

## Appendix A. The United Brethren (Old Constitution) Split of 1889

The 1889 General Conference of the UB Church met in York PA and adopted a new constitution that did not continue the prohibition on membership in secret societies. At that time a minority within the denomination, led by Bishop Milton Wright (the father of Orville and Wilbur Wright), withdrew to form the "United Brethren in Christ (Old Constitution)," a denomination (hereafter designated UBOC) which continues to this day. The offices of the PA Conference UBOC are at the King Street UBOC Church in Chambersburg, and the national headquarters of the denomination are at its college in Huntingdon, Indiana.

Because many of the congregations and individuals mentioned in the Raber journal sided with the UBOC, a brief account of that controversy will help the reader to more fully appreciate the notes in Appendices B-H. The following oversimplification outlines the key local events in the controversy.

- 1. Some members of Chambersburg First UB (later First EUB, now First UM) Church expressed concern that the denomination was not enforcing its constitutional prohibition of church members joining secret societies. They asked that the district superintendent be reprimanded for allowing pastors to accept members in violation of church discipline.*
- 2. The PA Conference, following what had become common practice across the denomination, would not reprimand the district superintendent and would not enforce the letter of the law by removing from church membership those who were members of secret societies.*
- 3. Claiming that Chambersburg was ready to support a second UB congregation, some members of First Church successfully petitioned the conference to begin another work in the town. When this was discovered to be a ploy by those supporting the ban on secret societies to form their own congregation, the conference refused to recognize the congregation.*
- 4. This second congregation continued to meet and the pastors and lay people who supported it were eventually removed from the conference, but not until the above sequence of events in Chambersburg had been carried all the way to the denomination's General Conferences of 1877 and 1881.*
- 5. The present King Street UBOC Church, this congregation joined with those who withdrew from the denomination at the 1889 General Conference and in some sense may be considered the "mother church" of the UBOC.*
- 6. Both the majority who adopted the new constitution in 1889 and the minority who withdrew to continue under the old constitution, known as the "liberal" and "radical" factions respectively, claimed to be the true UB Church. In many areas there were bitter feelings that divided congregations, created legal hassles and weakened the effectiveness of the church. The courts finally decided in favor of the liberals, and the radical congregations had to erect new church buildings or re-purchase their existing structures from the conference operating under new constitution.*

Discussions of the position on secrecy and decisions on the subject regarding individuals and congregations appear in the PA Conference journals as early as 1850 when it was "resolved that the circuit and stationed preachers ascertain the number of members of secret societies on their respective charges and to which of the orders they belong, and report the same to the next annual conference." The following journal excerpts give the official records of the immediate preliminaries to and effects of the 1889 UB split within the conference.

### **1876,7 Report on Boundaries**

We recommend that a [second] mission be established in Chambersburg.

**1876,18** The following paper was then offered and on motion adopted:

*Whereas, much agitation and difference of opinion prevail throughout the church of the United Brethren in Christ, in regard to the*

prohibitory law on Secret Societies whereby the peace of the church is greatly disturbed, her unity endangered and her growth and prosperity hindered, and,

Whereas, the said law has not been regarded nor observed either in the reception or expulsion of persons belonging to such Societies, even by the friends of the law, and,

Whereas, we the ministers of the PA Conference of said church, hereby declare ourselves in accord with its well known and long established principles, on this question differing from many of our own brethren, only in regard to the manner of treating those belonging to such societies, therefore

Resolved, 1st. That we disapprove of and discountenance all unkind and unchristian controversy on this subject, from whatever source it may come.

2nd. That as a conference we favor the abrogation of our present law (on secret societies) and the passage of one more in harmony with our practice and the Holy Word of God, and more compatible with the magnanimous spirit of our church and nation.

3rd. That we adopt as our position on this question the following: "We believe that Secret Societies, whether for social or political or moral reform, are for various reasons frequently objectionable and susceptible of abuse to evil ends and when thus abused, calculated to do great mischief in church and state; and we believe that the real good which these societies profess to seek may generally be obtained by open methods not so likely to such abuses, and therefore we pronounce our earnest judgment against these orders, and beseech and admonish all of our ministers and members to abstain from all connection with them.

Yeas: 24 [Beamer, Burtner, Colestock, Craumer, Erb, Garman, F. Grim, J.W. Grim, Hutchinson, Jones, Kohr, Koontz, Owen, Quigly, Rice, Sand, Schlichter, Shearer, W.O. Smith, Stearn, Tripner, Wallace, Whitlock, J.H. Young]

Nays: 15 [Anthony, Bishop, Burkholder, Corl, Croft, Diller, Edwards, Huber, Mowers, Shaeffer, J.C. Smith, Snoke, Wagoner, Weidler, Wentz]

Neutral: 4 [Bingham, W.A. Dickson, Proffitt, Rebok]

#### **1877,21 Presiding Elder of the Chambersburg District [Z.A. Colestock]**

Having been requested, at our last annual Conference by the Quarterly Conference of the Chambersburg station to constitute a [second] mission in that borough (make an appropriation and appoint a missionary), we accepted the proposition in good faith. We voted for the mission, made the appropriation, and appointed the missionary. But the perverseness of those who inaugurated the movement made it an utter failure. Brother Smith will give you a more complete statement in his report.

#### **1878,4 Presiding Elder of the Chambersburg District [Z.A. Colestock]**

In Chambersburg Charge unhappy disaffection continues to exist. The malcontents have organized, and held public worship most of the year in violation of our rule of discipline, and some of our old ministers of whom we had reason to expect better things gave aid and sympathy to this refractory movement. In my judgment these ministers and laymen are justly censurable for their conduct, yet I would advise forbearance and would indicate to them, that the way to peace and harmony in the Church is for them to return to their proper places in the Church -- not to rule others but to submit themselves to the majority, and co-operate with their brethren in harmony. In my judgment there is no impediment to their return and welcome reception, except what exists in their own feelings.

**1878,13 The Committee on Appeals** had before them the case from Chambersburg charge. A majority and minority report was read before the Conference. The minority report was adopted as follows:

1st. *The demand of the appellants from Chambersburg to have the condition of the classes restored as they were in 1876, is such as this Conference cannot grant.*

2nd. *We recommend that the names of these aggrieved members be restored and invited to return to the congregation and in the case of refusal, they be proceeded against according to the Discipline. See pages 23-24.*

Committee: S.A. Mowers, W.H. Wagner

**1878,14 The Committee to try J.M. Bishop** reported as follows:

Committee Room. March 9, 1878

*After considering the papers placed in our hands, and hearing the testimony offered, we, your committee, find the charges brought against J.M. Bishop sustained. The defence failing to appear, we had the evidence of one side only.*

Committee: W.H. Wagner, J.P. Anthony, J.P. Smith

The following action was then taken by the Conference:

*In view of the fact that the committee find the charges against J.M. Bishop sustained,  
Resolved, That he be suspended until he by word and deed shall show reformation, and the suspension be lifted by Annual Conference.*

**1878,15 The Committee on Grievances** made the following report in reference to Rev. J. Fohl and A. Bickley, which report was amended and adopted:

*We have heard the testimony touching the cases of Revs. Fohl and A. Bickley, and while they may not have violated the letter of the Discipline, they have plainly violated its spirit. We recommend that they receive the censure of the Conference, and also that the Chair admonish them to desist in the future.*

*Committee: J.C. Smith, Geo. W. Lightner, W.H. Wagner, S.A. Mowers, J.P. Anthony*

**1879,13 The Committee on Grievances** then made the following report in the cases of J. Fohl, A. Bickley and J.M. Bishop. The portion of the report in reference to J. Fohl and A. Bickley was passed, as follows:

*We, your Committee on Complaints, met and heard the cases of Brothers Fohl, Bickley and Bishop.*

*Touching the cases of Brothers Fohl and Bickley, we report as follows:*

*1. As they have appealed from the action of the Conference touching their cases last year to the General Conference, that appeal, in the judgment of this Committee, takes the action of this Conference touching the cases of these brethren previous to the last Annual Conference, out of the hands of this Conference.*

*2. Whereas, The characters of these brethren did not pass at their Quarterly Conference during the past year, but no specific charges were preferred against them according to Discipline, we recommend that they be referred to the future action of their Quarterly Conference.*

**1879,14 The following paper** was read before the Conference:

*Chambersburg, Pa. March 6, 1879*

*Whereas, Rev. J. Fohl, in the remarks made this morning, insinuated that three-fourths of the members of the Chambersburg Quarterly Conference were members of oath bound Secret Societies; therefore, we, the members of said Quarterly Conference, respectfully submit that such is not correct, and challenge him for the proof.*

*D.W. Proffitt, Robt. Thompson, John A. Lemaster, D.S. Byers, S.R. Ebersole, A.H. Rice, John Huber of B[enjamin], W.H. Shambarger, Geo. W. Fetterhoff, Wm. Humberger, Philip Lemaster, W.A. Dickson, W.H. Holby, C.H. Boles, E. Hawbecker, B.F. Zarger, Jno. Fuller, J.F. Croft, Hiram Herman, John Shafer, Peter Forney.*

**1879,14 The Committee on Grievances [continued]:** The Conference then took up for consideration the report of Grievance Committee on J.M. Bishop's case. The report of committee was not approved, and the following substitute was adopted:

*Whereas, J.M. Bishop has disregarded the action of the last Annual Conference in regard to his suspension, therefore  
Resolved, That his name be erased from the Conference Journal.*

**1879,21 The Committee on Grievances [continued]:** On motion the action of Conference in regard to Brothers J. Fohl and A. Bickley was rescinded, and the report was not adopted, and the following substitute was passed:

*Whereas, J. Fohl and A. Bickley have persisted in officiating for a congregation, calling themselves Loyal U.B. in Christ, within the bounds of the Chambersburg station, contrary to Discipline (see page 12), and*

*Whereas, These brethren were, at the last session of this Conference, admonished to desist from said course and yet persisted in their course --*

*Resolved, Therefore, that said brethren again be admonished to desist from their course, and if at the expiration of three months from this date they still continue to disregard the law of the Church, as set forth in the section of Discipline alluded to, they shall be silenced by the presiding elder of the Chambersburg District until the next session of the Annual Conference, when they shall be dealt with as the Conference shall determine.*

*Chambersburg, Pa. March 10, 1879*

**1879,22 John Fohl and A. Bickley** were, at their own request, granted a dismissal from the Conference.

**1890,24 Presiding Elder of the Baltimore District [A.H. Rice]**

Eschol is the only place we have suffered any from the secession movements, and for this reason it has not had the prosperity of last year.

**1890,26 Presiding Elder of the Chambersburg District [H.A. Schlichter]**

This has been one of the most perplexing and trying years the Church on this district has ever passed through. For several years the clouds of dissatisfaction were seen rising along our ecclesiastical horizon and the muttering thunders of discontent were heard along the lines, but it was not until after the late General Conference that the storm of insubordination broke with all its fury upon us...

Waynesboro, Greencastle, St. Thomas, Boiling Springs, Dillsburg, York Springs, and Bendersville charges have been the scene of open conflict. On all these charges the radicals have held quarterly conferences, have taken quarterly and other collections, and on most of them deposed liberal officials and appointed radicals in their stead, and, where it was possible to get men, appointed radical preachers to take the place of our regular men. Brothers T. Wagner, M.M. Burtner, and myself, were thus deposed, and M.F. Keiter, P. Nichlas, and J.M. Bishop were appointed in our stead...

At first we determined to overcome the opposition and hold our church-houses by means of locks and bars, and, where the majority was largely with us, we succeeded; but we soon found that this course of procedure settled nothing definitely, and, after a series of locking and breaking locks, and after waiting in vain for them to secure the property they claimed in a legal way, we placed the matter in the hands of competent attorneys, who are now conducting the case. This seemed to us the only way by which a final settlement could be reached. Greencastle church property was accordingly made the test case, with Brother T. Wagner, the Greencastle board of trustees, and myself as prosecutors...

When the courts decide that the property is ours we can do as we please, but until then we must do the best we can. The future of the Church on these fields is anything but encouraging. Even if the courts decide in our favor and the property is fully ours and the radicals are no longer allowed to occupy our church-houses, the condition of things will be such as to cripple the work for some time. Especially will this be true with reference to the finances. Some of these charges which in the past paid from four to five hundred dollars salary will not be able to pay much over half or two thirds of that amount. Other finances will be proportionate. We cannot redistrict or change boundaries, because most of these charges are too large already. Neither can we, to my mind, afford to change the men who are now on these fields, for they are acquainted with the people and all the circumstances and can manage as new men cannot possibly do...

Reverends J.S. Wentz and S. Diller have irregularly withdrawn from the Church and Conference by joining the seceders and affiliating with them.

**1891,16 Presiding elder of the Baltimore District [Isaac A. Albright]**

Eschol Mission: This work, composed of six appointments, has suffered considerably through the disturbances of the radicals, whose cause was championed by a man who withdrew from this body a few years ago under the serious charges of "imprudent conduct and immorality." These influences hindered the work, but a better day awaits this charge and its membership and pastor are holding the fort. No conversions, but there were three accessions.

**1891,21 Presiding Elder of the Chambersburg District [J.W. Beamer]**

The difficulties growing out of the amending of the Constitution and revising of the Confession of Faith have continued during the year. The holding of a so-called conference session in March last gave great inspiration as well as organized form to the rebellion which existed a year ago. With a zeal worthy a better cause, the work of dividing and distracting churches has continued until in all, ten charges are affected, seven of them so seriously as to much cripple the work. Nearly or quite eight hundred of the membership are now affiliating with them. The spirit, methods, and purpose of this effort, shows conclusively that it is not of God and hence will not stand. Not the least of the many perplexities and trying things growing out of these difficulties, is the suspense caused by the delay in getting a decision in the Greencastle case. It was hoped that an early and favorable decision would cause many to reconsider their action and remain with the church, or if not, the records could properly have been so revised as to exclude the names of all who are taking part in the effort to divide the church. As it is on most charges, the names of some such are retained amounting in the aggregate to several hundred.

**1891,38 Committee on Ways and Means [J.H. Young, D.R. Burkholder, S.W. Clippinger]**

Your Committee on Ways and Means in the church suits in Chambersburg and Eschol missions, would recommend as follows:

- 1st. That PA Annual Conference raise five hundred dollars (\$500) for the legal fund.
- 2nd. That the East PA, East German and Allegheny Conferences raise two hundred and fifty (\$250) each, and Erie Conference one hundred dollars (\$100).
- 3rd. That the assessment in this Conference be made on the basis of the Bishop's Assessment to the various charges.
- 4th. That the Presiding Elders will see that proper persons will be appointed to collect the various assessments.
- 5th. And that D.K. Appenzellar be continued as treasurer, and we hereby authorize him to borrow money to meet the expenses till collected.

#### **1892,21 Presiding Elder of the Chambersburg District [W.J. Beamer]**

The favorable court decisions of the year brought great joy to many loyal hearts as well as increased confidence in the future of the church. A few persons who had been affiliating with the Radicals have returned, but the masses have not and will not do so. The names of such that yet remain on our books amounting to several hundred have now been stricken off... Shippensburg has passed its crisis without harm. The anticipated withdrawal of the Radicals took place late in the year taking out nine persons. Twice this number have since joined. We now have a united, aggressive membership with vigorous Sunday School and YPCU all larger than ever before.

#### **1892,37 Committee on Boundaries**

Orrstown charge dissolved  
Orrstown and Strasburg attached to Rocky Spring charge  
Center [Lurgan] attached to Newburg charge  
Newville charge dissolved  
Newville and West Hill attached to Carlisle charge  
Bethany [Guisetown] attached to Big Spring charge  
York Springs charge dissolved  
Hampton and York Springs attached to Bendersville charge  
Gardner's attached to Dillsburg charge  
Mt. Victory attached to Boiling Springs charge  
Bendersville charge augmented  
Poplar Springs and Mt. Hope moved from Mont Alto charge  
Mainsville attached to Shippensburg Charge  
Clay Hill, Marion and St. Johns detached from Greencastle charge to constitute  
Marion charge

#### **1893,18 Decisions on Vacated Churches**

Ebenezer Church, Franklin County: trustees of Greencastle church authorized to dispose of said church and use the money secured from sale of same for Greencastle church.

Crider's Church, Franklin County: Henry Hartman, A.L. Ely, S.W. Clippinger, Benjamin Funkhouser and John Foreman appointed a board of trustees to dispose of same as they may deem best in their judgment, and proceeds be used as Conference may direct.

Oak Grove Church, Franklin County: the trustees elected by congregation and Quarterly Conference for said church be recognized by the Conference as the proper board to hold said church and act or dispose of said church as best in their judgment, and if sold, the proceeds to be used as Conference may direct.

Churchtown, Cumberland County: the trustees of Carlisle church be the trustees of said church, and if said church be abandoned, that the same be used in the building of the church in Carlisle.

Newville Church: the trustees of Carlisle church in conjunction with trustees of said church be authorized to move said church to Carlisle.