptures were written.

You are obviously referring to modern technology and typical Amish prohibitions against it, which vary from one Amish group to another. I am not sure, but hopefully all of those Amish prohibitions against modern technology are

based on some scriptural principle. For example, quite often, smart phones are forbidden by the ordnung. That prohibition is based on the fact that a smart phone provides access to the internet which can provide access to porn which leads to lust which can destroy marriages. And that is all true. If the smart phone that I own was causing me to stumble in that regard, I would eliminate it. Jesus said, "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off" (Mark 9:43).

Take note that Jesus' commandment I have just quoted is a commandment to individual followers of Christ. Again, Jesus said, "If YOUR hand causes YOU to stumble." He did not say, "Leaders, to prevent anyone's hands from ever causing them to stumble, cut everyone's hands off!" That's one of the problems with ordnungs. They attempt to regulate people's behavior through social pressure, rather than by allowing people to "work out their OWN salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

Automobiles are always forbidden by Amish ordnungs, although some allow for the ownership as long as the owners never drive what they own. It all seems so silly in light of the fact that Amish people ride in cars all the time and pay money for the privilege, employing English people to do what would be a sin for them. I have asked several Amish people for the moral or ethical principle for this prohibition. One told me he thought it was to prevent Amish people from driving to bars where they might get drunk. Yet Amish people who pay English people to drive them across the country to visit relatives could certainly hire a driver to take them to a bar. I have owned cars for 46

years, and not once I have driven to a bar, much less gotten drunk. The reason is because I've been born again, and I have no desire to get drunk. I'm a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17) in Christ! I don't need any church ordnung to keep me out of bars. I have the Holy Spirit living in me! And if driving a car is "worldly," how is riding in a car not also "worldly?"

Why don't Amish folks prohibit gun ownership? A gun is a modern technology that could be used to kill people. Why isn't it considered "worldly," like other modern technologies? Millions of non-Christian people in the world own guns. Hundreds of thousands of people around the world are murdered every year by people using guns. I suspect you will answer, "The reason I own a gun is because I am not worried that I am going to murder someone with my gun. Plus, I use my gun for good, to feed my family with the deer that I kill." And it is the same for me regarding my car. I use it for good and never for evil. I have used it to transport Amish people to where they need to go!

One more thing to consider when talking whether an ordnung is scriptural. Read 1 Cor. 11. Paul wrote to them how to have order when celebrating the Lord's Supper. Some were getting drunk and others were hungry. He wasn't afraid to set that in order. And note how he said, "The rest will I set in order when I come."

I'm afraid you are now grasping at straws to justify your position. What we read in 1 Corinthians 11 has no resemblance to Amish ordnungs, which again, consist of hundreds of rules which have no moral or ethical basis. All Paul did was apply Jesus'

commandment regarding loving one another to one small area of biblical church practice. That is it. And when Paul wrote, "The rest will I set in order when I come," nobody was anticipating that he was going to come and set up hundreds of rules that would regulate every area of everyone's lives. He didn't come with dress codes so that everyone would dress identically the same. He didn't tell men to shave their mustaches but not their beards. He didn't tell the Corinthian Christians what color their house curtains must be, and hundreds of other rules that regulated their daily lives. There was no "ordnung"—other than the Law of Christ.

And note also when Paul wrote to Timothy and/or Titus about being shepherds of the flock, not lords though. A shepherd's job is twofold (or more). First he needs to see that his flock gets fed. He also needs to guard his flock and keep them away from the edge of the cliff. If he were to only teach them wouldn't he have been called a teacher?

Again, you are grasping at straws, trying to force your point into a single biblical word. A shepherd, as you know, also shears his sheep. How are you going to apply that to an analogy that applies to the shepherds of God's flock? Also, a shepherd sometimes leads his sheep to be slaughtered or sacrificed. How does that fit into your analogy of the role of a biblical shepherd? But more importantly, there is zero evidence in the New Testament that shepherds Timothy or Titus ever set up anything that resembles an Amish ordnung.

In your first newsletter you wrote it is not right to have a young person promise to support an ordnung or doctrine. I wish to say that nobody (that I know of) is forced to promise that. Of

course it is true that you can't join the Amish church without promising that. But we do not force our children to join the church. I can't see why someone would want to join a church and yet would not want to support it.

OK, but I have heard from scores of former Amish folks who told me that they were pressured in many ways to join the church, and thus make a vow to keep the ordnung. They knew that they could not be married unless they were church members who made a vow. So not only was there family and community pressure to make a vow to keep the ordnung, but their own teenage hormones were exploited to get them to make the vow.

Then there are those who say that they didn't understand it, that the church wasn't doing right etc. etc. Humans are experts at making excuses. How does God view this? How important does He see it that promises are kept when we claim there was dishonesty involved or that keeping the promise might bring undesirable results? Let's look at a case in the Old Testament that was that way.

When the children of Israel were conquering the land of Canaan the Gibeonites came to them and deceived them with falsehood, saying they came from a far land, and wanted the Israelites to promise not to harm them. The Israelites did not ask God, and promised them [the Gibeonites]. Three days later the Israelites came to their [the Gibeonites'] homes. Imagine their disgust! Here they had promised something that actually seemed to go against God's word. God had told them to destroy the inhabitants! I would have thought that since the Gibeonites had outright lied, the promise would be void. It was not so. They had promised and they had to keep it. Even though the other side lied. Even though it could

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seem against God's will. Even though having them among them could cause problems. Even though this was a promise that had to be carried into the next generations. The Gibeonites were punished for their dishonesty by being made slaves, but the original promise had to be kept. Then we read in 2 Sam 21 how generations later God punished the Israelites for not keeping that promise—even though the ones who had done it had meant well.

Note these points. It was God's people that made the promise to people who were not God's people. But: it was possible for them to keep the promise and still serve God. The promise was a mistake!

How does this story compare to those who leave our churches, break their vows and then turn around and say we do wrong to shun them? I wish to suggest this. As long as the church they joined is righteous enough that it is possible to serve the Lord while being part of the church, then I feel they have no right to trample their vows.

Also consider this: there are not many Amish churches around that would prohibit you to move to another church—at least eventually.

What I see is this: (most) of those who leave our churches and are now being shunned really are living a lie and were simply too proud to submit to the elders. 1 Peter 5v5 Hebrews 13v17.

Note I did not say all. I realize there may have been some extreme cases where it was not possible to serve God and keep your vows.

You say you wish to help families be reconciled. How can it be right for us to lift the ban on those who left us if they are living a lie? How can we believe they truly are born again if they never

come back and make things right?

Regarding the story of the Israelies' vow to the Gibeonites, I'm sure you will agree that, had the Gibeonites deceived the Israelites into making a vow to forever serve Satan, God would never have expected them to keep that vow. True? Of course. God would have wanted them to repent of such a vow. So, it would be foolish to claim that God expects His people to keep any and every vow they have made.

That being so, if I discover that the church to which I made a vow to is not proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, or it excommunicates and shuns anyone from their members who becomes born again (accusing them of adopting a "new faith"), or protects pedophiles and physically-abusive men, does God expect me to keep my vow to that church? I'm sure you will agree the answer is "no." In fact, that is exactly what you wrote, and I quote: "As long as the [Amish] church they joined is righteous enough that it is possible to serve the Lord while being part of the church, then I feel they have no right to trample their vows." Thus, you, just like me, believe that there are cases when an Amish person should not keep their vows to the church. But who decides if a church is "not righteous enough" to allow the breaking of one's vows? That can only be an individual decision made before God and one's own conscience. Everyone will have to give an account of himself before God, and God will not accept the excuse, "My church leaders are to blame for my actions!"

But there is actually an even bigger issue in all of this. If there is any analogy to be made concerning the Amish and the story of the Gibeonite's deception, it is this:

Just as the Gibeonites deceived the Israelites into making a vow that God never wanted them to make, so Amish ministers and parents have deceived young Amish people into making a vow that God never wanted them to make. It is 100% irrefutable that there is not a single scripture in the New Testament that supports the idea of young people, or anyone for that matter, making a vow to any church or to an "ordnung." There is no example of such a thing, and there are no instructions to do such a thing. Again, that is irrefutable. The whole idea of making a vow to a church and its peculiar practices and doctrines is entirely unbiblical. It is just the invention of long-deceased church leaders, an invention that has become an unbiblical tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation. If you are becoming angry as you have read this paragraph, it can only be because you have elevated your tradition above the Word of God. Your tradition has become your idol.

Tragically, just as the vow that the Israelites made (that was not in accordance with the will of God) negatively affected later generations (just as you pointed out), so the same is true of the very first vows to the Amish church that were made hundreds of years ago by Amish people, because their vows were similarly not in accordance with God's will (according to the Bible, as discussed in the previous two paragraphs), and those vows have negatively affected their children, grandchildren, and multiple generations down to this very day. Beyond that, every Amish person who has been involved in either making vows to the Amish church, or encouraging others to make vows to the Amish church, is guilty of perpetuating something God never

wanted anyone to do, something that can't be found anywhere in the New Testament. Again, this is irrefutable.

Those original and subsequent vows have ultimately caused horrible division among the many, many Amish groups that hold to various ordnungs, as you and all Amish people know. Worse, it has caused division in Amish families. It is the root cause of all the shunning and excommunication of family members, which is the most unnatural and perverse thing that could possibly occur in families. When Jesus wanted to use an example of how much believers should love Him, He used family members in His example (see Matt. 10:37), telling His followers that they must love Him more than the people whom they naturally love the most. Yet, among Amish people, family members who fail to keep one senseless, non-moral, manmade rule risk losing their family's love for the rest of their lives! It is utterly bizarre. And it is done under the guise of Christianity, of which the second-greatest commandment is to love one's neighbor as oneself. It is enough to make the angels weep.

It is for these reasons (and others) why so many former Amish people don't view their leaving the Amish church as a breaking of a vow, but rather as a repenting of a foolish, unbiblical vow that God never wanted them to make in the first place. They promised to support something that they later realized God never wanted them to support, something that (in some cases) actually persecutes true children of God who have been born again by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, something that (in some cases) leads people to think that they can't go to heaven unless they keep hundreds of

rules that can't be found in the Bible, and something that (in some cases) protects pedophiles and abusive men.

Former Amish people should not, as you suggest, return to their churches and ask forgiveness for breaking their vows. Rather, all former and current Amish people should ask forgiveness of anyone whom that have coerced or encouraged in any way to make a vow to the Amish church, because they encouraged a vow that is not in accordance with God's will and that cannot be justified by the New Testament. Beyond that, they should also ask forgiveness from God for perpetuating something that is against His will. And finally, they should all renounce their former foolish vows to a church, and pledge their allegiance, instead, to the Lord Jesus Christ and His commandments, as did the early Christians.

I realize that what I am saying is potentially offensive, but I challenge you to refute it biblically. I don't believe that you can. And please understand that I do not mean to condemn any former or current Amish person for any Amish tradition which they have practiced, as all of them were born into Amish families and culture. I view all of them as victims of unbiblical traditions, something that is true of just about every human being who has ever been born. Still, God expects us to follow Him, even if it means breaking human traditions.

Add to this the great disrespect they [those who break their vows and leave the church] are showing to their parents. Please read Jeremiah chapter 35 how God blessed the descendants of Jonadab for respecting their father's wishes,

even though it was something not commanding in Scripture.

As I just mentioned above, Jesus expects that we will love Him supremely, above even our love for our parents. If my parents want me to do something that is opposed to God's will, I must disobey them and obey God, even if my parents feel disrespected. Jonadab did not ask his children to do anything that was opposed to God's will.

You probably recall the story of the man in the Bible who wanted to follow Jesus, but he requested Jesus' permission to first bury his father, an obvious act of honoring his parent. Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead" (Matt. 8:22). If that man returned home to honor his parent, he sinned. Think about that.

God said through His prophet Ezekiel: "I warned their children not to follow in their parents' footsteps, defiling themselves with their idols" (Ezek. 20:18-19). In that case, God was telling children to not obey their parents! When the ordnung is elevated above God's Word, it is an idol. In many (not all) Amish churches, that is the case. Every member of those kinds of Amish churches should abandon their idolatrous churches, and they should not use their teenage vows as an excuse to remain.

I do agree that the Amish have many shortcomings. There are so-called Amish communities that are downright corrupt. There are some that seem to think their ordnung will save them. It is terribly sad. Those are the first to throw your newsletter in the trash. And rashly call you a devil's messenger. Every ordnung has flaws, and people are being shunned unreasonably.

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Andy, I agree. So why not just do what the early church did? They had no ordnung but the Law of Christ!

Another accusation in your newsletter is that all Amish are required to agree with the ordnung [twice each year] or they will be shunned, therefore many become public liars [because they do not agree with the ordnung, yet they publicly sat that they do]. That is misstated, though some may see it that way. We are asked whether we agree—which basically means if we agree to keep the ordnung, and agree to go along with any changes that are presented at the time. If we are too proud to submit to anyone’s opinion except our own it will not work. We are allowed to express ourselves. And if several people simply do not agree, help is asked to come from other communities to resolve the issue. And if we simply do not fit somewhere we can move somewhere where we can better serve the Lord. The main requirement in most cases is that you need to have your record clean before you move, and you can’t move just anywhere.

I have never been Amish, so I can only tell you what many former Amish people have told me. Many have told me that twice a year, everyone in each Amish community must vote their agreement with the ordnung. And they have also told me that they experienced huge amounts of pressure to vote in favor of the ordnung even though they wanted to vote against it. In any case, if there was no ordnung, there would not be such issues. The only ordnung that God expects all Christians to obey is the Law of Christ, and that is not up for vote! Your suggested solution of moving to another community when disagreements regarding the ordnung cannot be resolved is one that has been employed tens of thousands of times among Amish people. Can

you point me to any scripture in the New Testament that reveals anything that even remotely resembles such a practice among the early Christians? By the way, those tens of thousands of instances of moving are tens of thousands of divisions in an alleged group for whom Jesus prayed, “that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20).

I really appreciate our ordnung, our ministers and bishops who with a great love preach us the Word of God. They tell us the ordnung cannot possibly save us, but if we do not abide by it, it can certainly get us lost.

That second sentence concerns me, as it is self-contradictory. “The ordnung can’t save us but if we do not abide by it, it can certainly get us lost.” So that means keeping the ordnung is necessary for salvation. That is not only unbiblical, it is anti-biblical. In fact, it is not too strong to say that it is heretical.

Another issue I wish to touch is how you wrote that it would be embarrassing to meet someone in heaven whom we had been shunning. Obviously, if we meet them there, maybe we were shunning wrongly. But I still think that was a pretty odd expression. How could we be embarrassed? If we are praying to God for them and begging Him to help them repent, then we would be overjoyed to find out in heaven that our prayers were answered.

*The example to which you are referring I used in a former issue of *The Awakening!* about an Amish woman who was shunning her adult daughter—who was wayward as a teenager, but who has since been born again and is living a holy,*

Christian life with her English husband and children. There is no doubt that daughter is on the road to eternal life, but her mother is shunning her. And why? Because that is what the ordnung says she should do! Incredible! She exalts the ordnung above God’s Word, something Jesus solemnly warned against (see Mark 7:8-9). I wonder, will the mother (if she makes it to heaven) be shunning her daughter when they both get there because that is what the ordnung says to do? I wonder, does she ever pray, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”?

We need an awakening. Thanks for your efforts. May God give you understanding. May God bless you and keep you.

With love, “Andy”

Join the discussion! Do you have thoughts or questions about Amish ordnungs that haven’t been addressed in this discussion? Please send them! We may include them in future issues of *The Awakening!*.

All correspondence should be addressed to: *The Awakening!*, P.O. Box 611, Punxsutawney, PA 15767. We honor all individual requests for removal from our mailing list, but no one has the right to censor others from hearing the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many of your Anabaptist ancestors gave their lives for that gospel, and we want to honor them by imitating their bold faith and their love for those who are perishing.

THE AMISH PAPERS

*Encouragement on the Journey
from Amish to Ahamish*



Good news! Many Amish people across North America are rediscovering their special spiritual heritage—namely, the new birth that was the centerpiece of the faith of their Anabaptist ancestors. Author David Kirkwood has coined a word to describe them—“Ahamish”—a

reference to the joyous expression, “Aha!” when the truth dawns for the first time.

More good news! The original Anabaptists not only universally enjoyed a spiritual rebirth that transformed every aspect of their lives, but they were indwelt by God’s Holy Spirit, which empowered them to live holy lives in obedience to Christ’s commandments. They believed that the new birth and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit were essential components to Christian living and eternal life.

Even more good news! The original Anabaptists possessed assurance of eternal life. That is, because they experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives every day, they had no doubt that they were God’s spiritual children. They knew their names were recorded in heaven.

All of this good news is established

in the very first chapter of *The Amish Papers*, a chapter titled, “An Honest Look at the 1632 Dordrecht Confession”—the original doctrinal statement subscribed to by all Anabaptists, including all Amish groups. Later chapters—that will be of interest to all Amish readers who are seeking for grace and truth—continue to build on the foundation of Scripture and the beliefs of the original Anabaptists.

If you are Amish, and you desire a joyous relationship with God, coupled with Spirit-empowered victory over sin, doubt, fear, depression and addictions—blessings that were enjoyed by your Anabaptist ancestors centuries ago—this is a book you will want to read. To request your free digital copy, email Jonas at Jonas@heavensfamily.org.

To receive a paper copy, please send \$10 to P.O. Box 611, Punxsutawney, PA 15767. Checks should be payable to Heavens Family/Awakening.

Imagine if this were you ...

Imagine that you and your family survive by growing corn on your small plot of land in rural East Africa. After you harvest, dry, and store this year’s corn crop in a corner of your mud-walled, two-room “house,” that is essentially all you and your children will eat for your single daily meal, until it runs out. Then you must endure what everyone in rural East Africa refers to as “the hunger season.” That is the time when everyone’s stored corn is exhausted, and everyone must wait for this year’s insufficient crop to start eating again.

What I have just described is the sad experience of millions of failing East African subsistence farmers. They have never known a year of life when they didn’t suffer through the hunger season.

But then imagine that a Christian minister visits your village who conducts several days of agricultural training. He

guarantees you that, if you will follow his instructions and example, your very next harvest will be at least three times larger than any harvest you’ve ever had before. And maybe even larger!

Imagine that you apply his instructions, first getting down on your knees on your small plot of land to ask for God’s forgiveness for all the sin that has been committed there, and then committing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in order that God’s blessing might fall upon you. Imagine applying the principles of not tilling your soil and adding a thick layer of mulch, which your instructor referred to as “God’s Blanket.” And then imagining harvesting a crop that you know will not only feed your family for an entire year, but that will provide financial income as you sell what you won’t consume. For the first time in your life, you have money to send your children to school, afford basic medical care, eat three meals a day, purchase a

water filter, or rent additional land to grow diversified crops.

What I have just described is one of the programs of the ministry of *Heaven’s Family*, called “Farming God’s Way.” Already, *Heaven’s Family* has helped tens of thousands of failing East African subsistence farmers lift themselves from extreme poverty.

For every \$35 that is donated to *Heaven’s Family’s* FGW ministry, we can train one head of household to permanently lift one family out of extreme poverty, and for multiple generations to come. Even better, we can introduce non-Christian families to the “Bread of Life”! To help, please send your donation to Heaven’s Family, P.O. Box 611, Punxsutawney, PA 15767, and write “FGW” in the memo. On the behalf of every East African family whose lives will be changed by your generosity and compassion, thank you!

Chronicling the Anabaptist Rediscovery of their Special Spiritual Heritage

Heaven's Family
P.O. Box 611
Punxsutawney, PA 15767

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