

## THE BRETHREN; GERMAN BAPTISTS – (*Tunkers or Dunkers.*)

All the Brethren churches in America, are the offspring of one organized at Schwardzenau, Germany, in 1708, consisting of seven souls, six of whom had been bred Presbyterians; and one, Lutheran; not one of these knew there was a Baptist in the world. They increased rapidly, spreading to other places, but persecution drove them, some to Holland, others to Creyfelt, and the mother church moved from Schwardzenau to Serustervin, in Freizland, and from thence about twenty families, with Peter Becker (Baker) as leader, immigrated to America in 1719. Landing in Philadelphia, in not the best of spirit of brotherly love, owing to difficulties among them in transit, a portion only settled at Germantown, while the others dispersed to Skippeck, Oley, Conestoga, and elsewhere. Thus separated they grew cold in religious service, but in the year 1772 Peter Becker, Johan Gromley, Balser Gans, Henrich Trant and others, grieved and zealous for their religion, by their extortions in behalf of the cause, succeeded in a measure in restoring the lost interest, insomuch that a great revival was the result; new converts were baptized in the Wissahicon, by Peter Becker, whom they delegated to the ministry.

The first converts were Martin Urner, Henry Landes, Frederick Long, with their wives, and John Mayl. A church was organized with seventeen constituent members and the seven converts to the faith, in all twenty-three, the first organized church of this kind in America. We subjoin the names of those who partook of the first "Love Feast and Holy Communion:" Peter Becker, Henrich Traut, Jeremiah Traut, Balser Traut, Henrich Holzople, Johannes Gromley, Stephen Koch, Jacob Koch, Johannes Hildebrand, Daniel Ritter, George Balser Gansz, Johannes Preisz, Johannes Kempfer, Magdalena Traut, Anna Gromley, Maria Hildebrand, Joanna Gansz, and the seven converts named.

This organization, the baptism, and Love Feast, were accomplished December 25<sup>th</sup>, 1723, at Germantown, Pa.

These people worker earnestly for about three years and organized many other societies during the year 1724, one at Coventry, Chester county, and another at Ephrata,\* Lancaster county, and others. After this time of earnest work the churches lapsed into a lukewarm state until 1729, when Alexder Mack, who had been the temporal head of the first church at Schwardzenau, being still persecuted, having fled to Creyfeld, thence to Holland, now with about thirty families migrated to Pennsylvania. This influx so encouraged their brethren that new zeal became general, and results of their labors were manifest. We find the record of establishment of new churches in part as follows: Oley,† 1723; Great Swamp, 1733; Arnwell, N. J., 1733; Cocolia, 1735; White Oak, 1736; Little Conaeago, 1738; and Big Conawago, 1741.

There have schisms occurred, but the church has increased, extending its influence to all the States, and in 1870 numbered not less than 100,000 communicants.

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\* A division occurred in this church in 1730, and the Ephrata society of Seventh Day Baptists grew out of it under the leadership of Conrad Beissel.

† Oley, nearly extinct now, 1879.