

PROGRESSIVISM—A DEFINITION

by Dale R. Stoffer

Introduction

In any movement the original ideals on which it was based are gradually forgotten or watered down by the passage of time. Slogans and platforms which had a crisp, assertive ring become trite and stale. The centennial year of The Brethren Church provides an occasion to reexamine the convictions which caused six thousand men and women to leave or be expelled from the German Baptist Brethren Church (the present-day Church of the Brethren) and begin a new denomination. The purpose of this article is fourfold: (1) to give a historical overview of the events that led to the formation of The Brethren Church; (2) to look briefly at the areas of contention among the various factions in the German Baptist Brethren Church; (3) to distill the basic principles which gave the Progressive movement its distinctive character; and (4) to offer a definition and evaluation of Progressivism.

Historical Overview

It is necessary to return to the early 1800s to provide a foundation for understanding the Progressive movement. Until the 1830s the Brethren¹ had generally been insulated from the influences of American society. Three factors in particular made this insulation possible: the retention of their German language and subculture during the early decades of the 1800s; the tendency of the agriculturally minded Brethren to migrate westward, frequently in groups, in search of better and cheaper land; the strong religious principles of simplicity and separation from the world. By the 1840s, however, English had become the predominant language among the Brethren and their enclaves were increasingly being surrounded by American culture. The Brethren were forced to come to terms with the fast-changing, materialistic society of the new world.

Initially the Brethren sought to "fence out" the influences of American culture through the decisions of Annual Meeting.² Rulings were rendered on everything from life insurance to flowered wallpaper. During the 1850s, however, men like Henry Kurtz, James Quinter, and John Kline began advocating the use of modern practices—periodical literature, Sunday Schools, higher education, evangelism—to aid the church in its mission.

During the 1860s and '70s three distinct positions gradually

evolved in response to the acculturation process. The left wing, known as the Progressives, sought to "keep pace with the times." Led by Henry Ritz Holsinger, it advocated the use of any practice that would contribute to the mission of the church.

The right wing, known as the Old German Baptist Brethren or "Old Order," saw these "innovations" as entirely worldly and a departure from biblical Christianity. Guided by Peter Nead and his son-in-law, Samuel Kinsey, the Old Orders desired to "maintain the ancient order of the Brethren."

The largest group, the conservatives (the present Church of the Brethren), sought a middle ground. They were willing to see change, but it had to be gradual. For such men as R. H. Miller, James Quinter, and J. H. Moore, the unity of the main part of the church was more important than either progression or the old order.

The dissension created in the church by these three positions led to the emergence of two new denominations between 1881 and 1883. The Old German Baptist Brethren withdrew from the main body of the church in 1881 while the Progressive leaders who founded The Brethren Church in 1883 in Dayton, Ohio were for the most part expelled from the church.

Issues Contributing to the Division

There were seven main issues that formed the battleground among these three groups.³ Consideration of these issues will help to clarify the distinctive position of each group. Periodical literature was the first source of friction. In 1851 Henry Kurtz, a leading elder in the church who probably would have considered himself a Conservative (he died before the divisions), felt the time was ripe for a monthly publication to serve the interests of the denomination. He therefore began the *Gospel Visitor* in April as a means of fostering unity in the widely scattered Brotherhood and of resolving doctrinal and practical problems.⁴ In addition he hoped that the *Visitor* would have apologetic value by promoting ideals and principles distinctive to the Brethren.

In 1865 Henry Holsinger, a former apprentice of Kurtz,⁵ began the second paper aimed at a Brethren clientele, the *Christian Family Companion*. This paper presented a marked contrast to the moderately progressive *Visitor*. Holsinger was more forceful in advocating progressive practices and designed his periodical as an "open forum" in which writers could express their opinions freely on a whole range of controversial topics with little editorial comment. In 1873 increasing opposition from Annual Meeting caused Holsinger to sell the paper to James Quinter who had succeeded

Kurtz as editor of the *Visitor*. Holsinger continued to feel, however, that the Progressive movement needed a stronger voice so in 1878 he reentered the publishing field with a weekly, *The Progressive Christian*. From this point on Holsinger became the catalyst for the Progressive wing of the church while *The Progressive Christian* became its mouthpiece.

The Old Order Brethren felt compelled, amidst this chorus of progressive voices, to publish their own journal, *The Vindicator*, in 1870. These periodicals played a central role in the controversies by keeping attention focused on the major issues and by popularizing the disputes related to these issues.

The second area of controversy related to education. Traditionally the Brethren had felt that a "common school" education supplied all necessary skills. All higher education—high school and college—was deemed a worldly endeavor which tended to lead youth astray and inculcate a spirit of pride. This was the Old Order position.⁶ Beginning in 1856, however, James Quinter, through the *Visitor*, led the movement for acceptance of Brethren related high schools and colleges. He argued among other things that such training would meet the necessary requirements for serving as school teachers, thereby ensuring that Brethren teachers could bring moral and religious values into public education; Brethren schools would provide a Christian influence lacking in most institutions for those youth set on obtaining advanced education; the church could better preserve her youth if such schools were available. Though the 1858 Annual Meeting accepted the concept of Brethren-related schools provided they were "an individual enterprise" founded on "gospel principles," a long string of failures occurred before the first schools were established which would stand the test of time: Juniata College (1876), Ashland College (1878), and Mount Morris Seminary and Collegiate Institute (1879; in 1932 it merged with Manchester College).

A third battleground involved evangelism. After the cooling of the evangelistic zeal of the early Brethren, very little effort was made to evangelize non-Christian neighbors. The Brethren instead relied on a "passive evangelism" which was content to wait for people to apply to the church for membership. In the 1860s, however, men like John Kline, D. P. Saylor, James Quinter, and H. R. Holsinger began to call for the establishment of a definite plan of evangelism. It was not until 1880, however, with the establishment of a Domestic and Foreign Mission Board that any organized approach to home mission work became a reality. Nevertheless, during the 1870s the Progressives, led by Stephen H. Bashor, were very active in evangelism, especially of the revivalistic type. The Old Order Brethren focused their criticism on the revivalistic

methods of the Progressives. These included utilizing protracted meetings (a series of meetings with preaching designed to lead to conversion and baptism), signing revival hymns, presenting invitations to rise or come forward, and inducing emotional decisions without stressing the need to "count the cost."

A fourth area of conflict related to the above concern. As interest in evangelism increased in the 1860s and '70s pressure for a paid (or subsidized) ministry also grew. Progressives and some Conservatives felt that the families of traveling evangelists should be cared for. The Old Order Brethren were firmly committed to the traditional free ministry and feared a paid minister would be more likely to preach what his congregation wanted to hear.

The fifth point of controversy was Sunday Schools. Jame Quinter through the *Visitor* in 1858 and 1859 advocated that Sunday Schools be established as a means of supplementing parental instruction and teaching by the ministry. The Old Orders viewed Sunday Schools as a popular innovation which would reduce the control that parents had over the Christian education of their children. A further area of contention was Sunday School conventions. Appearing among the Brethren by 1876, these district-wide gatherings involved lectures and workshops relating to various aspects of the Sunday School. The Progressives heartily supported these gatherings but the Conservatives joined the Old Orders in opposing them.

Dress was the sixth issue in the controversy. The Old Order Brethren felt that in submitting to the traditional plain dress of the Brethren⁷ one demonstrated a spirit yielded to the traditional Brethren principles of humility, nonconformity, simplicity, and modesty. They desired uniformity in dress and urged that Annual Meeting take an active role in maintaining the old order of dress. The Progressives, however, felt that individual conscience should determine how one should apply the principle of non-conformity. They held that mandatory uniformity destroys that vital spirit of inner obedience which is at the heart of the Christian life. The Conservatives sought to find a middle ground. On one hand, they were averse to the itemization and detailing of the order of dress but, on the other, they wanted to guard against the notion that harmony and unity even in outward things is immaterial. They sought to balance respect for the traditions of the elders with openness, in the contemporary setting, to the guidance of the Spirit of truth.

The final area of conflict and one which caused great dissension was the question of the mode of footwashing.⁸ The Old Order Brethren practiced a form in which one person would wash consecutively the feet of several people while another followed and

wiped their feet (the double mode). Since the vast majority of churches around 1860 utilized this mode, the Old Order Brethren fought hard for uniformity in practice. The Progressives, however, sought the freedom to practice a form in which one person both washes and wipes the feet of another (the single mode). Holding this to be the earliest form of feetwashing, they desired forbearance on the issue. Eventually both the Progressives and Conservatives adopted this latter mode of feetwashing.

Though the issues catalogued above were the most visible sources of conflict among the Old Orders, Conservatives, and Progressives, there was another set of differences which was, in reality, the underlying cause of tension. It is to these foundational differences that we must now look.

The Platforms of the Parties

A definition of Progressivism becomes possible only when the platforms of both the Old Order Brethren and Conservatives are also understood. F. Ernest Stoeffler has rightly observed that “. . . the ethos of a group can best be presented [and discerned] if the latter fights vigorously against some real or imagined enemy”⁹ The polemical writings which come from the period between 1865 and 1883 provide ample material to distill at least three fundamental issues out of which the other more visible differences arose. These issues consisted of the questions of polity, the authorities used for determining faith and practice, and the attitude toward adaptation to the world.

As was noted earlier the Brethren sought initially to come to terms with the surrounding American culture by turning to Annual Meeting for rulings on a wide variety of issues. The number of issues coming before Annual Meeting forced the church to seek more efficient and effective means of organization. Between 1847 and 1868 a number of changes were made in Annual Meeting which gave it far more authority in determining the course of the church.¹⁰ One of these changes is especially noteworthy. Very early in the history of Annual Meeting the practice arose for the host church to select five or more respected elders who would present answers to the questions brought to the gathering. This group gradually evolved into the Standing Committee of Annual Meeting. By 1868 it had taken final form. Only elders could serve on the committee which was composed of men elected from the various districts. This committee had considerable power for not only did it decide what business came before Annual Meeting but it also framed the responses to the questions brought to the gathering (the responses did have to be accepted by the

delegates, however). Because there was very little change in this committee from year to year, a small group of Conservative elders held considerable power over the direction of the denomination.

Both the Old Orders and the Progressives were disenchanted by this growing institutionalization in the church. In a petition submitted to Annual Meeting in 1869, the Old Order Brethren cried for greater simplicity in the organization of Annual Meeting. They singled out for criticism the selection of a certain portion of the Standing Committee from each state (as opposed to selecting the committee from all the elders present), the appointment of a "human moderator" (rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to be the guide or moderator for the committee's discussions), and the practice of listing all the members of the Standing Committee in the minutes. The Old Orders felt that, besides creating a barrier to the movement of the Holy Spirit, these practices tended both to "elevate and exalt the mind" and to concentrate "too much [power] in the hands of a few." Also criticized was the power recently assumed by Annual Meeting of sending committees to various churches where difficulties were present. The Old Orders preferred the older practice of settling such difficulties—the local church should call in elders from the adjoining districts to help resolve the problem. Only when a local issue remained unsettled or in cases where the ordinances or doctrines of the church were involved should the ruling of Annual Meeting be sought.¹¹ Annual Meeting decisions on the ordinances and doctrine should be uniformly observed in all local churches. After the Old Orders reorganized following their withdrawal from the Conservatives, they also repudiated district organizations and meetings.¹²

The Progressives, like the Old Orders, objected to the prerogative assumed by Annual Meeting of sending committees to local congregations. The Progressives, the most congregational of any of the groups, felt such a practice was a violation of the rights of the individual congregation. Though they maintained that in matters of doctrine "the church of Christ should universally harmonize," they upheld the right of local congregations to decide questions of "government and custom."¹³ All decisions of Annual Meeting for which there was no Gospel precept should be considered advisory only. The Progressives maintained that they were following the traditional Brethren understanding of these decisions and cited for additional support the testimony of such a departed statesman as John Kline.¹⁴ The importance of District and Annual Conferences was recognized but it was felt that they should be held primarily "for social advantages, and for consultation upon general methods of church work, and to beget a unity and concert of action in all im-

portant matters.”¹⁵ The Progressives were also critical of the increasing authority of the Standing Committee because it “made bishops separate and superior to the body and authority of the church, whereas the gospel declares them servants of the church.”¹⁶

Though there was some disagreement among the Conservatives concerning what authority the decisions of Annual Meeting should have, the view that these decisions should be mandatory had gained the ascendancy by 1882. This year it was decided that all queries should be decided according to Scripture

where there is anything direct . . . applying to the questions. And all questions to which there is no direct expressed Scripture applying, it shall be decided according to the spirit and meaning of the Scripture. And that decision shall be mandatory to all churches having such cases as the decision covers. And all who shall not so heed and observe it shall be held as not hearing the church, and shall be dealt with accordingly.¹⁷

Such was the protest against this minute that it was modified the next year by the statement that this “decision shall not be so construed as to prevent the Annual Meeting from giving advice when it deems it proper to do so, and that given advice, shall be so entered upon the minutes.”¹⁸ These developments clearly indicate that the Conservatives felt that the unity in faith and practice of the total community must have precedence over the liberty of the individual member or church. R. H. Miller gives expression to this concept.

Uniformity is but one of many peculiarities that separates God’s people from the world. One by one they may all be taken out of the way and every form that manifests the Christian spirit of humility and strict obedience, be supplanted by forms that manifest the flesh. This is one thing that congregationalism has never failed to do. . . . When a single congregation assumes the right to decide,—it assumes the right to change, and it changes to suit itself without regard to the judgment of the Brotherhood, or the feelings of adjoining congregations¹⁹

The second fundamental difference among the three factions concerned the question of what authorities should be used for determining Brethren faith and practice. The position of the Old Order Brethren on this question is succinctly stated by the standard which Samuel Kinsey adopted for the *Vindicator* and which appeared on the title page of every issue: they sought obedience to “the ancient order, and self-denying principles of the church, as taught by the Savior and held forth by the early fathers of our Fraternity.” The Old Order Brethren followed Peter Nead in holding that

Where the testament is silent on the order or mode of observance [of the ordinances], the brethren, by whom God organized the church, were clothed with authority to say in what way the commandments or institutions of his house are to be practiced.²⁰

Between the gospel and the ancient order of the Brethren, the Old Orders had a tightly knit and unified framework which they felt constrained to preserve in the face of a worldly culture and corrupted Christianity. They therefore felt that Annual Meeting should serve primarily as a conservator of the established order. Along these lines Samuel Kinsey writes:

It never was the object of the Annual Meeting—neither has she a right—to sanction new rules and orders, and to instill new principles, but rather to see that the established rules and old principles be *preserved*; that all preach the same and practice the same; and, that thus offenses, a variety of practices and divisions, be warded off, and the sweet harmony, peace, love and *purity* of the church be maintained.²¹

The Progressives were in agreement that Gospel explicit must be observed but differed with both Old Orders and Conservatives about practices on which Scripture is silent. Holsinger addresses this issue.

We are in perfect accord with the practice of the church in its administration of the ordinances of the Gospel. So far as we have plain instructions in God's word as to how we should proceed, we believe it is well that we should have uniformity; but when the Scriptures are not definite, no such regularity is required. The Scriptures must be the basis of our uniformity. Our methods of bringing about a uniformity differs from some of our brethren in this wise: They have adopted an order or custom which obtained by accident or otherwise among their predecessors, we by teaching the gospel, inculcating scriptural sentiments upon all points, and the aggregation of effects thus brought about is our uniformity.²²

The Progressives charged that, by stressing the "order of the Brethren," the Conservatives and the Old Orders especially were majoring on "externals" and neglecting "the weightier matters of the law of God." The Progressives held that the ancient customs of the church should be respected,²³ and they even maintained at the time of the split that they were "the only true conservators and perpetuators of the brotherhood and its original doctrines and principles."²⁴ Yet they felt that no tradition, including their own, could be elevated to a position in which it could not be scrutinized by the touchstone of the gospel.

The Conservatives sought a middle way between these two positions. Though emphasizing that the Bible must be the only rule of faith and practice, the Conservatives placed a great deal of respect

in the "councils of the ancient Brethren." Note how J. H. Moore deals with the issue.

There are two extremes in . . . [this] matter, each one equally dangerous. The one consists in ignoring and positively rejecting everything done, and recognized by those of former years, and the other is to claim that those who lived just before our time were, in some way, so influenced by the Holy Spirit, that what they did was right, and, therefore, we dare not set aside or alter their decisions on any point.

The actions of our ancient Brethren were not inspired in any divine sense, but were simply the result of their best judgment and careful reading, and should be respected by us only as they harmonize with the "thus saith the Lord" and the general tenor of the Gospel.²⁵

The Conservatives thus combined belief in the priority of Scripture with a high regard for, yet a willingness to change, the received order.²⁶

A third basic point of contention was their respective attitudes toward the acceptance of new practices. A number of factors actually come into play on this point—both of the preceding differences (polity and sources of authority) and also the factor of acculturation, that is, whether and how fast the church should become a part of the outside religious and cultural world. The Old Orders showed rigid opposition to any kind of acculturation (though they have softened somewhat on this point), rejecting higher education, Sunday schools, revival meetings, etc. as "innovations" and seeking to conserve the order of the church as they knew it. The Progressives were the most open to the outside secular and religious world, earning themselves the label, "the fast element." They accepted new practices if they were not contrary to the gospel and contributed to the mission of the church. Holsinger clearly expresses the Progressive position:

. . . The Progressive Christian will advocate an onward movement by the use of all lawful and expedient means. We hold it our duty to keep pace with the times. And we mean what we say, an onward movement, and not a backward movement. . . .

By keeping pace with the times, we have more direct reference to the using of such improvements as the advancements of science and art may introduce, for the promulgation of the religion of Christ. . . .

. . . And we would keep up, fully up, and not a year or twenty-five years behind the times, as the Brethren have been all along in most things, such as newspapers, colleges, Sunday Schools, and the like.

And again; we believe in keeping pace with the times in matters outside of religion.²⁷

Practically, this was the essence of progressivism to the Progress-

sives. Yet the term "progressive" also had a spiritual meaning which was accepted by both Progressives and Conservatives. To be progressive in a spiritual sense meant advancement, development, or progression in Christian maturity and truth. The Conservatives, however, were much more careful to distinguish between a Christian and non-Christian form of progression.

A "Progressive Christian" is one who is approaching still nearer to the Bible—one who is moving toward the Bible and away from the world. . . . Progression is all right . . . if it makes people more humble, more honest, more consistent and more obedient to every part of God's Word . . . ; but if it makes them high-minded, self-willed, proud, boastful, and disobedient to the Bible and the church, it follows that there may be considerable progression, but very little Christianity.²⁸

The Conservatives tried to steer a middle course between the Old Orders and Progressives on this issue of *adiaphora* as they did on others. They were willing to see change but it could not be at the expense of the unity of the main body of the church. Though the Conservatives sought to maintain a balance between both positions in the 1870s, the rigid position of the Old Orders and the constant agitation of the Progressives created a reluctant willingness among the Conservatives by the early 1880s to see both factions removed for the sake of harmony in the church.

A Definition and Evaluation of Progressivism

As can be seen by the above, progressivism had a variety of facets which combined to give it its distinctive character. One facet was sociological. As the gap between the established order of the Brethren and American culture widened, pressure from those who wanted to take advantage of what the modern world could offer the church grew proportionately. Progressives therefore utilized constant agitation through the periodicals, in the local churches, and at Annual Meeting to gain support for their agenda of reforms. In addition, the Progressives desired to be able to speak to the contemporary world. They were not content with the passive evangelism of the Old Orders. They were convinced that evangelism would be far more effective if the Brethren were on an equal footing with the modern man and woman. This is why education became such an important part of the Progressive platform.²⁹

A second facet was theological. The Progressives recognized that the Christian faith was dependent on the joint ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. They saw the ministry of both being encumbered by the increasing formalism represented by the decisions of Annual Meeting. The Progressives maintained that it is the Spirit who gives life and vitality to the outward practices and

forms of the church. Legalizing the "order of the Brethren" through the decisions of Annual Meeting effectively limited the Spirit's work to a single form which lacked divine authorization.³⁰ Only those doctrines and forms having Scriptural authority should be made mandatory; all other forms are advisory and to make them a test of fellowship is an addition to the Gospel. The two slogans which punctuated Progressive writings bear out their position: "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible" and "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

Thirdly the Progressives viewed their work as a return to the ideals of the early Brethren. They frequently stated that they were the true conservators of the Brethren heritage. In this sense then the Progressives were a reform movement.

These elements of progressivism can be distilled into the following definition. Progressivism was a reform movement in the German Baptist Brethren Church in the latter half of the 1800s which sought to be culturally up to date in utilizing any cultural practice which would aid the church in its mission and in adapting to modern customs insofar as they might enable the church to more effectively share the Gospel in the contemporary setting. It rejected the concept of mandatory uniformity in external matters not specifically addressed in Scripture, seeing such a practice as a human addition to the Gospel and a limitation to the work of the Holy Spirit. It sought to balance fidelity to the unchanging creed of Scripture with the need to declare and model that creed through the Spirit's leading within the context of an ever-changing world.

As with any reform movement there is the danger of overreacting to the opposite extreme. In the hundred years since the founding of The Brethren Church it is possible to discern several areas in which the Progressives reacted to an extreme. In both their theology of conversion and their polity the Progressives accentuated the individual at the expense of the community. With the acceptance of revivalism, the Progressives were influenced by a movement which tended to subserve the interests of the corporate community to those of the individual. Corporate worship was organized in such a way as to lead the sinner to Christ or revive the faith of the believer. As a result, the corporate commitment found in the early Brethren synthesis of Anabaptism and Pietism (which pointed the individual to the community) was severely weakened.³¹

In their polity the Progressives showed an excessive individuality in emphasizing the *advisory* nature of all decisions at the district and national levels as opposed to taking responsibility freely for these decisions made by the representatives of local churches. The bias against the larger, denominational identity of the church is evidenced in the facts that between 1883 and 1892 only three

General Conferences were held and that during the same period Ashland College and the Brethren Publishing Company nearly died because of lack of financial support at the local level. In addition numerous young churches disbanded because no organized program of ministerial supply was put into effect by The Brethren Church.

The other area in which the Progressives overreacted was in their extreme openness to new cultural and religious movements. During the late 1800s and early 1900s both fundamentalism and liberalism entered the church. During the 1910s the church faced sharp controversy which was resolved only after those influenced by liberalism left the church in the 1920s. But in the 1930s a clash between a fundamentalist group (the Grace Brethren) and a group committed to more traditional Brethren views (the Ashland Brethren) rent the denomination in half. Had The Brethren Church been more discerning about its own identity and calling these controversies may never have occurred.

As The Brethren Church celebrates its centennial it has a rich heritage of which it can be proud. But it needs to remember that its future depends on its fidelity to God's Word and its sensitivity to the Spirit's leading. Only as it is self-conscious about its identity and purpose can the church progress in the next century with confidence of its calling.

FOOTNOTES

¹The Brethren movement began in Germany in 1708 but by 1729 nearly the entire fellowship had emigrated to America, settling initially in eastern Pennsylvania. By 1800 Brethren had moved south as far as South Carolina, had crossed the Cumberland Gap into Tennessee and Kentucky, and had just moved into Ohio and Missouri. Being primarily an agrarian people, the Brethren were quick to settle newly opened frontiers in the Midwest, Central states, and Far West. By 1850 Brethren were to be found from the Atlantic to the Pacific though the greatest concentration of members has remained in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana.

²Annual Meeting began in the latter 1700s as an occasion for the growing brotherhood to fellowship together and present questions of doctrine and practice for consideration by the gathered body.

³For fuller details concerning each of these seven areas see Dale R. Stof-fer, "The Background and Development of Thought and Practice in the German Baptist Brethren (Dunker) and The Brethren (Progressive) Churches (c. 1650-1979)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980), pp. 421-48.

⁴Henry Holsinger in his history of the Brethren movement observed, "With the appearance of the *Visitor* was ushered in the progressive era in

the Tunker Church." Henry R. Holsinger, *Holsinger's History of the Tunkers and The Brethren Church* (Oakland, California: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1901; reprinted, North Manchester, Indiana: L. W. Shultz, 1962), p. 470.

⁵In 1856 Holsinger served a one year apprenticeship. He did not extend his training period because he was disappointed that Kurtz did not follow his suggestion to make the *Gospel Visitor* into a weekly.

⁶Another grave concern of the Old Order Brethren was that Brethren schools might cultivate the desire for an educated ministry which would preach "for hire." See Marcus Miller, "Roots by the River," *Ashland Theological Bulletin* 8 (Spring 1975): 56-57.

⁷For a thorough study of the plain dress of the Brethren see Esther Fern Rupel, "An Investigation of the Origin, Significance, and Demise of the Prescribed Dress Worn by Members of the Church of the Brethren" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1971).

⁸Feetwashing, the love feast, and the eucharist comprise the three parts of the Brethren observance of Communion.

⁹F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, Studies in the History of Religions, No. 9 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), p. 30.

¹⁰For a more detailed discussion of the evolution of Annual Meeting see Stoffer, "Thought and Practice," pp. 326-36.

¹¹Samuel Murray, George V. Siler, and Samuel Kinsey, "The Brethren's Reasons," in *Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Old German Baptist Brethren from 1778 to 1955*, Publishing Committee (Covington, Ohio: Little Printing Company, 1956), p. 15.

¹²Publishing Committee, *Minutes of the Old German Baptist Brethren*, pp. 502-503.

¹³Holsinger, *Tunkers*, pp. 531-33. These points are taken from a document prepared immediately following the expulsion of Holsinger and other Progressives from the church in 1882. It is interesting that the Progressives, in criticising the Conservatives in this document, used terminology similar to that which the Old Orders had used during the preceding decade in attacking the Progressive elements in the church. For example, the Progressives declared their "independence from all innovations and additions" introduced by the Conservatives regarding church polity and decried the "continued departures from the primitive simplicity of the Christian faith in almost every essential feature of gospel liberty and church rule." Of course the innovations and departures for the Progressives were defined in terms of the principle of "gospel liberty" while for the Old Orders they were defined in terms of the principle of continuity with the "ancient order of the Brethren."

¹⁴J. W. Beer, "The Old and Sure Foundation," *The Progressive Christian* (hereafter *PC*) 3 (November 11, 1881): 1 and P. H. Beaver, "Wild Shots," *PC* 3 (July 1, 1881):4.

¹⁵Henry R. Holsinger and Stephen H. Bashor, "Progressive Unity—Our Principles Defined," *PC* 3 (October 7, 1881):2.

¹⁶Holsinger, *Tunkers*, p. 534. Holsinger's most infamous attack against

the Standing Committee occurred in an article in which he compared it to a secret organization (the Brethren strictly forbade participation in such societies) with (1) a room to itself, (2) a door-keeper, (3) sessions held with closed doors, (4) exclusion of the press, (5) exclusion of all but the third degree ministry (ordained elders), and (6) secrets which are not to be revealed. H. R. Holsinger, "Is the Standing Committee a Secret Organization?" *PC* 1 (June 27, 1879): 2.

¹⁷The General Mission Board, *Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Church of the Brethren, Containing all Available Minutes from 1778 to 1909* (Elgin, Illinois: Brethren Publishing House, 1909), Art. 5, p. 408.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 421.

¹⁹R. H. Miller, "Liberties," *The Brethren at Work* (hereafter *BAW*) 7 (January 12, 1882), quoted in Kerby Lauderdale, "Division among the German Baptist Brethren" (M. Div. Independent Study, Bethany Theological Seminary, 1968), p. 83.

²⁰Peter Nead, "The Restoration of Primitive Christianity. No. 43," *The Vindicator* 7 (January 1876): 2.

²¹Samuel Kinsey, "Business Thoughts for Annual Meeting," *The Vindicator* 9 (June 1878): 183-84.

²²Henry R. Holsinger, "What Is the General Order?" *PC* 3 (January 28, 1881): 2. The Progressive position was well summarized in the often cited adage: "In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, and in all things charity."

²³*Idem*, *Tunkers*, p. 486.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 535. The historiography of the Old Orders and Progressives is noteworthy. Whereas the Old Orders idealized the Brethren of the 1820s and 30s, the Progressives idealized their conception of the eighteenth century Brethren (before the development of the "order of the Brethren").

²⁵J. H. Moore, "Due Respect to Our Fathers," *BAW* 7 (June 20, 1882): 4.

²⁶The difference between the Conservatives and Progressives on this point is one of degree only. The degrees of difference between the three groups can be illustrated by noting the concern of each group regarding the availability of the minutes of past Annual Meetings. The Old Orders not only print the minutes for each Annual Meeting following the gathering, but they make available as needed (editions in 1917, 1944, 1955, 1971, and 1981) a single volume containing all the extant minutes of Annual Meetings (beginning in 1778). The Church of the Brethren also prints minutes following each Annual Meeting, but only the minutes from 1945 on are still in print. The last complete edition of the minutes was published in 1909 "for historical value." The Brethren Church (Progressives) publish only the year by year proceedings of their Annual Conference. They have *never* published a collection of past minutes.

²⁷Quoted in Albert T. Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church* (Ashland, Ohio: Brethren Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 90-91.

²⁸J. H. Moore, "Our Reflector," *BAW* 6 (October 18, 1881): 633.

²⁹Note Holsinger's remarks about the lack of education found among the leadership of the church.

"I can even now close my eyes and name a dozen churches with whose elders I was personally acquainted who could not read intelligently a chapter from the Bible or a hymn from a hymnbook, nor write an intelligent notice or announcement of a communion meeting for a paper. Some of them could deliver a pretty fair discourse in an extemporaneous way, more or less satisfactory to the people of the community in which they lived, but the more discreet of them could not attempt to preach at a strange place or in a town."

Holsinger, *Tunkers* pp. 473-74.

³⁰See idem and Stephen H. Bashor, "The Issue," *PC* 3 (October 14, 1881): 2 and J. H. Worst, *Customs and Usages or the Order of the Church* (Ashland, Ohio: H. R. Holsinger & Co., 1883), pp. 1-16.

³¹For a more detailed discussion of the differences between revivalism and the early Brethren view of conversion and the church see Stoffer, "Thought and Practice," pp. 354-56, 499-501.