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FACTS

Concerning the

BEACHY A. M.

DIVISION OF

1927

Edited by

JOHN B. MAST

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by
Menno J. Yoder
Meyersdale, Penna.

INTRODUCTION

From the following documents it appears that "strict avoidance" and "the introduction of Sunday School" had much to do with the 1927 division in the Old Order Amish congregation of Somerset county, Pennsylvania. Another factor, however, which is quite evident, is a variance on strictness of church discipline, the issue which has been the cause of most Amish and Mennonite divisions: a point of difference not serious enough to become a major issue and on which there could be tolerable variance in opinion if it were approached "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph. 4:2, 3.

Several years after this division had occurred the Beachy faction made concessions on owning automobiles, for which Bishop Moses M. Beachy has been criticized by his opponents, until many have been led to believe that such innovations were the cause of this division. It is hoped that the following presentation of facts will clear up this misconception. This is nothing more than second-hand gossip (hearsay) which has definitely been abusive to those who chose to dissent from the imposition of extreme church rulings. It naturally follows that the portion of the church favoring a more liberal course in the use of modern conveniences, was also opposed to this sectarian avoidance, and, in the division the majority of these went with the Beachy fashion,

which made these concessions the more inevitable. We could enumerate case after case where Amish bishops made concessions on matters they felt a compromise could never be made, yet assented because they lacked a definite "Thus saith the Lord." Likewise, Bishop Beachy was not in favor of these concessions, but could not make a serious distinction in "driving" or merely "riding along" with those whom we regard as outsiders and therefore irresponsible for such supposed transgressions. He contended that what is wrong for one must also be wrong for another, since there is no respect of persons with God. (Read Col. 3:25; Gal. 5:10 and Romans 2:1-11.)

"The Yoder faction of this division is constantly tightening its church regulations relative to concurse with other Amish and Mennonite groups. Several years ago they somehow enacted a ruling which, in effect, forbids their members from doing manual labor for members of any other group outside of their own sect. This has obviously placed an undue hardship on their young laboring men, and because of the limited hiring opportunities some have been induced to move to other communities, which in turn seems to have caused more dissatisfaction within the group itself. At any rate, this "moving out" is not entirely confined to young married couples alone."

John B. Mast.

SOURCE OF DOCUMENT

Dr. Rufus M. Beachy (Veterinary)

Subject: Who instituted sectarian avoidance in Somerset county, Penna.?

Brief review of happenings regarding church matters relative to changes that have been made from time to time; the avoidance as instituted in the Somerset congregation especially. In June of the year 1894 this congregation called on Joseph Witmer of Davis county, Indiana, and John Gascho of Canada for assistance because the resident ministers were unable to serve the church on account of impaired health, etc. After investigating our situation, Brother Witmer stated under what circumstances he would assist us and hold communion service for us. His conditions were: "If you are willing to keep house as do the Old Order Amish churches who minister together and commune with one another, I am willing to assist you all I can. If you are not agreed to this, then I can board the B. & O. as easily for home as I did to come here." On the strength of that statement communion was held. Brother Witmer assisted us in at least three communion services after that, and at one of the council meetings those who withdrew from the Maryland congregation asked permission to commune with the Somerset congregation, to which Brother Witmer again made the above statement, and said further, "All who accept this statement and are at one with me, are welcome to commune no matter where they come from." On strength of that statement communion was again held,

and all who took part voiced agreement with him, preacher Moses D. Yoder included.

At a later communion conducted by Brother Witmer, assisted by C. S. Beachy now of Plain City, Ohio, Moses D. Yoder was ordained as bishop. It has been proved that Moses D. Yoder asked Brother Witmer to institute sectarian avoidance as it now stands. Witmer refused the request because he did not have it that way at home, nor any of the churches with whom he is working. Here is one witness that Witmer opposed such a move. Brother C. S. Beachy who assisted at the communion and ordination service, testified that Witmer was opposed to such a move. Here are two witnesses, which is scriptural as far as number is concerned. Avoidance as now practiced was instituted here about a year after Witmer's last visit. The previous summer Witmer was often consulted and his letters read before the church. He was often referred to as "our good friend Witmer." When the consent of the church was requested to enact avoidance as it now is, nothing was said about our good friend Witmer who had advised against the move. The fact that Witmer had come to our assistance, and advised how and what to do, and the fact that his name was frequently mentioned, and that he was often consulted by letter, the church was left under the impression that the move was taken upon his recommendation. Had the church been informed of the fact that Witmer opposed this move, the united voice of the church could never have been obtained.

A few years later Joseph Kemp of Indiana visited with us. I think he was a member of

the late David Kaufman congregation. Anyhow, in the course of our conversation he enquired how we conducted ourselves toward those who choose to join the other (Conservative) church, when there was only the change of churches against them. I told him that it is supposed that a personal avoidance was observed in all such cases. He asked me who advised us to take such steps. In answer to this query I informed him that Witmer had served our church in the capacity of Bishop for several years, and that I had reasons to believe that he had advised us in this. Kemp shook his head. He said if I investigate I will find that Witmer did not advise us to take such steps; that he knows Witmer, and that Witmer and David Kaufman were considered church fathers of their time, and that he knows that they do not agree with that teaching. I don't know that I ever said anything about this to anyone, and will say that Kemp began the conversation on that particular subject. I would not have mentioned it of my own accord.

In the fall of 1905 my wife and I were in Iowa on a visit and spent the night with Preacher Peter Brenneman. In the course of our conversation Brenneman asked who was responsible for the institution of avoidance the way we have it. He was then informed that we did it ourselves. He replied: "This was done quite some time ago, and you have probably forgotten about it," and asked "Was not Joseph Witmer the man who enacted that move?" He was then informed that this was done about a year after Witmer was there the last time. Brenneman said Witmer denied hav-

ing anything to do with that act, but we did not believe him. He said Witmer was so severely criticized for it that he rose to his feet before the church assembled on two different occasions, declaring he had nothing to do with instituting that avoidance, that they requested that he introduce it that way when he was there, and said further, "I told them that I would not do that, since I do not have it that way at home, nor do the churches with whom I minister and commune. What they have done since I was there they have done of themselves, and I do not agree with it." Brenneman verified this attitude. Also Bishop J. F. Swartzendruber and Bishop Peter Kinsinger. The testimonies of the two bishops and one minister all agree with Brother Kemp's statements. We have two witnesses to prove that Brother Witmer advised against such a move when he was here the last time, which corresponds with Witmer's statements made before the congregation in the presence of many witnesses. Bishop C. S. Beachy of Plain City, Ohio, says that he and Witmer were called to Allen county, Indiana, on three or four different occasions where avoidance was the main subject, and that Witmer opposed it every time. — Brother Kemp remarked that it seems to him this was rather a presumptuous (vorwitzig) step for a man to undertake who had been advised against such a move by his friend and adviser, considering the short time he had been ordained to the position of bishop.

After Bishop Peter Kinsinger and Preacher Peter Brenneman had gone to their reward, I felt there might come a time when proof would

be demanded, so I wrote to Bishop J. F. Swartzendruber relating the conversation between Peter Brenneman and myself and asked if he could recall any of these facts. I received a letter in a few days confirming all that had been said by Brenneman and Kinsinger. His German statement follows: "Ja, ich kann voll Zeugnis geben zu was du schreibst, dass Peter Brenneman euch erzählt hat. Ich hörte Witmer dasselbige an zwei verschiedene Versammlungen sehr kräftig sagen."

Bishop Peter Wagler of Davis county, Indiana, who was one of Witmer's co-laborers at the time Witmer assisted us, said in the presence of witnesses that he had seen a letter written to Moses D. Yoder in which he (Witmer) advised against this move. Had Moses D. Yoder and his following been opposed to sectarian avoidance, then we might have been told of Witmer's advice against the move. Those who willfully ignored the advice of our friend and benefactor are responsible for the condition of the church today.

An Account of the 1927 Division in Somerset County, Penna.

By Menno J. Yoder (Church Accountant)

To whom it may concern regarding reasons for the division in the Old Order Amish church of Somerset county, Pennsylvania, on June 26, 1927. There had been considerable difference in opinion on the proper application of avoidance among the brotherhood for a number of years. Some considered it an injustice to ex-

communicate and avoid such as left our church and affiliated with other churches of like faith; others insisted on absolute and unconditional avoidance of any and all members who chose to worship with other nonresistant churches. In one such specific case, namely, John D. Yoder and wife, were warned to avoid certain parties who had transferred to the Conservative A. M. church. The person insisting on the observance of this practice was asked by John D. Yoder: "Do you mean to say *we must* avoid them." He replied: "*You must*." John then said, "if *we must*, we will also transfer to the other church." And they, too, affiliated with the Conservative A. M. Church at Grantsville, Maryland, but were later called back into our church to give reasons for leaving this church, and gave this issue of compulsory avoidance as their reason. This provoked still more contention by the stricter faction of the church, and it was decided to call ministers to investigate this matter of avoidance. Then Ben Beiler and Gideon Stoltzfus of Lancaster county, Penna., Eli J. Bontreger of Indiana, and Joseph D. Schrock of Illinois were summoned to Somerset county to decide this particular case by arbitration, but instead they struck a plan which they felt would adjust our difficulties automatically, and recommended that our church counsel all such cases individually.

A Chronology of Meetings and Events

October 3, 1926: Mose Beachy made a motion (Vorstellung) concerning ban and avoidance, with reference to the John D. Yoder case,

because they were unable to secure the unanimous voice of the church to expel them, merely for making the transfer to the Conservative church, and the ministers council was also in a deadlock. Joseph and Noah Yoder insisted on expelling them, and Mose Beachy would not, under the circumstances, agree to this. October 31, 1926: Mose made known how he thought he should lead the congregation. Intimating that he had been accused of not punishing the disobedient. He then pointed out that many new things had been introduced into the church during Mose D. Yoder's administrations as bishop, and also in Manasse's and Joel Beachy's time. Also that in his father's time, as also in previous administrations, many things were forbidden that were not fully obeyed, but still were not punished. He said those ministers had been called to settle the John D. Yoder case, but had reached no definite resolution, and that he now considers the case finished. He then asked the congregation: "Why not leave this matter of changing churches to them and God, instead of expelling and avoiding them and still pretend to be leaving it to them and God, since we have no exact Scripture for it." He further expressed his desire to maintain church ordinances as much as is expedient; that if anyone has things which are not in line with our rules and church regulations, now is the time to dispose of them. He specially mentioned a number of things which were somewhat drifting away from the former modes and practices and pleaded that those concerned take steps to correct the situation. In such tedious times, he said, he thought it

not advisable to impose severe punishment, that he prefers to go easy rather than to punish excessively and thereby give the people occasion to leave the church, and asked: How many of us are in a position to avoid such members when we take our own shortcomings into consideration, and suggested being careful in the matter. He then asked the other ministers to express themselves. Mose D. Yoder said he did not understand the matter. Noah Yoder said he thought we were far beside the instructions of those ministers in bringing this matter before the church, that he does not know what to say. He said the congregation might think they had counseled over this in their private session in the morning, but that they had not, and that he did not know what was to come up. Then Mose told him he should not say this, because he did know. That he had told them this morning during minister's counsel what he proposed to say before the church, which Noah then attested. Joe Yoder then said: "When those ministers were here they were hindered from doing anything with the John D. Yoder case." Mose Beachy then told him that when they had tried to bring up other things he insisted on clearing up the John D. Yoder case first because it had been the issue for which they had been called; that he had offered to take up anything that was considered necessary, after this main issue was settled, but they would not do anything definitely about it. Mose then announced council meeting to be held in two weeks, and said further that we should not allow ourselves to become so entangled with our traditions that we transgress the command-

ments of God (Matt. 15:3-9) even hindering the observance of the Lord's Supper.

November 14, 1926: C. J. Swartzentruber and D. J. Swartzentruber were here to assist in council meeting at the Niverton meeting house. After the preaching service Mose Beachy made the motion (Vorstellung) and mentioned quite a number of items which he felt he could not tolerate, including such things as men's (too) short hair, and women's short dress waists, but made a concession on shawls which were to be worn four-cornered as was the practice in the western churches. (They formerly wore them three-cornered.) The automobile, he said, would draw the line, that he could not allow them since the other Old Order churches do not have them. He then announced his position in regard to the John D. Yoder case, stating that everyone must make his own choice as to where he will worship, and that he cannot impose restrictions on religious liberties. Joseph and Noah Yoder would not agree to this and were unwilling to proceed with communion services. The voice of the church showed the majority in favor of proceeding, but no communion was announced.

November 28, 1926: Church was held at the Summit Mills meeting house. Mose Beachy announced a difficulty between Gideon Brenne-man and himself concerning the use of electricity, but that it has been settled. Mose assured the congregation that a way would be made whereby they might proceed with communion.

April 3, 1927: Had council meeting at Niverton. Mose expressed himself as to how he felt

these affairs should be conducted, but no voice was taken and no communion was announced.

April 10, 1927: Had church at Summit Mills house. April 17th: Had church at Summit Mills with intention to hold communion, but had non because some were dissatisfied with the administration of the church. Communion services were announced for April 24th.

April 24th: Held communion services at Niverton house, but only a few over half of the members communed. May 1st: Had church at Niverton house. May 8th: Had a meeting at Niverton to organize Sunday School. May 15th: Had church at Summit Mills house where eight young souls came under ministerial instruction and wanted to accept Christ. May 22nd: Had our first Sunday School. May 26th (Thursday): Had Sunday School at Summit Mills but none at Niverton. Shortly before this date the dissatisfied portion of the church had called ministers to investigate their difficulties, and on May 26th this faction had a church service in the home of Amos Yoder where B. F. Beiler and G. K. Stoltzfus of Lancaster county, Pa., and Abe Yoder and Jacob Stutzman of Holmes county, Ohio, were present. These ministers had been called by only a portion of the church and many of the members were in Sunday School at the Summit Mills house, including the ministers who favored Sunday School. After this church service Abe Yoder asked the membership to remain seated, and these "called" ministers went into a separate room and ordered the members in one at a time, to give their views, if they

had anything to say. But since many of the satisfied portion of the church were either not present or objected to appear alone before these strange ministers, they could get only one side of the story, so they called another meeting at the same place for the following Friday afternoon, and then called in Sam Hershberger, Lewis Yoder, and Ed Yoder to get their stand on the situation. Nothing was accomplished at the meeting, except that the ministers advised the dissatisfied portion not to withdraw.

(Note: The last time we counseled with M. M. Beachy about these affairs, we went to Mose and told him we would fully submit to a committee of strange ministers and earnestly asked him to also do that; but the sorrowful answer we got was this: "I have told you before, I would not give myself under other ministers. You may call them if you want to. I don't care if you get a whole (railway) carload of them." Then our next move was that we called two bishops from the west and two from the east, but by the time they arrived, Mose had left for a trip and they did not see him. Submitted by Bishop Joseph J. Yoder.)

(Subnote; On examination of the material contained in this manuscript by the ministers and trustees of the Beachy congregation in Somerset county, it was pointed out that Noah and Joseph J. Yoder made this submissive offer to Mose Beachy after the retired bishop had asked Mose Beachy's consent to use the vacant meeting house with intent to conduct their own church affairs. The young ministers were

evidently unaware of the fact that the aged bishop had already exposed their plans to withdraw, and seemed surprised when Bishop Mose Beachy asked them why they were pretending to ask for another calling of strange ministers after they had already deliberately made a decision for the future. Even aside from this premature exposure, Mose Beachy could hardly have been expected to agree to their offer, since the instructions of "called ministers" had been misconstrued repeatedly on previous occasions. The trip referred to in the Yoder note was made through a number of western churches where Bishop Beachy was assured support in his stand against sectarian avoidance by at least twenty-five ministers. J. B. M.)

May 29th: Had church again at Amos Yoders for these ministers, then they all went home, excepting Abe Yoder. Henry J. Mast of Illinois came through on a visit, and again church was held at Amos Yoders, and the house was filled to capacity.

June 2nd: Had church at Niverton for Mast and Yoder. June 12th: Had church at Summit Mills; church was instructed to observe the life and conduct of the young applicants. June 26th: Had church at Summit Mills at which Lewis Beachy of Maryland and a Bontrager of Indiana were present as visitors. Here the members were asked to remain seated after services, and the congregation was asked whether they would be willing to do without automobiles. The voice of the church was taken, and the majority were in favor to do without them. Mose D. Yoder then announced services for his faction to be held in the house

our group was not using, and we continued in our regular routine. From this date they conducted their own church affairs with Mose D. Yoder, who had previously retired from the office of bishop, Noah Yoder, and Joseph Yoder, and by this move have divided the church by withdrawal. Bishop Mose M. Beachy and Pre. Alvin M. Beachy (now bishop in Indiana) served the portion of the church which is now called the Beachy Amish Mennonite Church. July 3rd: Had Sunday School at both houses. July 12th: Had church at Summit Mills. July 17th: Had Sunday School at both houses. July 24th: Had church at Niverton. July 31st: Had Sunday School at both houses. August 7th: Had church at Summit Mills. August 8th: Had church at Mose Beachy residence for visiting Kansas ministers. August 14th: Had church and Sunday School at Niverton. August 21st: Had church at Niverton, where Christian J. Swartzentruber of Norfolk, Va., was present. Following this meeting several of the brethren who had purchased cars were asked to put them away, and one brother did not agree to this, and was given two weeks in which to consider the matter. Voice was also taken of the church to baptize the applicants in two weeks, which was unanimously in favor. After our opponents had fully withdrawn themselves from us we then, on December 9, 1928, took council of the church, and by a unanimous voice tolerated automobiles and trucks. Mose Beachy expressed his conviction of the need to adjust our ways in such matters, if such adjustment does not conflict with the basic fundamentals of our faith, and said he felt church

leaders should be reasonable in considering things which serve to the people's welfare and safety.

Shortly after this division minister Noah Yoder (of the Yoder side) moved to Dover, Delaware, and Bishop David Miller of that place assisted the Somerset group in communion service and the ordination of two ministers, Gideon Brenneman, in the fall of 1927, and Bennie A. Fisher on May 20, 1928. In the following year, 1929, Bishop Daniel J. Beachy of Arthur, Illinois, who had instituted the strict-avoidance plan in his home congregation (Daniel C. Schlabach succeeded him as bishop) assisted them in communion, and ordained Joseph J. Yoder as bishop. In 1940 Noah J. Yoder was ordained a minister; Menno Brenneman a minister in 1944.

On the Beachy side, Minister Alvin M. Beachy moved to Indiana, and Minister Norman D. Beachy of Oakland, Md., who had formerly affiliated with the Beachy group, was ordained to the ministry April 27, 1929. Simon L. Yoder was ordained minister November 11, 1928, and later moved to Norfolk, Va. On June 15, 1930, this group affiliated with the John A. Stoltz group in Lancaster, Co., Pa., and some time later with the Valentine P. Yoder group in Mercer Co., Pa. In October, 1938, a group was organized by request, at Plain City, Ohio, where Emery Yutzky and Robert Kautman were ordained to the ministry. Elden Troyer was there ordained minister on September 27, 1948, and to bishop April 25, 1949. In 1939 a group was organized at Bunker Hill, Ohio, with Abner Schlabach as minister. Jere-

miah M. Schlabach of Fredericksburg, O., was ordained minister at this place on October 30, 1949. Tobe Byler, a minister of Fredericksburg, Ohio, affiliated with this group on November 13, 1949. In 1940 we merged with the congregation at Norfolk, Va., with Simon L. Yoder as minister. In November, 1941, Jacob J. Hershberger was ordained minister. In 1942 Jonas H. Hershberger was ordained minister; he was also ordained as bishop in the same year. Ezra E. Troyer, who had been ordained to the ministry at Portsmouth in 1934, moved to Norfolk section. In 1946 Jonas C. Swartzentruber was ordained as deacon in the Norfolk district.

In 1940 Bishop David O. Burkholder of Nappanee, Ind., affiliated with our group and was therefore expelled by the O. O. group, and was later reinstated as bishop. A group at Middleburg, Indiana, affiliated with the Nappanee group in 1947, and later organized as a separate congregation, at which time David Bontrager and Moses Bontrager were ordained as ministers. The former was ordained bishop September 28, 1948. Eli A. Miller of Topeka, Ind., was ordained minister on April 10, 1949. In 1940 a group was also organized in Howard county, Ind., with Levi Sommers as minister. Two ministers, Enos Miller and Ezra Miller, were ordained on April 18, 1948, and the latter was ordained bishop May 8, 1949. In Davis county, Ind., Jacob D. Gingerich and William Yoder were ordained minister on June 28, 1948, and Ben Wagler minister October 28, 1949. This group was organized in the summer of 1947. In October, 1946, a group was

organized at Kalona, Iowa, where Mose Yoder and John Helmuth were ordained ministers, and in 1948 Bishop Jonathan Miller, who had been silenced and expelled by the O. O. group, was reinstated and given charge of this congregation. In June, 1947, a group was organized in Stark county, O., with Joe Miller as minister, and on October 12, 1948, Sam Otto was ordained minister, and on May 8, 1949, as Bishop. Alvin Witmer was ordained minister May 6, 1948.

A letter by Bishop Jacob F. Swartzentruber, written about 1923.

Kalona, Iowa,

April 19th, Thursday morning.

Mose M. Beachy,
Elklick (Salisbury), Penna.

Dear Brother: May the grace of the Lord, the peace of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever. Amen. Your kind letter mailed last Monday came to hand with yesterday's mail. I was indeed glad to receive a letter from you once more; yet, would much rather have heard that peace and harmony prevailed in the church which is entrusted to your care. The trouble seems to be about enforcing the *strict avoidance* plan against those who leave your church and go over to the Maryland church. I am not very much surprised at this, as it is only the fulfillment of the prediction of Bishop Joe Witmer, who, when told of the move, used the English phrase, "Now, look out."

I heard him say in private and in public that he had helped that church on its feet by

ordaining a bishop, by which they became self-sustaining, but they now have taken steps to apply strict avoidance on all who go over to the other church, of which he is not in favor. "Ich bin nicht einig damit," and they will have trouble sooner or later. Similar troubles began in the life of Menno Simon, who died in about 1564. His last years were spent trying to alleviate such trouble, but he was unable to accomplish his aims and died with a heavy heart. After his death these conditions grew worse; until they were so bad as they could well be. Division after division occurred, and most factions aimed at avoiding the others. Finally in 1632 the eighteen articles of faith were drawn up, with the aim of healing these sores, which it did to a large extent, but not all the factions adopted them; yet it was the dawn of the day of greater harmony and peace. If you read carefully the last clause of the sixteenth article, which reads: "The church must put away from her those that are corrupt, be it in doctrine or life, *and none other.*" Here you have the foundation of this peace treaty. It does not definitely say so, yet it is plain to me that the intent of this clause was to put away with the avoidance of those whose only offense was such transfer. The Mennonites evade mention of this in their history, perhaps since it is a disgrace to the church's history to relate that they were at one time so desperately disunited, yet I find it in histories written by well informed historians of those times. This proves that such application of avoidance is not new, but as far as I can find it has always proved a failure and played havoc wherever it was

used this way. But now this plan has been adopted by unanimous voice of the church over which you have been ordained to preside as bishop, so I am told; this says to me, *hands off*; yet to a limited extent only. You ask for advice in your letter. I think you asked me the same thing once before, and I think I dodged your request that time, as that unanimous voice kept saying to me: hands off. I think I shall come nearer fulfilling your request this time. I shall do this on another sheet, but will say here that I woke up soon after 12 o'clock and have not slept since. I studied and prayed over this tedious matter quite a bit, and by the urging of my wife I concluded to give you better satisfaction this time. True Christian love, charity and forbearance demand that we respect our neighbor's rights, conscience, and convictions as much as our own, yet our conscience is not infallible. Much depends on what we are taught; if this teaching is infallible, then our conscience is, and *only then*, a safe dictator to follow. Everyone thinks himself to be in the right, and yet many often change theories and convictions. Now, this being the case, I think a safe and sane way would be to give everyone the liberty to follow the dictates of their own conscience, allowing those who think they would do wrong if they did not avoid, to avoid them; and, on the other hand, those who feel they would do wrong in avoiding, do not insist that they must. Be patient and bear one with another, come together and commune together and give the Holy Spirit a chance to teach and work within us, bringing us closer together as we grow in grace and

knowledge in the will of the Lord. If I understand that unanimous voice of the church, this procedure would not interfere with the issue in question, if they are all agreed, but no provisions whatever have been made for anyone who might change his convictions, which is likely to occur with the best of us. Now, dear brother, you may not be able to hold the church together by following the above method; but if you take this stand, you can feel that you have done your duty in trying to compromise. Compromising is not always best, but in this case it would be, and is the only thing that will hold the church together. I well know you are in close quarters, and to do this you must take a firm stand, be easy, mild, and loving. By all means do not use harsh words or expressions, trying with the help of God to be an example of mildness, forbearance, meekness and humility, inducing the members to the same. Matters may look dark to you, and I take from your letter you fear you would not accomplish much. It is right that this feeling should come; but I think with the above plan you can feel yourself on safe ground, and on the Lord's side; and if the church has not drifted away from God too far through selfishness, the Lord will be with you, bless your efforts, and work wonders which will surprise you. Let the Lord use you as an instrument in His hand.

We are having a few nice warm days now. Had a cold and backward spring so far. A good rain would be appreciated. We are improving in health; the Lord be praised for this kindness toward us. We expect to have council meeting Sunday, and if all goes well, com-

munion in two weeks; will likely ordain a minister. Help us to pray that the good Lord may bless and guide us in this important undertaking. We mean to pray for you also in our humble and weak way. I would be pleased to hear from you occasionally.

J. F. Swartzendruber.

P. S., I failed to mention above that neither side has a strict and definite "Thus saith the Lord," on which to base itself, hence I consider it safe to compromise.

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A Letter By Bishop Daniel C. Schlabbach

Arthur, Illinois
December 19, 1939.

Mose M. Beachy
Salisbury, Penna.

Dear unforgotten friend: Hope you are all well. We are all usually well, which is a blessing more so than we can realize. Well you are in my mind so much that I cannot help myself, and will try and write a few lines with the help of God, where all good gifts come from. I feel it my duty to write as you know we are well acquainted with each other, and the step you made is wonderful to me and the Illinois people, that is in church matters. Years ago no one could have made me believe that Mose M. Beachy would ever make such a step in church matters, but Satan is after us all. Just to think what your parents would say if they had the opportunity to view over his (their) son's church work. It is just awful for us to think the matter over. Now you know that you

left the Old Order Amish church—how can you talk anything in your church when you yourself are not obeying what you promised, and that is not obeying your parents. I would not take the step that Mose M. Beachy took for all that he could offer me. Now the most attractive machine to young people and also old people you have in your church, that is the automobile. We heard some town people that have them say that he has one, but if every man that has one would take his machine to the gulf and dump them into the sea, his machine would go too. Then he said they are the biggest piece of nuisance that was ever made in the U. S. There was a record made of how many people were killed in one year by autos; yes, more than were killed in the world war; now Mose Beachy has them and also Herschberger in his church. Now you make it your business to go from place to place and spread these autos in the churches. Now to make it plain to you: just take Cornelius Beachy's there in Madison; well, what! Mose M. Beachy got two or three of Cornelius Beachy's children to side in with him about the autos, and so from one place to the other. Do you believe you are doing the right thing? You know Cornelius doesn't like that, and what is Mose M. Beachy doing? Why is he helping them in leading them away from the Old Order Amish people. You may think in that what you want, but you are helping them along away from the Old Order. You are one of them, and you cannot get out; you are the man making a disturbance. A man does not realize how much disturbance he is making. Yes; you may say that they would have gone

if I would not have helped them: but Mose, you helped them in their disobedient step they made, and you know the disobedient step you made is not the good Spirit leading you that way, but on the broad way that leads to the place of everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Now you know you are not helping to keep up that Old Order of the Amish church which you promised to do with an oath to God and the church on your knees. Now, those deeds will go with you, day after day you will carry those deeds: you made the step. Well, I wrote some, and will say as the old prophet says: "As one iron sharpens another, so will the mind of one man sharpen the mind of another." So read the fifth chapter of Acts, it gives us something to think about.

Daniel C. Schlabach.

A Reply to the Above Letter by M. M. Beachy

Salisbury, Penna.

December 27, 1939.

Bishop Daniel C. Schlabach
Arthur, Illinois.

Well, Daniel: Your letter has been read and reviewed, and the more I read it the more resentful I feel toward you for writing so many untruths. In regard to the charge that I left the Old Order Amish, I want you to know that I am as Amish as you are. Do you not know that in our grandfather's time they had none of the modern conveniences such as grain binders, manure spreaders, hay loaders, and many other things which were allowed by the church

from time to time? When these came into common use my father allowed them rather than have contentions in his church. Do you mean to say, Daniel, that he left the Amish because he took steps to maintain peace in his congregation? No, he lived and died in the same faith you and I hold to. When gas engines, cream separators, milking machines, and other such things came up for consideration, Bishop Mose D. Yoder allowed them. Tractors and other such things were later also allowed. I know of a certain sister who would not take part in communion a number of times because she was not in favor of topbuggies and cream separators; but Mose D. Yoder paid no attention to her and she finally came along.

Would you say that Mose D. Yoder left the Old Order because he allowed one thing after another? Now that cars and trucks have come you have drawn the line between owning and using them. How can you condemn any medium of transportation, and yet hire it for your service without condemning yourself? Suppose you read Romans 2:1-11. It was very much against my will that automobiles came into the church, but some of our people began buying them, and we took church counsel, and they were tolerated by the unanimous voice of the church. I felt unable to answer at the judgment day for expelling a member for owning a car, when we were all using them more or less. Do you recall that Eli Tice took you to church services at the Joe Yoder home? How can you, then, condemn us the way you have, when you ride in a car yourself. I think it is very urgent that you make some kind of restitution

for writing such a letter. I will expose this letter to your people, unless you make satisfaction. You could probably come in better than we can come out just at this time. I had hoped some of your group would come to the funeral of Simon Yoder.

You wrote in your letter I had two or three of C. S. Beachy's children to side in with me, which is untrue. You also wrote that I make it my business to go from place to place and spread the automobiles, which is also untrue. The folks in Madison County, Ohio, requested Aid concerning tractor difficulties. When we came out their local ministers commenced working on the affair and we refused to intervene, but went home again, hoping their trouble could be settled among themselves. As you likely know, they allowed tractors for belt use, but could not use them in the field. Later they called us again, and we first of all interviewed their bishops. Bishop C. S. Beachy told me that they were unable to do anything for them, and that they must look for themselves, whereupon we took them into our fellowship. Now they all use their tractors in the fields, even those who opposed it most. I know of an Amish bishop who expelled a member for getting an automobile. He then joined the Mennonite church and this bishop employed him as a chauffeur, and made an extended trip through the far western states. Do you think that is justice? Is it a light to the world or a salt of the earth? Does it show a conviction that a car is condemned in the sight of God? Daniel, you have judged and condemned us. You have asserted that the evil spirit was leading us, and

that you were writing a few lines with the help of God. Are these motives in "one accord" with the Scriptures (as Philippians 2)? (If you cannot come in) I hope, if I live, to be in Illinois by this spring. I cannot lightly dismiss such severe accusations, but feel it our duty to one another to comply with Matthew 18:15-17, meeting face to face and humbly talk this matter over. Will close in sorrow.

Mose M. Beachy and Wife.

*An Authentic Document Pertaining to
Sectarian Avoidance*

(Note: Had all our churches been content to continue in the rules laid down by the following "Meidung Ordnungsbrief," they might have spared themselves much unpleasant publicity throughout the country, and needless scruples among themselves. For an account of the proceedings of the Ohio "Meidung" case of 1947, send 25c to the Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, for a reprint of the article "Caesar and the Meidung," published in the April, 1949, issue of the M. Q. R., J. B. M.)

*Resolution of the Ministers Called to Holmes
County, Ohio, in the Year 1913*

We will first say with the Apostle Peter: To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and

our Saviour Jesus Christ, we wish you grace and peace.

We, the undersigned, herewith testify that we have been called by the nine Old Order Amish congregations of Holmes county, Ohio, and the adjoining counties, to assist them with the help of the Lord to arrive at a unanimous voice concerning members who transfer from their church to other churches with whom they no longer fellowship, yet recognize as non-resistant Christian churches.

First: When ministers and the church are aware of members who consider withdrawing from the church with intention to affiliate with the churches referred to; with the help of the Lord, they shall make all sincere effort to restrain this member from making such transfer, by brotherly admonition and the word of God.

Second: When this has been done to church members who nevertheless make such transfer; we resolve that this concludes our obligation, and we further commit the matter to them, such church, and to God.

Third: When a disobedient church member has been excommunicated with counsel of the church and the word of God, and is later received according to Gospel standards into fellowship of the churches referred to, we resolve that ban and avoidance toward them by the Old Order church shall also be lifted (ended).

The original draft of this document signed by:

Peter Wagler
Andrew J. Mast
Joseph D. Schrock.
Abraham Knepp

Letters By Bishop Eli J. Bontrager

Shipshewana, Indiana, 1926.

Daniel J. Swartzentruber
Oakland, Maryland, R. R. 2.

Dear Brother Swartzentruber: Greetings in the Master's Name!

I received a letter from Pre. Alvin M. Beachy quite a while ago, in which he states that he rather thinks we men would be called back to make our work or advices plain; that there seems to be a misunderstanding. I can hardly see how it could be misunderstood, but I suppose we could have made it plainer than we did. I, in particular, am too forgetful and unworthy to bring a decision before a congregation, and then the others did not say much either. Ben Beiler was a little bothered the last day because of the death of his grandchild. Ben said several times while we were alone counseling about the matter, that their stand on the "Meidung" question is so old that it has outgrown itself, or words to that effect. So he, or they, thought too they had better take the council of the church in every case that comes up. I think they intended to advise just the same as Joe and I did, and if I understand them right, they do the same in Lancaster county; that is, as we advised, viz., every case that comes up that seems to need attention or counsel, for the ministers to counsel over the case, and if they decide that something should be done, then for them to decide what should be done, and after they have come to a decision, then, *and only then*, bring it before the church, and with their own decision or opinion as a

Vorschlag (motion). take the voice or counsel of the church, and thus decide what to do. In this way, if they cannot decide that something should be done, there is nothing to do; and if they cannot come to a decision what to do, then the matter cannot be brought before the congregation. If the case is serious enough to be taken up, they no doubt can also agree on what to do about it: but if they cannot agree, they had better drop the matter, unless, or until, they can agree, and not allow that they hinder their going ahead with other church matters or let it interfere with their peace. We said we would not want to give them an opinion what to do with any certain case, or change their way of dealing, or deciding any certain cases, but to take up all cases as I have outlined above. Naturally, this procedure may automatically change some foregone conclusions in matters as their former way of dealing with such as choose to worship with other congregations; but if they agree to deal with such cases as they formerly did, no change will be made, and this is what we meant by not changing it. But if by dealing with (individual) cases as we have advised, they come to a different decision than formerly, or cannot come to a decision at all, that will change it, yet we will not; we will leave it to them. Alvin wrote that Noah Yoder now says that, according to our advice, they must deal with such cases as formerly, and that, in order to do differently they would need the council of the church to change this way of procedure. It never occurred to me that anyone could construe this. How could they do as they formerly did, that is, pronounce "Meidung" on

anyone without counseling with the church, and still follow our advice, when we know that the ministers as well as the congregation does not agree to this. I hardly think they will get us back there, but I am sorry that things stand as they do with them. No church can get along for any length of time without doing as we advised; to take the counsel of the church in every individual case. Can a church be made to accept a matter, to which the majority does not agree? Certainly not, and Somerset is an example of this. When such cases come up, as it seems they now have, why could they not permit all those whose conscience bids them to observe Meidung, observe it, and the others have patience with them, and, if they cannot agree to pronounce Meidung in such cases, why should the others not have patience with those who do not observe it? If they have patience with one another it (Meidung) should not interfere with their peace and hope and charity. It was once suggested that we might mention this to the congregation, but we decided to withhold the suggestion. I am sorry that we could not express ourselves clearly enough that no misunderstanding could occur. Your humble brother,

Shipshewana, Indiana.
December 24, 1949.

John B. Mast,
Weatherford, Okla.
Dear Brother:

Yours of December 20th at hand. I fear I cannot give you much information on the subject in question.

Joseph D. Schrock and I of the west, and Ben Beiler and Dave Beachy (Gideon Stoltzfus) of the east, if my memory serves me right, were called at three different times, to try to adjust the difficulties between the O. O. Amish group at Grantsville, Md. I do not recall at this time what the main issues seemed to be, but I do recall that Noah and Joe Yoder told us at or after the last call was answered, that "Meidung" was not the main thing that kept Mose Beachy from working with them in a satisfactory way, but they did not say what the main issue was. I, however, sensed an intimation that they felt Beachy did not want to work with them any more on their former modes and practices.

After I came home and reflected on the matter, I decided to write a letter to the ministers (I think Alvin Beachy had moved away by that time), admonishing them to remain together by all means, and mentioned some of the difficulties and inconveniences that would result from a division in the church. However, being aware of the fact Mose was the one that seemed to desire a division, I later wrote a personal letter to him, trying my best to influence him to work with the others and keep the congregation together.

I have copies of many letters that I have written, and that I have received, but I have no copies of the above mentioned letters to the ministers. Neither have I the letter received from Alvin Beachy to which you refer. In fact I do not recall having received such a letter. If you can get anything of value out of the above statements, you are welcome to use them over my signature.

Regarding the "Meidung Ordnungsbrief" to which you refer, this was set up for the Holmes county Old Order Amish churches, and the procedures laid down in this letter is the way our old bishop, David S. Kaufman, worked, and all the other districts here, and in the Marshall and Davis county districts; also Illinois and, as far as I know, all other western districts except the "Schweizer" in Allen and Adams county, Indiana. Holmes county had been working the same way (as the western churches) until the time when these four brethren were called to help them in 1913. At that time much dissatisfaction had been worked up, then this call was made, and they put the matter exactly as it had previously been, and had the consent of every district to work that way, excepting the Sam Yoder faction.

Yours,

Eli J. Bontrager.