

**CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN HISTORY AND FAITH PRACTICES**

An Outlined Presentation  
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by  
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## CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN HISTORY AND FAITH PRACTICES

- I. The Cultural Background for the Beginning of the Church of the Brethren:
  - a. Augustine (354-430):
    - i. Popularized the doctrine of Original Sin. If Original Sin is true, then infant baptism must occur
    - ii. Baptisms of babies was already a widespread phenomenon in Christiandom.
  - b. Thirty Year's War (1616-1648)
    - i. War between the Reformed Faith (followers of Calvin and Zwingli), Lutherans, and Catholics.
    - ii. In some areas ONLY 10% of the population was left AND some towns were utterly destroyed in the German areas called the Palatine.
    - iii. The Treaty of Westphalia – end of the war 1648
      1. Grants toleration of the Reformed Faith
      2. Determines that who ever rules makes the rules
      3. Notice: of the three legal faiths (Catholic, Reformed, or Lutheran), all baptized babies. Water Immersion of adults became illegal!
  - c. After the Thirty Year's War
    - i. The preachers took up the battle in arguments over doctrine.
    - ii. The German area of Wittgenstein continually changed rulers (and religions).
    - iii. Pietism
      1. Pietism sprung out of the Church neglecting the spiritual habits for the sake of doctrinal purity. They cared about devotion. They also cared about being very social with their gospel due to eschatology (being ready) and Christ's commands.
      2. "We should not interpret the Scriptures by the Creeds, but the Creeds by the Scriptures."
      3. Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705) the Father of Pietism, wrote about six requirements for reformation of the church (*On Pious Desires*):
        1. Better Bible knowledge on the part of Christians. He started "Conventicles" (small groups for Bible Study and prayer)
        2. Restore the priesthood of all believers.
        3. Restore mutual Christian concern; emphasis on good works.
        4. Avoid controversy.
        5. Provide better spiritual training for leaders in the church, with emphasis on the devotional life of the believer.
        6. Reformation of preaching—more fervor needed.<sup>1</sup>
    - iv. Anabaptism (radical Reformationists):
      1. Overall, the Anabaptists were allowed to stay in an area, unless the began to evangelize. They usually stuck to rural areas, because they were farmers.
      2. The Anabaptists taught:
        - a. A "Two Kingdoms" view in which there was a separation of the Kingdom of God (the church) and the kingdoms of man (governments).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hall, p. 16

- b. The spiritual unity of believers
- c. A “spiritual” exegesis of Scripture – how does it move your spirit?
- d. The concept of the separated people of God – baptism became their symbol of this separation.
  - i. Infant baptism was wrong to them because:
    - 1. No biblical stories – infant baptism didn’t happen until 3rd century; even then there was strong opposition to it.
    - 2. No confession
    - 3. No repentance
    - 4. Children are covered by GRACE
  - e. To do away with accumulated practices and traditions – “have no creed but Christ”<sup>3</sup>
- v. Anabaptism & Pietism commonalities that impacted the development of the Brethren:
  - 1. They are Biblical centered movements
  - 2. They are very participatory
  - 3. They emphasized expressing faith in practical ways.
  - 4. Both movements influenced the Church of the Brethren:
    - a. The Pietists wanted to renew the church through small house churches.
    - b. The Anabaptists said that we are a church of called out baptized believers.

## II. The Beginning of the Church of the Brethren

- a. Hochmann von Hochenau – Pietist preacher who was a former lawyer.
  - i. Preached “rebirth” & inner purity, because Christ is coming back Easter 1700.
  - ii. Hochmann's beliefs:
    - 1. Use of the apostle's creed for confession
    - 2. Baptism is for adults, not children
    - 3. The Lord's Supper is only for those who have renounced all worldly things.
    - 4. Though he has not attained this state, being perfectly sanctified through Christ can happen.
    - 5. Preachers and teachers are called by God, not church leaders (who are merely men)
    - 6. There are two kingdoms: nature and God
    - 7. There are more curses than blessings in marriage<sup>4</sup>
  - iii. Went to a tiny village in Germany called Berleburg (capitol of Wittgenstein, pop. 300)
    - 1. Wittgenstein was known for its various religions. Example: one woman and two men were believed by one cult to be the Trinity. Healing came from group sex.

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<sup>2</sup> Ray

<sup>3</sup> Hall – p. 15

<sup>4</sup> Stoffer, p. 38-39

2. The Queen asked him to teach her city about holy living.
  3. Hochenau led revival meetings where there was people: barking like dogs, laughing, fainting and swooning, confessed sin, and wild prayers.
  4. Jesus didn't come back on Easter and didn't come back on Pentecost (he predicted this too).
  5. Fun fact: Revelation has been written about more than any other book by Brethren authors. Usually, they were pre-millennial, but with out a rapture.
- iv. He eventually left this area, but came to meet Alexander Mack.
  - v. Brethren historian M.C. Brumbaugh considered that Hochmann's *Confession of Faith*, "next to the Bible was the most important influence on the genesis of the Church [of the Brethren]."<sup>5</sup>
- b. Alexander Mack (1679-1735) – the prominent founding leader of the Brethren:
    - i. Lived in the Palatinate, a German area along the Rhine river
    - ii. This area was continually under war because of a question over the throne AND because of the persecution of the Anabaptists.
    - iii. Alexander Mack then moved to Wittgenstein:
      1. He was forced to move because he was illegally leading in-home Bible studies (1706)
      2. The ruler of the Wittgenstein asked the Anabaptists to come and farm his land.
  - c. The Brethren commit an illegal act (1708):
    - i. Schwarzenau, Germany - in the Eder river, eight believers (3 of them women) were baptized:
      1. The men drew straws to see who would baptize Mack. He then baptized the rest.
      2. Called themselves "New Baptists" to be distinguished from older Anabaptists groups (like the Mennonites).
  - d. Reasons these Brethren formed this community::
    - i. They asked: How much of the New Testament can we have & do?
      1. This is in opposition to:
        - a. Simplifying the faith with creeds and phrases like: "justification by faith alone"
        - b. Catholicism's rule of faith, where tradition is as important as Scripture.
      2. The Brethren wanted the New Testament, not just what the Protestants boil it down to or what the Catholics add.
    - ii. The Bible is our sole authority, not creeds or tradition.
    - iii. Believer's Baptism by Trine Immersion - their reasons for Baptism:
      1. Although, the adult baptism of believers became the blatant distinctive mark of the "New Baptists," it was not their starting point. Primary was the desire for a marked gathered community of believers according to the "Rights and Ordinances" of the New Testament.<sup>6</sup>

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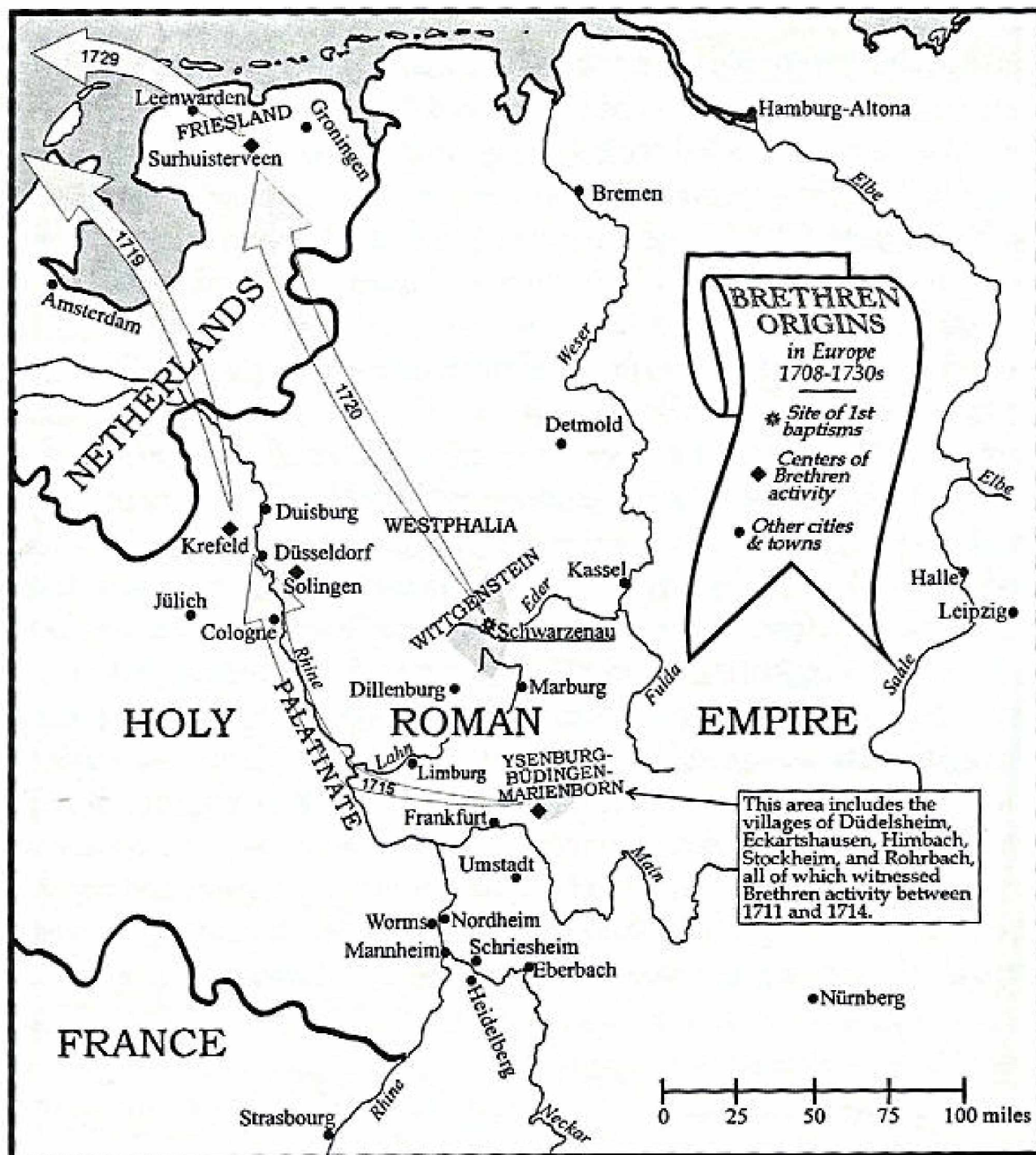
<sup>5</sup> Hochenau, p. 1

<sup>6</sup> Schneider, p. 48

2. Believers who confess faith, and repent of sin should be baptized.
  3. It was commanded by Christ
  4. Church was the gathered body (baptism was the mark)
  5. They believed that the Holy Spirit was leading them in unity. Baptism is a sign of the work of the Spirit. Baptism brought unity.
- iv. Church Discipline that lacked in other Faith groups- There was to be a brotherly discipline according to Christ's rule (Matthew 18:15-22).
- v. The Rejection of War - Scriptures that are vital to the early Brethren:
1. Matthew 5:9 - blessed are the peacemakers
  2. Matthew 5:38-48 & Romans 12:17, 21 - overcome evil with good
  3. Matthew 26:47-56 - Jesus does not retaliate
  4. Isaiah 2:2-4 - the peaceful kingdom of God
  5. James 3:18 - actively pursue peace
- vi. Wanted to become a visible church with one purpose. "We cannot say that [the church is] completely one in spirit, but we must be one in purpose."<sup>7</sup>
- e. The Brethren began to spread in Europe:
- i. The Pietists separated themselves from the Brethren (and vice-versa), because of the Brethren's stance on church discipline. Hochenau left them too.
  - ii. These early Brethren became highly evangelistic. This is part of the reason why they had to come to America. Intense growth: approximately 1700-1711
  - iii. The Brethren began to be persecuted. Example: Christian Liebe – arrested in 1714 and imprisoned in Sicily as a slave boat rower. Penalty for rebaptism. Note: even though the penalty for rebaptism was death, few after 1699 were killed.
  - iv. The Brethren began to move across Europe:
    1. This depended on the hostile climate of the area they were in.
    2. Also note: the moving was mostly financed by Alexander Mack.
    3. See map on next page:

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<sup>7</sup> Mack, p. 37



European origins and migrations of the Brethren. Adapted from *Brethren Encyclopedia* 1983, 1438.

- f. Church Leadership began to develop in the churches:
- i. First Degree (Teachers) – called by the congregation (and then later licensed by the Denomination when they came to America). Responsibilities: preaching
  - ii. Second Degree (Pastors) – after the first degree and congregational concurs, you were ordained. Responsibilities: preached, baptized, lead Love Feast, solemnized a marriage, and made your own appointments (could go to other congregations as wanted).
  - iii. Third Degree (Elder/Shepherd) - Responsibilities: all of the above, made appointments for first degree, reconciled conflict in other congregations (not their own), led business meetings for other congregations (not their own), could be moderators, and advanced other preachers. Tried to have a plurality of elders.
  - iv. Also to be considered:
    1. The elder never could do discipline in their own congregation. Only the council, or congregation, could.
    2. It was later developed that Baptisms in the Church of the Brethren polity should only be done by the church leader. In early theology, any baptized believer could baptize.
    3. In Brethren theology and in the beginning of our denomination, any one could speak, if they are invited or led to in testimony time during the services. The denomination moved to only being preacher led in the mid/end 1800's.

### III. The Brethren move to America:

- a. Under the leadership of Elder Peter Becker some Brethren move to the Philadelphia, PA area, because of:
  - i. Persecution of this new sect in the northern German States.
  - ii. The promise from the Pennsylvania governor of religious freedom.
  - iii. Division over mixed marriages. Brethren and Mennonite young people were marrying. The Brethren leaders wanted to move away from the Mennonite.
- b. On Christmas day, 1723, the First Brethren congregation is established in Germantown, PA - Peter Becker, chosen as their leader, officiated at the first Brethren baptisms and love feast in the New World.
- c. Division Occurs:
  - i. Under Conrad Beissel (died 1768) the Ephrata Community is developed in 1732 along the Cocalico Creek.
  - ii. Conrad Beissel rejected the leadership of the elders of the Germantown settlement. He even “gives back their baptism” by baptizing himself (1728) and later having one of his followers baptize him.
  - iii. At the Ephrata community, Beissel begins to teach:
    1. Spiritual Elitism - He emphasized celibacy, mysticism, and separation from the world's influence.
      - a. Based on celibacy, three divisions of leadership existed in this new community: Solitary Brethren, Solitary Sisters, and Householders (in order of power).

2. Judaizing Practices – observing Saturday for worship, elimination of all foods that are unclean in the OT, and circumcision.
3. Divine Revelation – he taught that his own teachings and visions were to take priority over Scripture.
- iv. Alexander Mack tried to reconcile differences with this group, but was never able to. This community exists today in small numbers under the name: Seventh Day German Baptist Brethren.
- d. Brethren encounter other faith groups in America:
  - i. Brethren vs. Mennonites and Friends:
    1. These two groups were considered to have “like precious faith” because both are Historic Peace Churches.
    2. The major difference:
      - a. Baptism – the Mennonites believed that spiritual baptism can happen without baptism. They also accepted augmentation, pouring instead of immersion.
      - b. Tolerance – the Mennonites did not wish to be involved in the affairs of other groups, nor did they wish to be overzealous in seeking converts. This led to the Brethren being more active in evangelism and in defending their faith stance against other groups.
  - ii. Brethren vs. Universalism:
    1. Alexander Mack agreed with every basic belief of the historic Christian faith (i.e. the Apostle’s Creed, etc.), except in one area.
      - a. He was greatly influenced by the teachings of Hochenau who wrote: “As all humans have fallen in Adam, so must all humans be restored through another Adam, namely: Christ. If this were not so, it would necessarily follow that Christ would not be powerful enough to redeem the human race, which through Adam was lost.”<sup>8</sup>
      - b. Mack took this to mean that “Universal Restoration” is true – punishment in hell for sinners was still true; he believed that punishment is not eternally eternal, but that it would be a long time. Eventually, there would be a restoration of sinners based on grace. They would be 2nd classed citizens in heaven.
      - c. Most of the early Brethren did not believe this, but some did.
      - d. This is different from Universalism – universalism believes there is no hell and no punishment, all go straight to heaven, Jesus is not the only way, there is no devil, and whatever hell happens is here on earth.
      - e. 1790 – John H., a Church of the Brethren preacher, in North Carolina preached that there is no hell, no punishment, and no devil. The annual conference disciplined him and eventually disfellowshipped with him and his followers (around 1-2K people).

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<sup>8</sup> Hochenau, p. 7

- i. Some entered the Universalist churches. John H. and others moved into Kentucky and began new churches that taught this philosophy.
  - ii. George Wolf (1812) came from these churches and sought recognition within the annual conference. His group was called the Western Brethren. They were later reinstated.
- f. This doctrine became a matter of opinion, not a core belief. Even Mack warned about preaching it – “Even though this is true [that eternal punishment has an end], it should not be preached as a gospel to the godless.”<sup>9</sup>
- iii. Brethren vs. Restorationism:
  1. In the Ohio Valley, there came to be close connections between these two groups. “Both were Biblicists, immersionists, and noncreedal.”<sup>10</sup>
  2. Differences:
    - a. Baptism – trine forward vs. once backward
    - b. Communion – special holidays vs. every Sunday
  3. Despite these differences, an association formed between Restoration churches and Brethren.
    - a. This led to some 15 Brethren churches (2000 members) becoming Christian Churches/Churches of Christ.
    - b. The Ohio Valley Brethren were open to: single immersion, revival meetings (some were concerned that the invitation did not include the cross bearing / counting cost aspect of faith.), and fashionable clothes.
  4. Joseph Hostetler, a young Brethren preacher, wrote to Alexander Campbell – why did Campbell not teach about footwashing and the holy kiss? Why didn’t teach trine baptism? Campbell responded that these were “social customs of the early church and should not be made mandatory church rituals.”<sup>11</sup> This converted the young preacher and his congregations.
  5. Other Brethren who were “converted” to Restorationism: Abraham Kern, Peter Hon, and George H. Hon.
  6. Peter Keyser, a preacher in the Philadelphia congregation, clashed with Campbell, however. They believed that Campbell was in error concerning the washing of feet and the restitution of all things.
  7. In the 1820’s & 30’s, the Church of the Brethren began to take a hard line stance on the form of baptism because of the Restorationists.
  8. Debates: James Quinter (Brethren) and a lawyer of the Christian Church debated in 1868 over the methods of baptism and church order. It should also be noted that D.B. Sturgis debated with Sidney Rigdon (then a Mormon, but a former Restorationist) in 1841.

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<sup>9</sup> Mack, p. 99

<sup>10</sup> Durnbaugh, p. 173

<sup>11</sup> Durnbough, p. 174

- IV. Major Issues for the Church of the Brethren:
- a. In 1742, Brethren have their first Annual Meeting concerning questions of Brethren distinctiveness. As the baptisms at Schwarzanau defined the first Brethren, what defines the Brethren in America?
  - b. Pacifism during the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) and The Civil War (1861-1865):
    - i. The Brethren, holding to Biblical Nonresistance, refused to fight (even though other parties tried to force them, sometimes violently), and made a distinction between Biblical pacifists secular pacifists:

<b>Biblical Nonresistance</b>	<b>Secular Pacifism</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thinks in terms of individual peace with God, with peace among the nations coming only when men submit to the rule of Christ.</li> <li>2. Sees failure in any attempt to effect a permanent reformation of human nature apart from God's grace.</li> <li>3. Refuses to participate in military service because such service conflicts with the new nature received in Christ.</li> <li>4. Believes his allegiance is to the higher kingdom which forbids his involvement in earthly government.</li> <li>5. Has a passive interest only in the activities of state and makes no effort to influence international diplomacy.</li> <li>6. Considers himself a pilgrim and stranger here and gives priority to citizenship in God's kingdom.</li> <li>7. Regards war as an inevitable and recurring evil so long as the heart of man is not at peace with God through the blood of His son.</li> <li>8. Works primarily to bring people in the world into peace with God.</li> <li>9. Believes in a complete separation of church and state.</li> <li>10. Sees no way to realize a worldwide friendly society without the work of intervening grace and divine power.</li> <li>11. Primarily concerned with preaching the Gospel which is the 'power of God unto salvation', and with spreading the teachings of Christ.</li> <li>12. Works for spiritual regeneration in the life of the individual through the new birth, and for the establishment of a Christian society within the church.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thinks in terms of effecting peace among the nations.</li> <li>2. Has confidence in an evolutionary process of mankind through human achievement.</li> <li>3. Opposes war because it conflicts with its ideology.</li> <li>4. The ideal of a political order embracing international law and order requires participation in political activities.</li> <li>5. Has an active interest in administering the affairs of the state motivated by the desire to influence policies.</li> <li>6. Considers itself responsible for working for a just world order.</li> <li>7. Urges disarmament as a step toward abolition of war.</li> <li>8. Works directly for international peace.</li> <li>9. Promotes legislation to accomplish ends.</li> <li>10. Hopes to achieve ends through education and legislation.</li> <li>11. Concerned with the use of various types of propaganda to accomplish its purposes.</li> <li>12. Often ignores the necessity of regeneration and works for the reconstruction of society through social reform.<sup>12</sup></li> </ol>

<sup>12</sup> Ray

- ii. Even though the Brethren never officially split over their Biblical nonresistance doctrine, some Brethren left the denomination only to rejoin later during these wars – example: Dr. Geiger (strong abolitionist & pro-union) renounced his membership publicly to be a doctor in the union army during the civil war.
  - iii. The Brethren were always anti-slavery and disfellowshipped any church member who owned slaves. In 1812 and then again in 1813, the anti-slavery decision was reaffirmed at the Annual Conference: any member not following this policy was to be disfellowshipped.
  - iv. It wasn't until 1935 that the Biblical Non-resistance stance changed for the Church of the Brethren. Many Brethren entered the service in WWI (1914-1917). In 1918, a special Annual Conference passed an especially assertive statement against military service, but was later withdrawn due to government pressure.
  - v. Later however, the 1935 Annual Conference declared that "all war is sin; it is wrong for Christians to support or engage in it." However, by 1939, Conference added that for those who choose to participate in war, "the attitude of the church toward such should be one of brotherly love and forbearance, endeavoring by faithful teaching to restore him as long as he expresses desire to continue membership in the Church of the Brethren." A unified stance on traditional nonresistance was rejected in 1939 as participation in war no longer was a test of church membership.
  - vi. In 1940, the U.S. government gave official recognition to "Conscientious Objectors" for beliefs and exemption from military service. This eased tensions in the domination.
- c. Expanding beyond America - Foreign Missions:
- i. In 1874, Christian Hope and others were sent to Denmark to start a Church of the Brethren as an extension of the Cherry Grove congregation, or an offspring to the Northern Illinois District. D. L. Miller and the Northern Illinois District financed him to go. After some churches were started, missionary staff was sent to help. This opened doors to the denomination taking on mission work.
  - ii. In the 1890's, Wilbur Stover, involved in the Student Volunteer Movement, began preaching in the Germantown church. He also began preaching in other churches and places to call the denomination to do missions.
  - iii. In 1894, Stover and women were sent to Bombay, India. Stover went to Bulsar, India from no planning. The women began orphanages, and these children were the nucleus for the churches.
  - iv. In 1908, a China mission was started.
- d. The Brethren Split:
- i. 1880 - Old Order German Baptist split from the Church of the Brethren over the denomination being too progressive.
  - ii. 1882 - Henry Holsinger was excommunicated, because he was introducing too many new-progressive ideas.
  - iii. 1883 - the Brethren Church was formed, splitting from the Church of the Brethren, because they were not willing to be progressive.

- iv. Parties involved:
  1. Old Order – German Baptist (in Ohio) – led by a group of elders
  2. Conservatives (actually traditional and moderate) – led by elder D. P. Sailor, and H. D. Davey.
  3. Brethren Church group (Most progressive; also came from the east, like Germantown, PA, headquarters: Ashland. Ohio) – led by Henry Holsinger.
- v. Stated reasons for the split:
  1. The Annual Meeting was restructured:
    - a. From the local congregations & persons setting the agenda to the control of (sometimes secret) standing committee & moderator;
    - b. From consensus TO majority vote.
  2. Plan dress was being tossed aside. “The first major change was a shift in the practice of nonconformity from an outward sign to an internal spirit or attitude.” The "dress question" became one of the most widely discussed topics in the early twentieth century.<sup>13</sup>
    - a. It wasn't until 1911 that traditional garb of the Brethren was no longer enforced as a test of membership.
    - b. Plan dress referred to the traditional garb of peasants in Germany – this looked like:



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- c. The order of dress was such a hot issue because it symbolically links the Brethren ideals of unity and separatism.<sup>15</sup>
3. Mode of foot washing – should one person wash & dry OR two.
4. Paid Ministry.
5. Higher educations for members and ministers.
6. Foreign Missions – paid or not?
7. Bureaucracy and Staff.
8. Revival Meetings and alter calls without counting the cost.

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<sup>13</sup> David Eller, p. 75

<sup>14</sup> Bowman, p. 305

<sup>15</sup> Gardner, p. 42

9. Sunday School.
  10. Innovations in Ministry – musical instruments, raised platform, & a central pulpit instead of the Table.
- vi. Behind the Scenes issues for the split:
1. CONTROL issues – each group felt that they will lose all power & control.
  2. PERSONALITY issues:
    - a. The abrasiveness of Holsinger:
      - i. Who was a publisher and only semi-educated, but still called others uneducated
      - ii. He stood against the new Standing Committee and compared it to the Masonic Lodge.
    - b. Note: there was mistreatment from both sides.
  3. CULTURAL issues – adaptation, dress, education, etc. (example: should a congregation spend an enormous amount of money on carpet?)
- e. Changing of the name – The German Baptism Brethren officially adopted the name “Church of the Brethren” at its bicentennial celebration (1908) at the Annual Conference.
- f. The Liberal Debate
- i. Liberalism (the idea that the scientific method should reign supreme) in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s swept the Church of the Brethren (as it did with any other religious group).
  - ii. Bethany Seminary (founded in 1905 as the denomination’s seminary) became a major thinker in the Liberal Debate.
  - iii. This polarized the denomination. Fundamentalists:
    1. Tried to start their own seminary (example: Juniata College, which ended in 1925),
    2. Did manage to have Bethany list a doctrinal statement, and
    3. Had the 1923 Annual Conference confirm the “Brethren Card.” This cemented certain doctrines as necessary to be Brethren (see p. 18).
- g. Expansion of Ministries (and a Social Gospel):
- i. Because of the impact of war, and the globalization of the U.S. (this means more people saw the extreme poverty in third world countries) several organizations were developed by the denomination.
  - ii. For some, participation in these organizations also meant participation in the advancement of a “social gospel”. This term refers to relieving the physical needs of people without sharing the solution to their spiritual needs (namely their need for Jesus). This element caused fundamentalist to withdraw support at times.
  - iii. The Brethren became founders of or involved in the following ministries:
    1. Several church camps.
    2. Printing organizations and presses.
    3. Colleges and Seminaries.
    4. The Heifer Project (1942 – formerly Heifers for Relief, which began in 1939) – donates animals to the world’s hungry people.

5. Brethren Volunteer Service (1948 – formerly Brethren Service Committee, which began in 1939) – a forerunner to the Peace Corp that provides direction for CO's to perform civilian service in world projects, supply foods, and humanitarian needs.
6. Church Councils – this caused major controversy:
  - a. World Council of Churches (1948) – founding member
  - b. National Council of Churches (1950) – founding member
7. SERRV International (1944) – Sales Exchange for Refugee Rehabilitation Vocations.
8. On Earth Peace (1974) – organization to lobby for the peace movement
9. Brethren Revival Fellowship (BRF) – a conservative loyal concern movement in the CoB that was formed after the 1958 decisions about baptism not being required for membership.

#### V. Faith Practices of the Church of the Brethren:

##### a. Sacraments vs. Ordinances:

- i. It is important to note that the Church of the Brethren does not view the following faith practices as “Sacraments,” those rituals that pass on the grace of God mysteriously simply by the fact that they are done.
- ii. The Church of the Brethren rather would use the terms: celebrations or ordinances (they are orders, “commanded practices,” by Christ).<sup>16</sup>

##### b. BAPTISM

- i. Church of the Brethren Reasons:
  1. Baptism is linked to repentance, an adult decision to redirect one's life by saying yes to good news of God's reign;
  2. Baptism celebrates God's forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ, an amnesty of grace that allows life to begin anew;
  3. Baptism is an act of separation from the world ("this corrupt generation"), a shift of loyalty from the values of the present age to those of the age to come;
  4. Baptism is couples with empowerment by God's Spirit, who frees our tongues and lives to witness boldly to God's grace;
  5. Baptism incorporates us into a community of believers, a common life where faith flourishes and worship abounds.<sup>17</sup>
- ii. “A believer who desires to be baptized, but cannot obtain it because of necessity - like the criminal on the cross - is still saved. If, however, a man does not desire to be baptized, he is rightly to be judged as unbelieving and disobedient, not because of baptism, but because of his unbelief and disobedience.”<sup>18</sup>
- iii. There usually was a teaching time that existed before baptism in the earlier churches. After baptism, the deacons and ministers would also interview the converts.

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<sup>16</sup> Vernard Eller, p. 4

<sup>17</sup> Gardner, p. 15

<sup>18</sup> Mack, p. 28

- iv. Early Brethren also included the laying on of hands – why?
  - 1. Praying for spirit baptism.
  - 2. The receiving of spiritual gifts for public ministry, evangelism (and proclamation), and ministry to the Body.
  - 3. The receiving of the fruit of the Spirit.
- v. The Mode of Baptism:
  - 1. The Church of the Brethren uses trine immersion, because honoring the Trinity is believed to call for trine immersion
  - 2. [Jesus] bowed His head-a forward movement. We too, are to receive baptism in the same way, bowing our heads in a forward movement.
  - 3. Examples of trine immersion can be found in the writings of:
    - a. The Didache. Sometimes called The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, was written about A.D. 100. It says, "But concerning baptism, thus baptize ye: having first recited all these precepts, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in running water." Almost a direct quote of Matthew's Gospel, the implication is strongly for trine immersion as the preferred means of baptism.
    - b. Tertullian, A.D. 160-220: "Jesus gave as his last command that they should immerse into the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, not into one person. Therefore, all who believed were immersed. For we are immersed, not once but thrice, at the naming of every person of the Trinity."
    - c. Augustine, A.D. 354-430, "In this font, before we dipped your whole body, we asked you, 'Believest thou in God the omnipotent Father?' After you declared that you believed, we immersed three times your heads in the sacred font ... You are rightly immersed three times, you who receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, who rose the third day from the dead" (Sermon on the Mystery of Baptism).
    - d. Jerome, A.D. 340-420: "We are thrice dipped in water that the mystery of the Trinity may appear to be but one, and therefore though we be thrice put under the water to represent the mystery of the Trinity, yet it is reputed to be but one baptism."
    - e. Chrysostom, A.D. 347-407 "Christ delivered to his disciples one baptism in three immersions when he said to them, 'Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'<sup>19</sup>

#### c. THE LOVE FEAST

- i. For Brethren, the traditional love feast, held once or twice a year, remains the profound central act and symbol of the church's life.<sup>20</sup>
- ii. The Love Feast, or Agape Meal is not just taking communion. It consists of the following four parts:

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<sup>19</sup> Myers

<sup>20</sup> General Board, p. 183

1. **Examination** – “The remedy for sin and failure is confession. And confession is not simply mouthing a few words in prayer. Confession includes taking sides with God against ourselves, acknowledging that we have been wrong, seeking grace to cultivate the virtues of Jesus, and if we have wronged another person, going to that person and making an apology.”<sup>21</sup> Possible questions to consider during this time:
  - a. Is your heart right with your brothers & sisters in Christ? Do you have any disagreements that would hurt your relationship with God?
  - b. Is your personal devotion to Christ right? Do you need to spend this time to renew your devotion to Him?
  - c. Is your service to others what God wants it to be? Do you need to spend time reflecting on what Jesus has done for you?
  - d. Are your relationships in need of repair? Is there any one that God wants you to forgive?
  - e. Is there sin in your life that is stopping you from knowing God more fully and creates a roadblock for you to walk the way Jesus wants you to?
  - f. Is your witness powerful? Do you eagerly attempt to share Jesus Christ with others?
2. **Foot washing** – this is vital part of the Love Feast, but it is only mentioned in John (not in other Gospels, nor in 1 Corinthians).
3. **Love Meal, or Agape Feast:**
  - a. This has never been a Seder supper. The dish that is served came from the Peasant Supper from Germany to remind us that we are each poor without Jesus.
  - b. The meal was a sign that there was true fellowship:
    - i. In Christian meals, there was mixed social class. In Hellenistic culture, people were sat according to their social status. Christians were commanded to not make such distinctions.
    - ii. For thousands of years, eating together has been a sign of friendship. John 15:14-ff
    - iii. In the Old Testament, eating together was the sign of a ratified agreement. Genesis 26:30
    - iv. In the days leading up to the birth of Christ, eating together was a popular figure of speech for the Kingdom of God. Luke 13:29-30
    - v. Eating together is one of the significant things a family does as a family.<sup>22</sup>
4. **Bread & Cup of Communion** – “Communion [in the CoB] is a memorial of Christ's death and passion,... a recollection of the redemption which we have received,... an appropriation to those who

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<sup>21</sup> Martin

<sup>22</sup> Middlekauff, p. 226

belong to him,... a participation in his body, the church,... and finally a foretaste of the future.”<sup>23</sup>

- iii. NOTE: traditionally, the deacons visited those who were going to attend the Love Feast and asked the members questions. Three Questions from the Deacons:
  - 1. Are you of the same faith?
  - 2. Do you have love and harmony with others in the congregation?
  - 3. Do you have anything to bring to council?
- iv. There is a debate in the CoB that you CAN NOT have communion with out the full Love Feast. Some see in the Scripture that each time that the bread and cup was mentioned there was a meal given with them.” Examples:
  - 1. Each of the Gospel accounts of communion
  - 2. 1 Corinthians 11:17-ff
  - 3. But: is the New Testament description of what happened a command?
- v. Traditionally, all of the Church of Brethren in one area were invited to the Love Feast of an individual church. The Churches would never schedule a Love Feast at the same time as the other churches.
  - 1. This means that you could go to a Love Feast five weeks straight in a season.
  - 2. You were expected to travel to a Love Feast. Some would travel 4-5 hours, up to 12 hours.
  - 3. This system kept unity in the denomination.
  - 4. They were usually on Saturday nights and people stayed over for Sunday service. Churches had a sleeping loft, or hospitality was in the homes.
  - 5. There was never a sense that Love Feast was only for a single congregation, until much later.
- d. Some dates to consider about the Love Feast and Baptism:
  - i. In 1951, the annual conference voted that people who were baptized in another fashion other than immersion can take part in the Love Feast.
  - ii. In 1958, the Bread & Cup was allowed as a solo event AND membership was accepted from other kinds of churches even if baptism was not by immersion.
  - iii. 1963 was the peak of the Church of the Brethren membership – 210K. Today we are at around 134K.
- e. THE ANOINTING SERVICES:
  - i. The CoB tries to follow the New Testament example in this – James 5:14
  - ii. Reasons for an Anointing Service:
    - 1. Traditionally, Brethren have anointed for three reasons: the forgiveness of sin; the strengthening of one's faith; the healing and wholeness of body, mind, and spirit according to God's grace and wisdom.<sup>24</sup>
    - 2. Anointed is done for healing – on different levels:
      - a. Physical (if the Lord wills).
      - b. Emotional (from brokenness).

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<sup>23</sup> Beahm, p. 14-15

<sup>24</sup> General Board - p. 254

- c. Spiritual (readiness of what God is going to do – might include peace).
  - d. From demonic.
3. Anointed is done to make known that Jesus' Kingdom has come.
  4. Anointed is done to discover: how is God's glory revealed here?
- iii. The Anointing Service traditionally includes:
    1. Reading of the James passage (James 5:14)
    2. Opportunity for the confession of sin
    3. We say, "we anoint you for: the healing of body, the forgiveness of sin, and the strengthening of faith" while anointing (sometimes pouring).
    4. Laying on of Hands & Blessing – closing prayer.
    5. Then leaving the individual to contemplate what has happened

- VI. Issues for Today and the Future:
  - a. The Name of the Denomination
  - b. The Homosexual Issue – underlying this is accepting the Bible as the Word of God, not the word of man.
  - c. Declining Membership & Unhealthy Churches mired in history in tradition
  - d. Reconciliation with the Brethren Church Denomination
  - e. Finding a balance of Biblical evangelism and social outreach
  - f. The Ecumenical Movement
  - g. The Peace Movement and the War on Terror

#### EXTRA:

Our logo is composed of images central to the life in Jesus Christ.

- The cross recalls our baptism into Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:4) and testifies to God's plan to bring "all in heaven and on earth... into a unity in Christ" (Eph. 1:10 NEB).
- The circle, partially defined, represents the world into which we are sent by Christ (Matt. 28:19). The circle also affirms that as members of Christ's body we are members one of another (Rom. 12:5)—a people who confess "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5).
- The wave connotes new life in Christ, "born of water and the spirit" (John 3:5). It further evokes the waters of justice (Amos 5:24), the cup of water offered in Christ's name (Mark 9:41), the basin and towel (John 13:5), and "springs of living water" (Rev. 7:17).
- Combined, the cross, the circle, and the wave present a distinct "Brethren" statement—images central to the life of Jesus Christ, images for Brethren to live by.



### THE BRETHERN CARD

The following is a statement of faith approved for circulation by the 1923 Annual Conference, with the understanding that it is not to be considered a creed. [The New Testament is our only creed].

This body of Christians, which originated early in the eighteenth century, called the Church of the Brethren, being a natural outgrowth of the Pietistic movement following the Reformation...

1. Firmly **accepts** and **teaches** the fundamental evangelical doctrines of
  - the inspiration of the Bible,
  - the personality of the Holy Spirit,
  - the virgin birth,
  - the deity of Christ,
  - the sin-pardoning value of his atonement,
  - his resurrection from the tomb, ascension and personal and visible return and
  - the resurrection, both of the just and unjust (John 5:28, 29; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).
  
2. **Observes** the following New Testament rites:
  - Baptism of penitent believers by trine immersion for the remission of sins (Matt. 28: 19; Acts 2: 38);
  - feet-washing (John 13:1-20; 1 Tim. 5:10);
  - love feast (Luke 22:20; John 13: 4; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; Jude 12);
  - communion (Matt. 26: 26-30);
  - the Christian salutation (Rom. 16:16; Acts 20:37);
  - proper appearance in worship (1 Cor. 11:2-16);
  - the anointing for healing in the name of the Lord (James 5:13-18; Mark 6:13);
  - laying on of hands (Acts 8:17; 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14).
  - These rites are representative of spiritual facts which obtain in the lives of true believers, and as such are essential factors in the development of the Christian life.
  
3. **Emphasizes:**
  - daily devotion for the individual, and family worship for the home (Eph. 6: 18-20; Philpp. 4:8, 9);
  - stewardship of time, talents and money (Matt. 25:14-30);
  - taking care of the fatherless, widows, poor, sick and aged (Acts 6:1-7).
  
4. **Opposes** on Scriptural grounds:
  - War and the taking of human life (Matt. 5:21-26, 43, 44; Rom. 12:19-21; Isa. 53:7-12);
  - violence in personal and industrial controversy (Matt 7: 12; Rom. 13: 8-10);
  - intemperance in all things (Titus 2: 2; Gal, 5: 19-26; Eph. 5: .18);
  - going to law, especially against our Christian brethren (1 Cor. 6:1-9);
  - divorce and remarriage, except for the one Scriptural reason (Matt 19:9);
  - every form of oath (Matt. 5: 33-37; James 5:12);
  - membership in secret oath-bound societies (2 Cor. 6:14-18);
  - games of chance and sinful amusements (1 Thess. 5:22; 1 Pet. 2:11; Rom. 12:17);
  - extravagant and immodest dress (1 Tim. 2:8-10; 1 Peter 3:1-6).
  
5. **Labors** earnestly, in harmony with the Great Commission,
  - for the evangelization of the world;
  - for the conversion of men to Jesus Christ; and
  - for the realization of the life of Jesus Christ in every believer (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; 2 Cor. 3:18).
  
6. **Maintains** the New Testament as its only creed, in harmony with which the above brief doctrinal statement is made.

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