

3. Query: Secret Oath-Bound Societies

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Whereas: we, as members of the Church of the Brethren, believe that the Holy Bible is the only inspired, eternal word of the living God (II Timothy 3: 16,17) and;

Whereas: Jesus is the only way of access to God for our salvation. No other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4: 12) and;

Whereas: All things need to be in submission (education, vocation, pleasures, associations) to gain Christ (Philippians 3: 8,9) and;

Whereas: truth is the only thing to set men free; secrecy (bound by vows and oaths) is in direct conflict with the Holy Word (John 8: 31,32) and;

Whereas: the brotherhood of secret oath-bound societies is incompatible with the fellowship of Christ's followers (Matthew 5: 33,34);

Whereas: we as followers of Christ, have fellowship with light, for God is light and cannot be darkness, and we cannot have fellowship with darkness (I John 1: 5 – 7) and;

Whereas: we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. The brotherhood of secret oath-bound societies claim that its members are in a solemn, spiritual bond to one another, irrespective of members' faith or creeds. The Bible forbids the followers of Christ from being unequally yoked with unbelievers (II Corinthians 6: 14 – 18, Ephesians 5: 7-17) and;

Whereas: oath-bound societies deny the Bible as the only Holy Word of God, claims any god as sufficient;

Whereas: after examining the scripture references that point out areas that are not in line with biblical teaching and the oath-bound societies, it is clear that membership in these societies constitutes a dual allegiance. Are we as the Church of the Brethren going to allow membership in secret oath-bound societies or like organizations to divide Lordship between the one and only true God and another god? Can we serve two masters? (Exodus 20: 3 – 6) and;

Therefore, seeing that secret oath-bound societies exist, thereby causing confusion in some churches as to how membership, leadership, as well as the set-apart ministry is to exist in the Church of the Brethren, there is confusion among the Brethren about the issue of membership in secret oath-bound societies. We, the Dry Run Church of the Brethren request District and Annual Conference to take action giving clarity to the issue of membership in secret oath-bound societies.

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| L. Roy Fahnestock, Dry Run Church Board Chairperson | 1 |
| Grace Shearer, Dry Run Church Clerk | 2 |
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| The Southern Pennsylvania District Board, meeting in regular session on March 15, 2008, at the West Shore Church of the Brethren, determined to forward the query on to District Conference. | 4 |
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| Terry Smith, District Board Chair | 8 |
| Joe Detrick, District Executive | 9 |
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| The District Conference of Southern Pennsylvania, meeting in regular session at York First Church of the Brethren, York, Pennsylvania on September 19-20, 2008, received the Dry Run query, and voted to pass the query on to Annual Conference. | 11 |
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| Wilmer Horst, Southern PA District Moderator (2008) | 15 |
| Ann P. Miller, Southern Pennsylvania District Writing Clerk | 16 |
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