

Pennsylvania's Crazy Quilt of German Religious Groups*

Donald F. Durnbaugh
Juniata College

Summary:

Because of the unusual religious tolerance and economic opportunity offered to residents in William Penn's colony after its founding in 1681/82, it became the preferred focus of immigration from the German states. With the first substantial arrival of Germans in 1683, its population swelled during the 18th century. By reasonable estimate, Pennsylvania's German element amounted to a third of the population by 1790, with the number of immigrants approaching 100,000.

Foundation Movements: Two important formative strands are:

Anabaptism – it derives from the Radical Reformation of the 16th century. It was marked by separation of church and state (religious liberty), strict adherence to scriptures, restitutionist orientation (looking to early church as normative), high ethical standards, and nonresistance (pacifism).

Pietism – it derives from renewal movements among German Lutheran and Reformed churches in the late seventeenth century. It sought personal conversion as opposed to creedal adherence, moral living in daily life, bible study, and gathering in small groups (conventicles) for worship and mutual admonition. Like Anabaptism in many ways, it tended to be more individualistic, introspective, and emotional.

Groupings: The bewildering variety of German religious bodies can be better understood if they are placed into family groupings. With some over-simplification, they can be categorized as:

Church Groups:	Leader	Founding Date
Lutheran	Martin Luther (H.M. Mühlenberg)	1520/21 (1742)
Reformed	Ulrich Zwingli (Michael Schlatter)	1523 (1747)

* Revised from an address sponsored by the Max Kade German-American Research Institute / Department of German, The Pennsylvania State University, March 18, 1997.

Plain Groups:	Leader	Founding Date
Mennonite	Menno Simons	1525
Amish	Jacob Ammann	1693
Brethren (Dunkers)	Alexander Mack	1708
Plain Groups	Leader	Founding Date
Intermediate:		
Renewed Moravian Church	Count N. von Zinzendorf	1727
Schwenckfelders	Caspar von Schwenckfeld	c. 1560 (1734)
Revivalist/Wesleyan:		
River Brethren	Jacob Engel	c. 1778
United Brethren	M. Boehm/P.W. Otterbein	1800
Evangelical Association	Jacob Albright	1807
Churches of God	Jacob Winebrenner	1830
Communitarian:	Leader	Founding Date
Woman in the Wilderness	Johannes Kelpius	1694
Ephrata Society (Cloister)	Conrad Beissel	1723
Harmony Society	Joh. Georg Rapp	1804
Blooming Grove	J.F.C. Haller	1804
Hutterian Brethren/ Bruderhof	Eberhard Arnold	1920

It is a curious fact that although the “church people” — Lutherans and Reformed — made up the bulk of German immigration in colonial America and since, public attention has tended to focus on the “plain people” — those groups largely of Anabaptist and Pietist background. There are several reasons for this: one is that the latter came first, pushed by the oppressive policies of European states and pulled by the promise of religious freedom and economic opportunity; another is that their polity (organization) of congregational autonomy and lay leadership was well adapted to the colonial Pennsylvania reality; yet another is that they have been more strikingly nonconformist in their lifestyles (particularly their more conservative, “Old Order” branches) and therefore more visible. The church people more quickly became one with the larger society. In an increasingly homogenized world, those who see themselves as belonging to a colony of heaven, which sets its face in principled opposition to the world, will understandably stand out from the crowd and attract attention.

One of the best summaries of this situation was presented by Bernard Bailyn of Harvard; an extensive quotation presents the case, with some understandable over-generalization:

... the majority of the Germans were affiliated with the Lutheran or Reformed churches which, like their members, quickly acquired American characteristics and became part of the general drift of organized religion in America toward a universal pattern of denominationalism. Twenty-five to thirty percent of the Germans were not church people but sectarians, involved with one or another of the various sects — Amish, Mennonites, Dunkards, Schwenkfelders — which flourished as the major churches lost their hold on their parishioners. The sects reached out, successfully, for recruits among the church Germans, and developed a series of fiercely self-protective devices that would help perpetuate their group identity over succeeding generations. They developed strict rules for the conduct of religious life — *Ordnungen* — which regulated the major rites of everyday life (baptism, courtship, marriage, burial). They used a complex language system as a barrier against the world and as a protector of group solidarity, insisting on High German for worship, local dialect for everyday discourse and English only for marginal contacts with the outside world. They restricted education to the elementary levels, viewing higher learning as improper for poor farming families and as dangerous conduits to a corrupt world. And they imposed regimes of strict austerity and self-denial in all the processes of everyday life, a form of ascetic unworldliness which became a badge of moral superiority, discarded only with extreme shame when once experienced in childhood. So was it that the sects, frozen in their peculiar, saintly unworldliness, grew strong and flourished while the major churches, moving inexorably toward assimilation, lost their distinctiveness in the tolerant atmosphere of the early Republic.¹

A glance at bibliographies published in learned journals indicates that many more scholars are producing books and articles focusing on the sectarians than is the case for the those communions derived from established or state churches in the European homelands. Although a generalization that the smaller the group the more it is studied could hardly be defended — because of the bewildering number of splinter

1. Bernard Bailyn, "From Protestant Peasants to Jewish Intellectuals: The Germans in the Peopling of America," in *German Historical Institute, Washington, DC; Annual Lecture Series No. 1* (Oxford / Hamburg / New York: Berg Publishers, 1988), 7-8. Bailyn's estimate of sectarians making up a quarter of the population seems high; other observers consider them to have composed a tenth of the total. Although the Dunkers, especially their monastic offshoot Ephrata, and the Moravians were quite aggressive in proselyting, other sectarians like the Amish, Mennonites, and Schwenkfelders were content with perpetuating their faith among their own families (which were often quite large).

and schismatic groups among the sectarians that seldom find chroniclers — it is true that many relatively small bodies have occasioned what can only be called scholarly growth industries, with the intense focus on the Old Order Amish being the prime example.

A recent study of research trends in German-American studies, based on an analysis of the annual comprehensive bibliography published in the 1995 issue of the *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, found that no less than 42% focused on Anabaptist bodies, the Amish and Mennonites.² The tiny Schwenkfelder Church (with a membership under 3,000) could serve as another illustration. Schwenkfelders maintain a well-stocked library and archives at Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, published a massive source collection in their *Corpus Schwenkfeldianorum* (1907-1961) of nineteen volumes, and also conduct an active publishing program. A series of publications appeared after 1984 to mark the 250th anniversary of the Schwenkfelders' arrival in America. On May 2-3, 1997, Pennsburg hosted the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania German Society, and that year's annual volume of the Society featured the rich collection of Schwenkfelder *Fraktur*.³

Anabaptism: Both Anabaptists (including Mennonites and Amish) and Schwenkfelders were part of the Radical Reformation of the 16th century. Its members stood in opposition to Catholicism, on the one side, and classical Protestantism of Lutheran and Calvinist (Reformed) persuasions on the other. The tag *Anabaptists* was placed on many of the dissenters because they held the ancient practice of infant baptism to be contrary to scripture and, hence, began to baptize believing adults. Because all such had themselves routinely received baptism as infants, this rejection of pedobaptism and practice of adult baptism earned them the reproachful label of “re-baptizers” or Anabaptists. This had fateful legal consequences, as well, because those found guilty of accepting

2. Don Heinrich Tolzmann, “Recent Trends in German-American Studies,” *Newsletter: Society for German-American Studies* 18 (March 1997): 2-3.

3. The source collection is Elmer E. S. Johnson and others, eds., *Corpus Schwenkfeldianorum* (Leipzig / Göttingen: 1907-1961); the saga of its publication, despite two world wars, is told in W. Kyrel Meschter, *Twentieth Century Schwenkfelders* (Pennsburg, Pa.: Schwenkfelder Library, 1984), 37-59; see also Peter C. Erb, ed., *Schwenckfeld and Early Schwenckfeldianism* (Pennsburg, Pa.: Schwenkfelder Library, 1986). The best study of the early life of the founder is R. Emmet McLaughlin, *Caspar Schwenckfeld, Reluctant Rebel: His Life to 1540* (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 1986), which may be supplemented by the standard life, Selina Gerhard Schultz, *Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig (1489-1561)*, 4th ed. (Pennsburg, Pa.: Board of Publication of the Schwenkfelder Church, 1977).

rebaptism were, under imperial law since AD 529, to be punished by death.⁴

What Anabaptists sought was a church of voluntary members, those whose well-considered and mature decision to convert was marked by this “believer’s baptism.” They aimed to model their congregations on the pattern of the early Christian church, thus breaking with the traditional pattern of state-sponsored and protected church establishments. Many adherents to this movement, particularly in Northern Germany and the Dutch provinces, accepted the name *Mennonites*, derived from the name of a second-generation leader, Menno Simons (1496-1561). The Schwenckfelders (mentioned above) who followed Menno’s contemporary Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig (1489-1561), also opposed infant baptism; they, however, did not themselves proceed to the actual baptism of adults but rather advocated a spiritual or inward baptism.⁵

In sheer volume of publications, initiation and support of regional and national historical library/archives, and proliferation of scholarly and popular journals, the several Mennonite bodies must take front rank. In Pennsylvania alone we have the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society with its Historical Library and Archives and Mennonite Information Center (Lancaster), the Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania with its Meeting House (Harleysville), the Juniata County Historical Center (Richfield), the Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust and Information Center (Germantown), Hans Herr House Museum (Lancaster County), the Mifflin County Mennonite Historical Society with its Mennonite Heritage Center (Belleville), the People’s Place (Intercourse), the Pequea Bruderschaft Library of the Old Order Amish (Lancaster County), among others. We should not forget individual enterprises, for which the Muddy Creek Farm Library and Museum of Old Order Mennonite Amos B. Hoover (Denver) can stand as splendid examples, or institutional efforts such as the Young Center for the Study of Anabaptist and Pietist Groups of Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown).⁶

4. Harold S. Bender / Robert Friedmann, “Anabaptist,” *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955), 1: 113-116.

5. The magisterial study of the Radical Reformation by George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962) established the term in scholarly discourse; there is a third, revised, and expanded edition (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1992).

6. For a national listing, consult “Directory of Mennonite and Related Church Historians and Committees,” *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* 58 (January 1997): 11-13. A review of the first ten years of work of the Young Center has been published: [Donald B. Kraybill, ed.], *The Young Center for the Study of Anabaptist and Pietist Groups: Interpreting a Distinctive Heritage (1986-1996): A Decade of Good Beginnings* (Elizabethtown, Pa.: Elizabethtown College, 1996).

This listing ignores such excellent resources as the Mennonite Historical Library and Archives of the Mennonite Church (both at Goshen, Indiana); the Mennonite Library and Archives (North Newton, Kansas); the Mennonite Historical Library (Bluffton, Ohio); and the Menno Simons Library and Archives (Harrisonburg, Virginia), all harboring rich lodes of material of relevance for Pennsylvania. Related repositories for the Brethren in Christ, Mennonite Brethren, and Canadian Mennonites would need to be included in any complete survey. The celebration in 1996 of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Menno Simons stimulated another burgeoning of publications, conferences, and exhibits.⁷

Because of this skewing of scholarly interest toward the sectarian wing, it is perhaps excusable if this article perpetuates the bias, with most attention given to the plain people and only brief mention to the numerically much-more important Lutheran and Reformed. That the latter denominations are not being totally ignored is documented, for example, by the recent excellent work of A. G. Roeber, chair of the History Department at Pennsylvania State University. His award-winning monograph *Palatines, Liberty, and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America* (1993) builds on lengthy articles dealing with comparable subjects.⁸

Another substantial case in point is the multi-volumed edition of the correspondence of Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg (1711-1787) of colonial Pennsylvania fame, known stereotypically as the "patriarch of American Lutheranism." Thus far, four massive volumes in meticulous documentation have appeared from the editing offices in Münster, Germany, covering the years 1740-1776. It remains to be seen whether the death in 1994 of Kurt Aland, founding editor of the series, will disrupt the publishing effort and delay subsequent volumes. Aland was the nestor of research on Pietism in Germany, and the Mühlenberg edition appears in the series *Texte zur Geschichte des Pietismus*, produced by the

7. See, for example, the richly illustrated (but poorly edited) internationally produced book compiled by Piet Visser and Mary S. Sprunger, *Menno Simons: Places, Portraits and Progeny* (Morgantown, Pa.: Masthof Press, 1996).

8. A. G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty, and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). See especially his article, "The Origin of Whatever Is Not English among Us": The Dutch-speaking and German-speaking Peoples of Colonial British America," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, eds. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill/London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 220-283.

German Historical Commission for Pietist Research. This set of books of Mühlenberg correspondence is being translated and published in the USA, with one volume already released.⁹ The series augments the well-known and valuable three-volumed set of Mühlenberg's journals, first published in 1942-1958 and later re-issued.¹⁰ By the nature of the case, the correspondence and the journals largely overlap, although the volumes of correspondence helpfully fill in some gaps left by lost journals. **Lutherans and Reformed:** With this introduction, let us turn, then, to a hurried overview of the varied religious persuasions of the German-speaking colonists in early Pennsylvania, with passing references to elaborations in later years. A quotation from H. M. Mühlenberg, referring to the first two decades of the 18th century, can introduce the discussion by pointing out the handicaps facing Lutheran clergymen in the new land and the loss of membership to the sectarian groups:

Toward the end of this period, a large number of High Germans also appeared, who were either actually Separatists, bringing with them a deeply rooted hatred of and aversion to the doctrine and organization of our church, or who were Baptists (Dunkers, as they are here called), Mennonites, Schwenkfelders, and generally of this sort, to name all of which would take too long to mention here. These were primarily concerned with deepening their own opinions, and with inducing into their midst by all kinds of seemingly good reasons, others who arrived later and who still maintained a concept of our Lutheran doctrine. This could happen all the more easily because there were no pastors here, and each man principally fixed his gaze on how to buy land, build houses, till the soil, plant crops, and support his family in this way. No one thought of the continuation of our all-hallowed doctrine. ...¹¹

9. Kurt Aland and others, eds., *Die Korrespondenz Heinrich Melchior Mühlenbergs. Aus der Anfangszeit des deutschen Luthertums in Nordamerika*, vols. 1-4 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986-1993). The translation is John W. Kleiner and Helmut T. Lehmann, *Correspondence of Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg, Volume 1, 1740-1747* (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1993).

10. Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein, eds., *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg in Three Volumes* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1942-1958); reissued (Philadelphia / Evansville, Ind.: Lutheran Historical Society and Whipporwill Press, 1982) and (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1990).

11. W. J. Mann and others, eds., *Nachrichten von den vereinigten deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden in Nord-Amerika, absonderlich in Pennsylvanien* (Allentown, Pa.: Brobst, Diehl, and Co., 1881-1895), 2: 193-195, as translated in Donald F. Durnbaugh, ed., *Brethren in Colonial America* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren Press, 1967), 127. Comparable sentiments are repeated in Mühlenberg's correspondence and journals; for a selection from these materials, see Theodore C. Tappert and John W. Doberstein, eds., *Notebook of a Colonial Clergyman* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959).

It was these and similar problems that led to the saying: "Pennsylvania is heaven for farmers, paradise for artisans, and hell for officials and preachers."

Mühlenberg had been sent to Pennsylvania by Lutheran officials in Halle (Brandenburg), the citadel of German churchly Pietism. Most of the correspondence in the publications mentioned previously derives from his reports to the church fathers at Halle, in which he expounds eloquently on the difficulties described in the quotation above. Despite these problems, Mühlenberg was able to bring together an effective church organization and by the end of the century had, with his co-workers, firmly planted the Lutheran church in Pennsylvania. An effective tool in this work was the *Ministerium*, initiated and dominated by Mühlenberg. Toward the end of the colonial period he was well assisted by his sons, whom he had sent back to Germany for theological education.

By 1783, one hundred years after the beginning of mass German migration to Pennsylvania, Lutherans made up the majority of the German-speaking immigrants from several German provinces. Despite theological differences that led to separate Lutheran organizations in the 19th century (General Synod and General Council) and additional diverse synodical development by ethnic background, the twentieth century has seen movement toward church union. The most striking evidence of the unitary drive was the creation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, completed in 1988.¹²

The exact size of the German element in the American colonies is still being debated by scholars. The latest study on German immigration, by Aaron S. Fogleman, places the number (for 1700-1775) at ca. 85,000. Mariane Wokeck, who worked primarily from American records, estimated the number at ca. 100,000. A. G. Roeber has given the number at 120,000, for the century from 1683 to 1783. Even the lowest number, 85,000, is twice that of English immigrants, although the situation would be different if Scots and Irish were counted together with English as a British cohort.¹³

12. For an overview of most of Lutheran history in North America, see Abdel Ross Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), 3-61.

13. Aaron S. Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Marianne Wokeck, "German Immigration to Colonial America: Prototype of a Transatlantic Mass Migration," in *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred Year History*, eds. Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 2: 3-13; Roeber, *Palatines* (1993), ix.

The other leading churchly group was the German Reformed, whose creedal basis was the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563. Most of the German immigrants associated with the Reformed Church came from the Palatinate, but their direct ecclesiastical allegiance was owed to Dutch Reformed officials in the Classis or Synod of The Netherlands. The counterparts to Mühlenberg for the Reformed were Johann Philip Boehm (1683-1749) and Michael Schlatter (1716-1790), who were instrumental in the formation of a synod (*coetus*) in 1747. It was not until 1793 that the German Reformed became a self-directing and self-sustaining church. By that time there were some 236 congregations associated with the Pennsylvania synod. (The number of Lutheran congregations was slightly higher, at 249).¹⁴

In 1934 the Reformed (German) Church in the United States merged with the Evangelical Synod (largely of 19th century immigration from German states and inspired by the Prussian attempt to unite Lutherans and Reformed) to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church; this body in turn merged in 1961 with the Congregational Christian Churches to form the United Church of Christ.¹⁵

In eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, the scattered settlements of Reformed and Lutheran colonists often shared church buildings, usually alternating Sundays for holding worship services. By 1793 fully half of the Pennsylvania congregations used such union structures. A common saying was that, for the laity, the only discernible difference was the way the Lord's prayer was recited, with the Reformed beginning with "Unser Vater" and the Lutherans with "Vater Unser." This was, of course, not technically accurate because of continuing differences over the theological understanding of the eucharist; this division had kept Reformed and Lutherans apart after 1529 with the failure of the Marburg Colloquy, a disagreement that was not resolved until our own

14. Charles H. Glatfelter, *Pastors and Peoples: German Lutheran and Reformed Churches in the Pennsylvania Field, 1717-1793* (Breinigsville: Pennsylvania German Society, 1980-1981), 426.

15. Douglas Horton, *The United Church of Christ: Its Origins, Organization and Role in the World Today* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1962); Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 6th ed. (Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1975), 258-268. On the Prussian background, see John T. McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism: The Ecumenical Spirit and Its Persistent Expression* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1964), 303-307.

time. As population and thus membership grew, it was common for separate church edifices to be constructed, ending the union arrangement.¹⁶

Pietism: Both Lutherans and Reformed in Pennsylvania were influenced heavily by Pietism, the renewal movement within the German state churches of the 17th and 18th centuries. With the revered pastor and devotional writer Johann Arndt (1555-1621) as their mentor in the early 17th century, and Phillip Jakob Spener (1635-1705) and August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) as their guides and promoters in the later 17th century, Pietists were concerned to make the Christian faith alive and vital in the daily life of each believer. They wished to break through the crust of overly-scholastic dogma and rigid church bureaucracy to find the soul-satisfying bread of true spirituality.

The publication of a programmatic pamphlet on churchly reform by Spener in 1675 is often cited as the birthdate of Pietism, but its beginnings go back at least as far as Arndt's books on *True Christianity* (completed in 1610). The Historical Commission for Pietist Research, mentioned previously, is sponsoring a standard history of Pietism (*Geschichte des Pietismus*), of which the first two of a projected four volumes are in print.¹⁷

The theological guardians of orthodoxy warned that Pietist ferment could burst the bounds of the church, with images of new wine in old wineskins. Their fears were realized with the emergence of separatists — termed Radical Pietists — who broke with or were expelled from the Reformed and Lutheran churches. Their insistence on privately coming together in conventicles to search the scriptures, pray, sing, and edify each other in spiritual discourse was not tolerated within the ecclesiastical establishments. Many Radical Pietists were informed by the theo-

16. Glatfelter, *Pastors and People* (1980-1981), esp. 161-170, with texts of actual agreements. See also Ralph Wood, "Lutheran and Reformed, Pennsylvania German Style," in *The Pennsylvania Germans*, ed. Ralph Wood (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1942), 87-102, and Frederick Klees, *The Pennsylvania Dutch* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), 72-90. For a clear exposition of the original sacramental difference, consult Lewis W. Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation, 1517-1559* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 158-162.

17. Martin Brecht and others, eds., *Geschichte des Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, 1995). See also Gary R. Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good: A Brief Introduction to the Life and Writings of August Hermann Francke* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1982) and K. James Stein, *Philip Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1986). A useful introduction to Pietism is Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, rev. ed. (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1996); for a popularly-written survey, see the special issue, "Pietism: A Much Maligned Movement Re-examined," *Christian History* 5:2 (1986).

sophical interpretations of the Silesian shoemaker mystic, Jakob Boehme (1575-1624) and the descriptions of the early Christians by Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714).¹⁸

Of the few organized movements derived from Radical Pietism, one which affected Pennsylvania history was the Brethren movement. They began in central Germany in 1708 and migrated to North America (primarily in 1719 and 1729); they were known popularly as *Dunkers* or *Dunkards* because of their form of baptism by threefold forward immersions. They are best described as Radical Pietists who accepted an Anabaptist view of the church.¹⁹

They were called in Europe the New Baptists (*Neue Täufer*) to distinguish them from the Mennonites whom they otherwise closely resembled. They differed from them, however, not only on minor practices (such as the specific mode of baptism) but also principally in their starting point in Radical Pietism. They had personal association with Mennonites both before and after their formation and read Mennonite devotional and doctrinal literature.

In North America, Amish, Mennonites, and Brethren tended to seek out the same fertile soil for their settlements, thus finding themselves in close proximity. This residential pattern reinforced their shared beliefs, but also sharpened the focus on those few areas of dissimilar interpretation and practice. Despite these tensions, family lines became intertwined through intermarriage, as genealogists can readily testify. It was also the case that the strict Amish, over the generations, lost many members to the Mennonites and to the Brethren, among whom they could enjoy the "like precious faith" under more generous and accommodating disciplines, withal still very strict in the eyes of the "world's people." Because of their Pietist origins, Brethren had a more lively form

18. Brief accessible data on Boehme and Arnold are found in Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (1996). More detail is provided in the books by F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965) and *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973). The best recent study in English on Boehme is Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1991).

19. The most recent comprehensive study is Donald F. Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine: A History of the Brethren, 1708-1995* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren Press, 1997).

20. See on these interactions volumes in the Mennonite Experience in America series, especially Richard K. MacMaster, *Land, Piety, Peoplehood: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America, 1683-1790* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1985) and Theron F. Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation: Mennonites and Amish in Nineteenth-Century America* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1988).

of worship, which seemed to attract the more sober Anabaptists.²⁰

Anabaptists: Reference has been made to the Anabaptists and Mennonites, who need to be further described and defined. As previously explained, the phrase "Anabaptist" means "re-baptizer" or in the German, *Wiedertäufer*. Members of these groups rejected this label, because they held that the "water bath" they had all experienced automatically as infants was no true baptism. If a name had to be accepted, which they were reluctant to admit, then they should be called simply "Baptists" or *Täufer*, they preferred the term "Baptist-minded" — *Taufgesinnten* or (in Dutch) *Doopsgezinde*. Because of the drastic persecution levied upon them, they often compiled martyrologies, of which *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of Defenseless Christians* (1660), is the best example.²¹

In their own self-understanding, baptism was not all that central. It was rather a logical step in their determination to follow Jesus Christ as Lord in humble obedience in all things, large and small. Baptism of adults was simply a dramatic and legally-pregnant consequence of their rejection of the Constantinian linkage of church and state in favor of a voluntary union of committed believers. Later analysts have used the terms "Free Church" and "Believers Church" to characterize the new form of religious association Anabaptists created, and the term "Radical Reformation" to contrast with the "Magisterial Reformation" of Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican Protestantism.²²

Most often cited as the originators of this new kind of Christian society were the Swiss Brethren of the Zürich canton of eastern Switzerland, most of them formerly younger associates of the reformer Ulrich Zwingli; January, 1525, is accepted as the date of foundation. Later scholarship has revealed the concurrent crystalization of many such dissenting movements across Italy, Switzerland, Southern Germany, Central Germany, Northern Germany, and the Low Countries, with their own characteristics and emphases. Earlier commentators had emphasized that these dissenters were primarily bible-believers seeking to put

21. Useful surveys of Anabaptist/Mennonite history are: Cornelius J. Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History*, 3rd edition (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1993) and William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Erdmans, 1996).

The story of the most-widely translated and circulated martyrology is told in Jan Gleysteen, *The Drama of the Martyrs* (Lancaster, Pa.: Mennonite Historical Associates, 1975) and John S. Oyer and Robert S. Kreider, *Mirror of the Martyrs* (Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books, 1990).

22. See Franklin H. Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1964) and Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism*, 2nd ed. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1985).

into practice and complete the Protestant tenets introduced by Martin Luther and other reformers; they stressed the largely orthodox quality of Anabaptist beliefs. Recent scholars have stressed Anabaptist linkage with both passive and violent peasant revolt, anti-clericalism, heretical doctrines, and apocalyptic prophecies. However this historiographical dispute is resolved (and one expects it will not be readily forthcoming), all will agree that the result was a parting of the ways of this form of radical Christianity from both the customary institutions, rites, and doctrines of the medieval Catholic Church, on the one hand, and the newly emerged magisterial Protestant Churches (Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican) on the other.²³

Of the several manifestations of Anabaptism, it is the Mennonite tradition that most directly concerns us today. Scattered Mennonite individuals and families found refuge in North America in the course of the early 17th century; the Bronx in metropolitan New York, for example, was named for an early Dutch Mennonite. Yet, large-scale migration began with the influx of over a dozen families of Mennonite background in the famed 1683 migration from Krefeld to Germantown north of Philadelphia. Their ship, the *Concord*, has been called the German *Mayflower*. Most of these immigrants had become associated with the Religious Society of Friends by the time of their arrival, but with their coming Mennonites made their beginning here as an organized movement. They were joined by a rising tide of other Mennonites, many of them of Swiss origin who had found refuge in the German Palatinate. They were aided in their perilous migration by the efficient and generous Dutch *Doopsgezinden*.²⁴

In the 1730s these Mennonites were joined in Pennsylvania by their close cousins, the Amish. The Amish resulted in 1693 from a division in Switzerland, the Palatinate, and Alsace spearheaded by Jakob Ammann (fl. 1690s), who may have been a convert from the Swiss Reformed. Maintaining that the leaders of the Swiss Mennonites were too lax in church discipline, Jakob Ammann banned those elders who did not follow his strictures and won many followers to his rigorous cause. The Amish settled first in Berks and Chester counties, moving

23. The most recent attempt at a synthesis is Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Thought: An Introduction* (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1995). A recent interpretation of the historiographical shift is found in Werner C. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995), 1-11.

24. The latest summary of these developments is in MacMaster, *Land, Piety, Peoplehood* (1985), 50-78.

later to what became Lancaster County with which they have become inextricably linked. We will consider later some of the Amish and Mennonite developments.²⁵

Schwenkfelders and Moravians: Having briefly identified and defined the Pietist and Anabaptist movements as they took shape in the 16th and late 17th centuries, it is possible to backtrack to the 16th century to identify two movements with their own links with Pietism. One of the most unusual of the dissenting strands to take on loose shape then were the followers of Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig, referred to previously. At one time close to Luther in his religious thought, Schwenckfeld broke with the reformer over the correct understandings of the nature of Jesus Christ and of the eucharist. The Silesian aristocrat tried to strike a "middle way" during the hefty religious controversies of the time. He refused to give structured form to those who followed his teachings, but rather appealed to them to be yeast and ferment where they were; this stance earned him the title of "Pietist before Pietism." In fact a small number identified so firmly with his position that they came to be called *Schwenkfelders*. They persisted in private conventicles long after his death, often protected in scattered provinces by a tolerant nobility.

In the early eighteenth century a number of Schwenkfelders were driven from their home base in Silesia and eventually found their way to Pennsylvania in 1734. They have persisted to the present in five congregations, all near Philadelphia, currently with links to the United Church of Christ. Over the years they have entertained close connections with Mennonites and have been considered among the Historic Peace Churches.²⁶

Schwenkfelders fleeing Silesia found refuge on the Saxon estates of Nikolaus Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), the Lutheran noble who had earlier given sanctuary to Czech Brethren refugees. This latter group was derived from the "Hidden Seed," the remnant of the once flourishing *Unitas Fratrum* (Unity of Brethren), which had formed

25. A useful recent survey is Steven M. Nolt, *A History of the Amish* (Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books, 1992). Standard accounts are: John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society*, 4th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) and Donald B. Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1989). Documents pertaining to Amish beginnings are available in a new translation: John D. Roth, ed., *Letters of the Amish Division: A Sourcebook* (Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 1993).

26. See the literature in endnote 3. Though dated, the following work is still valuable: Howard W. Kriebel, *The Schwenkfelders in Pennsylvania* (Lancaster: New Era Printing Co., 1904), Volume 13, Proceedings of the Pennsylvania German Society. On the Silesian developments, see Horst Weigelt, *The Schwenkfelders in Silesia* (Pennsburg, Pa.: Schwenkfelder Library, 1985).

among Hussites in the later 15th century; both 1457 and 1467 have been given as dates of origin. Though predating the Protestant Reformation, the Unity formed close links with it in the 16th century, before its members were almost completely suppressed during the Catholic Counter Reformation. A small band of Moravian refugees found shelter on Zinzendorf's estates in the 1720s and there established their community *Herrnhut* (the "watch of the Lord"), which was to become a stronghold of Pietism and headquarters of international mission efforts.²⁷

Count Zinzendorf became the leader and bishop of the energetic body of Moravians, who took the name *Renewed Moravian Church* to highlight their rebirth as a church body in 1727. They founded centers on the Herrnhut pattern in other parts of Germany, The Netherlands, England, Scandinavia, and the West Indies. Under the guidance of Zinzendorf and his associate (and later successor) Augustus Gottlieb Spangenberg (1704-1792), the Moravian movement expanded on the North American continent first to Georgia in 1735, and then to Pennsylvania, Maryland, the Carolinas and other areas. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, eventually became the center of the Northern Synod and (Winston) Salem, North Carolina, the center of the Southern Synod. Moravian contributions to music (choral, instrumental, and organ-building), missions among Native Americans, and ecumenical cooperation have become famous.²⁸

Communal Societies: We referred to Radical Pietism in describing the origin of the Brethren; it is important to note that an early schism within the Brethren in the Conestoga area (1728) led to the formation of an exemplar of Radical Pietism — the *Ephrata Society*, or as it is generally known today, the *Ephrata Cloister*. Its brilliant if self-centered initiator, the former Palatine baker Conrad Beissel (1691-1768), became in 1724 the leader of a Brethren congregation in Conestoga. This con-

27. The standard history is J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Moravian Church of America, 1967); an informative biography is A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf, the Ecumenical Pioneer: A Study in the Moravian Contribution to Christian Mission and Unity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962). Current scholarship on Moravians may be followed in the international journal, *Unitas Fratrum: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Gegenwartfragen der Brüdergemeine*, which contains periodic bibliographical surveys.

28. A recent study of Pennsylvania Moravians is Beverly Prior Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988). The older Bancroft Award winner by Gillian Lindt Gollin is still useful: *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities* (New York / London: Columbia University Press, 1967).

nection was soon strained, and his predilection of placing his own revelations above the plain teaching of the Bible led in 1728 to a split with the Germantown Brethren.²⁹

The unusual circumstance of a Protestant monastic center, built up around Beissel's eremetical retreat on the Cocalico after 1732, naturally attracted attention. The monastic practices, celibate discipline, beautiful *Fraktur* artwork, heavenly singing, and free-handed generosity to the neighbor and traveling stranger brought fame to Ephrata; even the cynical deist and critic of religion Voltaire heard of them and called them the "most inimitable" people on earth. More recently Thomas Mann's novel *Doktor Faustus* (1948) brought notoriety to Ephrata by its focus on Beissel's unique theory of music. The year 1991, the 300th anniversary of Beissel's birth, appropriately stimulated several celebrations and observances.³⁰

It is not well known that the Ephrata heritage is continued to this day by the small Seventh Day German Baptist Church, with a sizable congregation at Salemville in central Pennsylvania, and smaller numbers near Ephrata and Waynesboro. A daughter colony, the Snow Hill Nunnery, in Quincy, Pennsylvania, lasted until 1895. Over 570 Ephrata and

29. Two articles by Donald F. Durnbaugh provide overviews of the Radical Pietist communities; they are: "Work and Hope: The Spirituality of the Radical Pietist Communitarians," *Church History* 39 (March, 1970): 72-90, and "Communitarian Societies in Colonial America," in *America's Communal Utopias*, ed. Donald E. Pitzer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 14-31. Relevant literature may be found in Philip N. Dare, *American Communes to 1860: A Bibliography* (New York / London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 61-71.

The only full biography of Beissel is harshly critical: Walter C. Klein, *Johann [sic] Conrad Beissel: Mystic and Martinet, 1690 [sic]-1768* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1942). Recent research has shown that Beissel's full name was Georg Conrad Beissel, not Johann Conrad as most earlier writers had assumed, and his birthdate was 1691. For a selection of his writings, see Peter C. Erb, ed., *Johann Conrad Beissel and the Ephrata Community: Mystical and Historical Texts* (Lewistown, Me.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985).

30. There is a voluminous literature on Ephrata; a compilation made more than fifty years ago had already more than 450 entries — Eugene E. Doll and Anneliese M. Funke, *The Ephrata Cloister: An Annotated Bibliography* (Philadelphia: Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation, 1944). A recent narrative history is E. Gordon Alderfer, *The Ephrata Commune: An Early American Counterculture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985). The best treatment of Ephrata's ideology is Jeffrey A. Bach, "The Voice of the Solitary Turtledove: The Mystical Language of Ephrata," Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 1997).

Voltaire's judgment is included in Felix Reichmann and Eugene E. Doll, eds., *Ephrata As Seen by Contemporaries* (Allentown, Pa.: Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, 1953), 84; Mann's book is *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn, As Told by a Friend*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948).

Snow Hill books, many manuscripts, and an Ephrata-related printing press from Snow Hill were deposited in the Archives of Juniata College early in 1997.³¹

Ephrata was not the first such communal experiment. The Dutch Mennonite and Collegiant P. C. Plockhoy (ca. 1620-ca.1700) had attempted a community on the Delaware River in 1664 at the *Valley of the Swans*, near the present town of Lewes, Delaware. A promising beginning was thwarted by a English military raid which crushed the experiment. This was followed by the longer-lasting Labadist colony of *Bohemia Manor*, Maryland, which was active from 1683 to 1727. The founder of Labadism was the former French Jesuit, Jean de Labadie (1610-1674). Labadie had himself influenced the Pietist leader Spener in Geneva, and had been recognized for a time by the Reformed Church in Holland.³²

The Labadists were followed, chronologically, by the fascinating and still mysterious community of the *Woman of the Wilderness* located on the Wissahickon Brook near Philadelphia, named after the passage in Revelation (12:6ff.); the society of savants and hermits themselves used the name, the *Contented of the God-Loving Soul*. Its members had been led to Pennsylvania in 1694 by the 21-year-old scholar and mystic Johannes Kelpius (1673-ca.1708), who unfortunately was lost to the community because of his early death in 1708. Conrad Beissel of Ephrata had in fact made the difficult journey to America in hopes of joining the Kelpian community, only to find it dispersed when he arrived in 1720.³³

These Radical Pietists were followed by others a century later. Most successful was the *Harmonist Society* led by Father Johann Georg Rapp (1757-1847), a Swabian arch-separatist. After 1803 several hundreds of Rapp's followers from Württemberg arrived in Western Pennsylvania where they set up a religious communal society in Butler County. One of Rapp's former lieutenants, Dr. F. C. Haller (1753-1828), led a group of erstwhile Harmonists to the Williamsport area, where they founded

31. The most thorough published description of this little-studied society is Charles M. [actually W.] Treher, "Snow Hill Cloister," in *Publications of the Pennsylvania German Society* 2 (Allentown: Pennsylvania German Society, 1968), 7-114.

32. A definitive work is Trevor C. Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem: Jean de Labadie and the Labadists, 1610-1744* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987); see also Ernest J. Green, "The Labadists of Colonial Maryland (1683-1722)," *Communal Societies* 8 (1988): 104-121.

33. The most complete recent study is Willard M. Martin, "Johannes Kelpius and Johann Gottfried Seelig: Mystics and Hymnists on the Wissahickon," Ph.D. thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 1973. For other literature, see Durnbaugh, "Communitarian Societies" (1997).

the semi-communal *Blooming Grove* Dunker colony, without mandatory celibacy and authoritarian Rappite rule.

In 1814 the Harmony Society moved bag and baggage to the extreme southwest tip of the Indiana territory to create New Harmony, only to abandon it ten years later to return once more to western Pennsylvania. There they erected their last settlement on the banks of the Ohio River in Beaver County at what is today called Ambridge; this highly successful colony they called *Economy*. After Rapp's death in 1847, the largely celibate society prospered financially under his successors but could not sustain its religious vitality; the last members dissolved the organization in 1892. Like Ephrata it was later taken over by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as an historic site.³⁴

To round out the story, the fascinating Anabaptist-based communal *Society of Brothers* or *Bruderhof* should be mentioned, because of its two current communities in Western Pennsylvania. Founded in Germany in 1920 by Eberhard Arnold (1883-1935) and his wife Emmy Arnold (1884-1980), the Bruderhof made common cause in 1931 with the Hutterian Brethren, a branch of early 16th century Anabaptism. The Bruderhof members were expelled from Nazi Germany, found refuge for a time in England, but then migrated to Paraguay at the beginning of World War II. Following 1954 they moved to North America, where they have flourished in several colonies since then, despite flurries of disaffection.³⁵

34. There is an expansive literature on the Harmonist movement led by Rapp, most of which was written or edited by Karl J. R. Arndt. His two volumes of narrative history remain the standard treatment: *George Rapp's Harmony Society, 1785-1847*, rev. ed. (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972) and *George Rapp's Successors and Material Heirs* (Teaneck, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971). Arndt published extensive sourcebooks on the three Harmony settlements.

The latest study of Blooming Grove is D. F. Durnbaugh, "Blooming Grove Colony," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 25 (Spring 1970): 18-23, which supplements Joseph H. McMinn, *Blooming Grove (Bluengrofe): A History of the Congregation of German Dunkers Who Settled in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, 1803 ...* (Williamsport, Pa.: Scholl Brothers, 1901).

35. The latest narrative account is Yaacov Oved, *The Witness of the Brothers: A History of the Bruderhof* (New Brunswick, N.J. / London: Transaction Publishers, 1996). After 1997 the official name of the movement was "The Bruderhof Communities." The trials and travels of the Bruderhof are recounted in Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Relocation of the German Bruderhof to England, South America, and North America," *Communal Societies* 11 (1991): 62-77.

Two histories written by Bruderhof leaders are Emmy Arnold, *Torches Together: The Beginning and Early Years of the Bruderhof Communities* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough Publishing House, 1971) and Merrill Mow, *Torches Rekindled: The Bruderhof's Struggle for Renewal* (Ulster Park, N.Y.: Plough Publishing House, 1989). Mow's account is sharply critiqued by a former member (and granddaughter of the founder) in the book by Elizabeth Bohlken-Zumpe, *Torches Extinguished: Memories of a Communal Bruderhof Childhood in Paraguay, Europe and the USA* (San Francisco: Carrier Pigeon Press, 1993).

Other Developments: A notable new group was born in the 1770s in Lancaster County with a triple inheritance. With most of its early personnel of Mennonite stock, with other members and some religious practices from the Brethren, and with its spiritual orientation largely derived from the Wesleys, the so-called *River Brethren* (after the 1860s known officially as the *Brethren in Christ*) share Anabaptist, Pietist, and Revivalist roitage. Of course, if one recalls that the Wesleyan movement itself drew heavily from Pietism by way of the Moravians, the last named is yet another tributary of the Pietist stream.³⁶

The *United Brethren in Christ* (which took organized form in 1800), along with the *Evangelical Association* (organized in 1807, reorganized in 1816), were the most active outgrowths of the revivalistic Wesleyan movement among the German settlers in Pennsylvania in the late colonial and early national periods. It was appropriate when they united in 1946 to form the *Evangelical United Brethren*, and appropriate again when that body united with the Methodist Church in 1968 to form the *United Methodist Church*. All belonged to the larger Wesleyan family.³⁷

The history of Anabaptism, with its emphasis on discipleship and the strict and sober daily walk, has been marked by disagreements on how discipleship is to be understood in concrete cases. Different interpretations of the *Ordnung* can arise; different responses have been given to innovations introduced in the larger society or mandated by law (one thinks of automobiles, traffic regulations, mandatory school regulations, and hygienic laws, for example). Such disagreements, complicated by personality clashes and varying leadership styles, have often resulted in disunion. This has happened when the mechanism for resolving disputes, the "rule of Christ" spelled out in the eighteenth chapter of the gospel according to Matthew, has not resulted in full reconciliation.³⁸

Reference has already been made to the historic Amish schism of 1693, which European division was transplanted to these shores. The *New or Reformed Mennonites* formed in 1812 around John Herr (1782-1850) of Lancaster County, who taught that the main body had strayed from the true path because of lax exercise of the discipline. Its current membership is under 500 in eleven congregations. In mid-nineteenth

36. A standard history is Carlton O. Witlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience: The Story of the Brethren in Christ* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1978). Descriptive articles are published in *Brethren in Christ History and Life* (June 1978ff.).

37. A recent overview of these and comparable groups is Stephen L. Longenecker, *Piety and Tolerance: Pennsylvania German Religion, 1700-1850* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994).

38. A skillful interpretation of these issues is Beulah Stoffer Hostetler, "The Formation of the Old Orders," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 66 (January 1992): 5-25.

century Pennsylvania a reform movement in the Franconia Conference led by John Oberholtzer (1809-1895) gave rise to the eventual formation of the *General Conference Mennonite Church*. Wishing to see the Mennonite organization given a more orderly and written structure, the progressively-minded Oberholtzer clashed with older colleagues in the ministry, who wished to stay by the unwritten rule of the *Ordnung*. Those following Oberholtzer united with like-minded congregations in the midwest in 1860 to form the denomination, soon augmented by Mennonite immigration from Russia.³⁹

The *Old Order Mennonites* originated in several schisms — one in Pennsylvania in 1845 (Jacob Stauffer in Lancaster County), another in Indiana in 1872 (Jacob Wisler in Elkhart County), and in Pennsylvania in 1893 (Jonas Martin in the Weaverland area of Lancaster County). Of these Old Order Mennonites, the small *Stauffer or Pike Mennonite* group center around Ephrata and stress complete nonconformity to worldly practices. They do not accept the use of automobiles, retaining the horse and buggy as means of transportation. There are two Pennsylvania branches of the Old Order Mennonites associated with the Wisler schism — the so-called English group are somewhat more accomodating to new practices (members can drive soberly-styled automobiles) and the so-called German group or Team Mennonites (who forbid the use of automobiles). The former are often referred to as the *Weaverland Conference or Horning Mennonites*, the latter as the *Groffdale Conference or Wenger Mennonites*.⁴⁰

There are many other divisions among the Mennonites and Amish, too many to describe easily or even to place on a chart or timeline. To take one example: a recent charting of Amish/Mennonite groups in Kishacoquillas or Big Valley in Mifflin County showed eighteen distinct groups, most taking on separate form after 1900. In an earlier listing of the Amish and Mennonite groups in Big Valley, the writer commented that the those in the middle looked on the more conservative with condescension and on the more liberal with apprehension.⁴¹

A major division took place among the Brethren (known legally at

39. On these movements, consult Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation* (1988).

40. The latest survey of these developments is Jean-Paul Benowitz, "The Mennonites of Pennsylvania: A House Divided," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 46 (Autumn 1996): 2-19; it contains some errors. See also the companion article, John Ruth, "Not Only Tradition but Truth: Legend and Myth Fragments Among Pennsylvania Mennonites," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 46 (Autumn 1996): 20-37.

41. S. Duane Kauffman, *Mifflin County Amish and Mennonite Story, 1791-1991* (Belleville, Pa.: Mifflin County Mennonite Historical Society, 1991).

the time as the *German Baptist Brethren*) in the later nineteenth century. Increasing tension between factions pressing for innovations calculated to spread the gospel more effectively and those calling for absolute adherence to past practice and belief broke into separation in 1881-1883. The most conservative, recognizing that they would not be able to hold the changing denomination to their line of thought, withdrew in 1881 to form the *Old German Baptist Brethren*. The progressive element also developed a separate organization in 1883 after their leader, Henry R. Holsinger (1833-1905) of Berlin, Pennsylvania, was expelled for insubordination. They took the name *Brethren Church*. A fundamentalist controversy in the late 1930s led to a painful division among these "Progressive Brethren" and the creation of the *Grace Brethren* fellowship. The mainline group of German Baptist Brethren, which took the name *Church of the Brethren* in 1908 (at its bicentennial), suffered another conservative schism in 1926 when the *Dunkard Brethren* withdrew because of the relaxation of insistence upon the plain dress and the increasing attachment to higher education.⁴²

The Brethren in Christ also experienced separation during in the mid 1850s, with the emergence of the *Old Order River Brethren (Yorkers)*, on the conservative side, and the *United Zion's Children* (later called *United Zion's Church*) on the more liberal side. The conservative Old Order group itself experienced several divisions, particularly about whether automobiles could be accepted, although some of these have been reconciled.⁴³

Conclusion: An ecumenical age, and one marked by easy tolerance for diversity based all-too-often on lack of real concern, finds a history of division distasteful and distressing. Different observers may take different attitudes toward it. One sees it positively as a sign of integrity and determination, using the motto "Rotten wood can't split, it merely crumbles." Another also sees it in a positive light by pointing out the growth and outreach which smaller and separating bodies have often placed on record. Another sees it as a sign of original sin and judges that

42. The most recent descriptions are Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine* (1997), 291-315; Carl F. Bowman, *Brethren Society: The Cultural Transformation of a "Peculiar People"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 95-131; Dale R. Stoffer, *Background and Development of Brethren Doctrines, 1650-1957* (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., 1989), 133-156.

43. Laban T. Breckbill, *History of the Old Order River Brethren*, ed. Myron S. Dietz ([n.p.]: Breckbill & Strickler, 1972). Two informative articles are: Myron Dietz, "The Old Order River Brethren," *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 6 (June 1983): 4-35, and Stephen E. Scott, "The Old Order River Brethren Church," *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 1 (July 1978): 13-22.

division among Anabaptists and Pietists is based on incorrect theological orientation from the outset, placing too much weight on the possibilities of frail human nature and discounting the impact of divine grace. Others see it as a delightful example of the complex and ever-varied mosaic of religious experience, where a thousand flowers can flourish.

However the proliferation of religious bodies with similar parentage is viewed, it is important to note, in conclusion, that centripetal as well as centrifugal forces are at work. In 1995 the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonites decided to unite and are currently moving toward some kind of organizational linkage, following the precedent of numerous congregations that already hold dual alliance. The initiative flowed from the joint Assembly/Convention held in Bethlehem as part of the tricentennial celebration of the 1683 migration.⁴⁴

The Church of the Brethren and these Mennonite churches have cooperated in a number of initiatives and agencies, ranging from foundations, to health and caregiving concerns, to a common hymnal published in 1992. Members of the five largest Brethren bodies have cooperated in ambitious publishing ventures and held a Brethren World Assembly in July, 1992, in Elizabethtown, PA. A second World Assembly was held in July, 1998, in Bridgewater, Virginia.⁴⁵ The Brethren in Christ cooperate closely with Mennonites on many levels of church activity.

Preeminently, however, and this flows naturally from their basic faith heritage, these groups work together on practical applications of Christian caring and sharing. From the local level, with barn-raising and auctions for relief, to the national level with cooperation on peace programs, to the international level with agencies of relief and rehabilitation, the Anabaptist and Pietist churches work shoulder to shoulder to relieve human need caused by war, natural catastrophe, and socio-economic hardship. The Mennonite Central Committee, with its hundreds of shortterm and longterm voluntary staff and multi-million dollar budget, epitomizes this common effort. One Mennonite working at a disaster site said it well by stating his belief "that our faith needs to be

44. This process can be followed in reports published in *The Mennonite Weekly Review*, an independent journal reporting on news about all Mennonite bodies.

45. Donald F. Durnbaugh, ed., *Report of the Proceedings of the Brethren World Assembly ... July 13 - July 17, 1992* (Elizabethtown, Pa.: Young Center for the Study of Anabaptist and Pietist Groups / Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., 1994).

put into overalls.”⁴⁶

The Heifer Project is another example of this kind of earthy cooperation; initiated by Brethren relief worker Dan West (1893-1971), it enjoys broad ecumenical support. It dispatches agricultural livestock from cows to chickens around the world to needy recipients, given by schools, Sunday School classes, and individual donors. Someone stated that the project started a “chain reaction of love,” now having reaching more than a million families in many nations.⁴⁷

Anabaptism and Pietism have been fruitful reform and renewal movements in the life of the Christian church. Their branches and offshoots in the Pennsylvania vineyard, along with the better known mainstream denominations, have contributed to the rich inheritance of Pennsylvania German religious expression; they merit our attention and respect.

46. See Robert S. Kreider and Rachel Waltner Goossen, *Hungry, Thirty, a Stranger: The MCC Experience* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1988). Comparable activity among the Brethren is reported in Donald F. Durnbaugh, ed., *To Serve the Present Age: The Brethren Service Story* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren Press, 1975).

47. See the biography of West, Glee Yoder, *Passing on the Gift: The Story of Dan West* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren Press, 1978) and also Clara T. Johnson, *Milk for the World: The Heifer Project on the West Coast: A Story of Love in Action* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren Press, 1981).