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OF ONE DIVIDED MIND: FUNDAMENTAL CAUSES OF THE
NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRETHREN SCHISM, 1850-1880

by

Daniel S. Weller

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

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2019

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ABSTRACT

Of One Divided Mind: Fundamental Causes of the
Nineteenth-century Brethren Schism, 1850-1880

by

Daniel Weller, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2019

Major Professor: Dr. Kyle T. Bulthuis
Department: History

The German Baptist Brethren were Christians who formally organized in Schwarzenau, Germany in 1708, and shortly thereafter moved to America. Their beliefs were founded almost solely on the Bible. In the period between 1850 and 1880 the church divided over a number of social issues, including whether to pay ministers and the prescribed manner of dress for members. Because of the polarity caused by the differing views, the church split twice between 1881 and 1883, resulting in the formation of three distinct groups. Many of the arguments about these divisive issues were found in the Brethren periodicals of the time. Publishers of these periodicals advanced their own perspective on particular issues, and almost exclusively based their opinions in biblical teachings. Previous research has centered on the publishers and their periodicals, but not on the rhetoric within their pages.

(92 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Of One Divided Mind: Fundamental Causes of the
Nineteenth-century Brethren Schism, 1850-1880

Daniel Weller

Historical research involving the schism within the German Baptist Brethren Church in the 1880s has only been found within broad, general histories of the church. The explanations given by historians relating to the cause of the split have previously centered on individuals and the church publications between 1850 and 1883, and on contemporaries who argued among themselves about whether to adopt practices common among surrounding American religions and society. No known project has focussed directly on the content within the publications as it relates to the way these brethren used the Bible and other religious and spiritual rhetoric to substantiate their arguments on either side.

My research focussed on the Brethren periodicals during the decades between roughly 1850 and 1880. I selected four of the most prominent papers of the period: the *Gospel Visitor*, the *Christian Family Companion*, the *Vindicator*, and the *Progressive Christian*. Each of these periodicals contained arguments for or against adopting practices not previously accepted within the church. Within their pages I found that every argument, for or against a particular practice, was based on scriptural interpretation, or other religious commentary used to persuade readers.

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A special thanks goes to the Utah State University Department of History for providing research funding to visit archives at both the Brethren Heritage Center in Brookville, Ohio, and Ashland Theological Seminary in Ashland, Ohio. Karen Garrett and Gale Honeyman at the Heritage Center gave up hours of their personal time to help me find the material I did not yet know I needed. Dr. Marcus Miller, on very short notice met with me and shared his vast knowledge about my topic. Dr. Dale Stoffer at Ashland Theological Seminary provided crucial access to microfilm of the periodicals I analyzed, and additional understanding of Brethren belief and culture. His help was paramount. Also, thanks to Denise Kettering-Lane at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Indiana for her time on the phone with me, and for pointing me toward the Brethren periodicals as a focal point of research. Her early guidance was pivotal.

I would also like to thank my family for all they put up with and provided throughout this process. My wife and two beautiful daughters who helped inspire me to do my best, provided a special and necessary balance in life, and allowed me time away

from home to research and write. I love them. My parents have always provided moral support, and my mom has always been eager to read my work just because it is mine.

Above all, I would like to thank my Father in Heaven who hears and answers prayers. He provided inspiration that was fundamental to this project. Without His divine guidance, I would not have been able to even begin. He provided strength when strength was needed, and helped me find the people and material I needed to work with in order to make this all possible.

Daniel Weller

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INTRODUCTION

At some point during the mid-1890s, Enoch Eby reflected on and recorded his thoughts relating to the cause of a major three-way split that occurred within his church some fifteen years prior. Eby had involved himself enough in the church's affairs to have what he considered to be an intimate knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the schism. He speculated:

What was the cause of this trouble? Let us see. How many [periodicals] sprang up in our beloved Brotherhood just prior to these difficulties? We answer, A half dozen at least. These caused trouble by moulding sentiment, which every paper is sure to do. It was generally admitted that our many unauthorized papers were the most prominent, if not the exclusive, factors, in bringing about the unfortunate results.¹

Enoch Eby belonged to a group of Christians who called themselves Brethren, also commonly referred to as the German Baptist Brethren, or more derisively as Dunkers. Eby was a leading member during the period between the 1850s and 1880s.² Prior to speculating about the church-wide split, Eby had served as a moderator in the church's Annual Meeting, the yearly governing council comprised of members from the church's various congregations. Because of his position, Eby believed he knew the answer to the question that puzzled him, what caused such a split?

Contemporaries like Enoch Eby and recent historians alike have pointed to the Brethren's religious publications that blossomed in the decades between 1850 and 1880, and the arguments found therein, as the primary reason for the schism in the 1880s.³ The

¹ Donald F. Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine: A History of the Brethren* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1997), 232.

² *Ibid.*, 232.

³ Carl F. Bowman, *Brethren Society: The Cultural Transformation of a "Peculiar People,"* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 130. In 1881 the church experienced a major division that resulted in two very unequal parts. The first offshoot group consisted of roughly 5,500 members who considered themselves Old Orders, later called the Old German Baptists. Another split in 1883 resulted in

very existence of any paper was looked down upon by ultra-conservative members because they feared newspapers would cause division by spreading controversial ideas. While Enoch Eby and historians after him are correct, they have not gone far or deep enough in explaining the root causes of the discord.

The debates found within the Brethren periodicals that eventually led to the church-wide split, while they presented and dealt with a variety of social and religious problems, all centered around scriptural interpretation or otherwise related religious, spiritual, and traditional rhetoric. The publishers of, and contributors to, these papers between the 1850s and 1880s tactically used such religious and spiritual language in order to appeal to the emotions of their readers. This biblical interpretation, religious and

the formation of a third distinct church. This third group consisted of about 4,500 members, leaving the main body at about 60,000 members. The Old German Baptists were the ultra-conservative faction within the church during the mid-nineteenth century that sought to very closely mimic the church founded by Jesus Christ during his mortal ministry as recorded in the Holy Bible. To be clear, the foundation of the Brethren was based on that very principle, namely the modern-day practice of the ancient church established by Christ, but some clung more closely to the past while others were interested in adapting to social and cultural changes while at the same time holding on to tradition.

The second split in the church, in 1883, saw the creation of the Brethren Church that consisted of the group that saw little harm in some reform in practice. Before the split this group proudly referred to themselves as progressives. To opposers, this progressivism meant a breakaway from tradition, and therefore the ancient church. These progressives are not to be confused with early-twentieth-century Progressivism, or any forms of it. The Brethren brand of progressivism (lowercase p) simply advocated progress or advancement, particularly in knowledge and understanding, but also in religious practice. Like children that grow to adulthood, so should Brethren grow in their maturity in Christ's gospel. This belief in progress led them to advocate reform in church practice, like paying and educating their ministers, supporting Sunday Schools for their children, and a more modern, less-plain dress code. These ideas were anathema to most of the Brethren, particularly the Old Orders.

The third group became formally known as the Church of the Brethren, and was the largest group by far—they made up roughly 85 percent of all Brethren at the time of the split. They saw the Old Orders as too conservative and too traditional, while at the same time viewed the Progressives as too forward-looking, and too willing to accept reform. For the purpose of this thesis, these branches that came after the split are not referred to here because it deals with material prior to the split. The term *ultra-conservative* is sometimes used to describe the very traditional Old Orders, and *progressives* to describe those who advocated reform.

spiritual rhetoric, and the call to members to hold on to traditional practices caused the split on a very fundamental level.

This paper includes analysis of four distinct Brethren periodicals that appeared in the mid-nineteenth century, namely the *Gospel Visitor*, the *Christian Family Companion*, the *Progressive Christian*, and the *Vindicator*. Additional papers originated during this period, but scholars largely agree that these four are the most significant.⁴ The publishers of these papers were at odds with each other at different times, and all believed they knew the answers to the questions that plagued the Brethren during the mid-nineteenth century. This research builds upon, and adds complexity to, existing Brethren scholarship relating to the schism.

This thesis analyzes the way Brethren publishers used calculated language to substantiate their respective claims, but does not claim to be an exhaustive treatise on the Brethren's schism in the 1880s, nor does it purport to cover all aspects of each argument that led to the break. That has been covered well by Brethren historians.⁵ All Brethren historians since the schism have made at least some attempt to explain and analyze the

⁴ Brethren scholars agree that these four papers are the most significant of them all. For more on the significance of these four papers, see Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*; Bowman, *Brethren Society*; and Dale Stoffer, "The Background and Development of Thought and Practice in the German Baptist Brethren (Dunker) and the Brethren (Progressive) Churches (c. 1650-1979)" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 1980).

⁵ There are several significant accounts of Brethren history that dedicate large portions to the causes of the great divide (1881-83). They include, but are not limited to: Bowman, *Brethren Society*; Henry R. Holsinger, *History of the Tunkers and the Brethren Church* (1901; repr., North Manchester, IN: L. W. Shultz, 1962); Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*; George N. Falkenstein, *History of the German Baptist Brethren Church* (Lancaster, PA: The New Era Printing Company, 1901); Roland L. Howe, *The History of a Church (Dunker) With Comments Featuring The First Church of the Brethren of Philadelphia, Pa., 1813-1943* (Lancaster, PA: Lancaster Press, 1943); Marcus Miller, *Roots by the River: The History, Doctrine, and Practice of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church in Miami County, Ohio*, rev. ed. (Brookville, OH: The Brethren Heritage Center, 2011); and Albert T. Ronk, *History of the Brethren Church: Its Life, Thought, and Mission* (Ashland, OH: Brethren Publishing, 1968).

arguments presented in the periodicals during the period covered here, primarily between the years 1850 and 1883. One exception to this was the earliest, Martin Grove Brumbaugh's *A History of the German Baptist Brethren in Europe and America* (1899). In a section he titled "Unwritten Chapters," Brumbaugh included a mere five paragraphs loosely related to printing during the period. He wrote simply that "there should be an article in a later publication on the growth of the publication interests of the modern church, beginning with those sterling men of God, elders Henry R. Kurtz and James Quinter."⁶ Later historians answered his call.

All Brethren historians who followed Brumbaugh have dedicated significant portions of their works to the periodicals and schism. One of the most significant among them is Dale Stoffer. He posits that the periodicals were only part of the larger process that culminated in schism. The other issues that nineteenth-century Brethren argued over, and printed within their papers, included "education, a paid and educated ministry, Sunday Schools, evangelism, prescribed dress," and the "mode of feetwashing," a practice found in the Bible in John chapter 13 when Jesus washed the feet of his apostles during the Last Supper and instructed them to "wash one another's feet."⁷ Nineteenth-century Brethren had to decide on which side they stood of every social or cultural issue they faced, and clearly took each decision very seriously. In this thesis I will examine two specific issues: whether the church should pay and educate their ministers, and what manner of dress, if any, should be prescribed to church members.

⁶ Martin Grove Brumbaugh, *A History of the German Baptist Brethren in Europe and America* (1899; repr., London, England: Forgotten Books, 2015), 553.

⁷ Stoffer, "Background and Development," 421. For the reference to feetwashing in the Bible, see: John 13 (King James Version), hereafter cited as KJV.

Three additional Brethren works capture well the process of discord and division in the nineteenth century. They are: Albert T. Ronk's *History of the Brethren Church: Its Life, Thought, Mission*; Carl F. Bowman's *Brethren Society: The Cultural Transformation of a "Peculiar People"*; and Donald Durnbaugh's *Fruit of the Vine: A History of the Brethren, 1708-1995*. Each of these contribute a great deal to the understanding of the tensions between the three primary factions within the Brethren during this time period.

While this thesis largely deals with the way the Brethren approached and dealt with internal strife, the schism that resulted in the 1880s did not happen in a vacuum. American society, culture, religion, and politics were in constant flux all around them during the three decades examined here. The country became increasingly divided over the fate of millions of enslaved Africans and whether slavery should extend into new territories acquired from Mexico in the west. Transportation, particularly the railroad, became increasingly more effective and widespread. Industrialization boomed while literacy rates and education increased dramatically. In other words, the Brethren schism was very much part of, and connected to, a very complex American story.

This paper differs from the above-mentioned works and all other known Brethren writings because, while they all agree that the mid-century periodicals played a crucial, if not primary role, in influencing member sentiment that led to a church-wide division, not one of them has examined the language on which the arguments were founded. It is likely that not one Brethren historian would disagree with this argument, yet none has taken the opportunity to explore this avenue.

Also, all existing material that deals primarily with the German Baptist Brethren from the beginning has come from the hands of men and women who were and are members of one of the many now-existing Brethren denominations. The analysis here comes from an outsider's perspective. This is significant because it is the first-known scholarship on the Brethren from a non-Brethren.⁸ An outsider can claim some advantages in approaching a religious group from a perspective that is foreign to him or her. The outsider can analyze from a somewhat safe distance, something not easily accomplished by someone so close to difficult questions. A stranger to, or someone not directly involved with, Brethren beliefs and practices can ask questions Brethren historians cannot or have not asked themselves.⁹

The Brethren, while similar to other protestant religious practices, remained unique in their own ways. They closely related to Restoration movements in the Ohio Valley, but not in every particular. The Restorationist movement "intended to restore the primitive church," much like the Brethren.¹⁰ Both the Brethren and Restorationists were biblicist, immersionist, and noncreedal, but the Brethren differed in their mode of immersion baptism. Brethren "insisted" on practicing a three-fold forward immersion,

⁸ This information comes from the author's personal conversations with leading scholars in the field, namely Denise Kettering-Lane, who, at this writing, is Assistant Professor of Brethren Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary in Elgin, Illinois; Dale Stoffer, who is Professor of Historical Theology Emeritus at Ashland Theological Seminary in Ashland, Ohio; Marcus Miller, who authored *Roots by the River*, quoted in this work; and Karen Garrett, who is Managing Editor of *Brethren Life and Thought*, and a volunteer at the Brethren Heritage Center in Brookville, Ohio.

⁹ A good example of an outsider who has added significantly to another religious movement's history is Jan Shipps and her work on Mormon history. Her work is well regarded by members of the Mormon community even though she is not, nor has she ever been, a member of the Mormon Church. See Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

¹⁰ Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 172.

while the Restorationists practiced a single backward mode.¹¹ The Restorationists also observed the Last Supper each Sunday, while the Brethren did not. Also, the Brethren split examined here did not result over the vexing issue of slavery like nearly all other religious bodies.¹² They endeavored to remain a peculiar people.

Nearly all churches in America have dealt with similar growing pains and experienced similar breaks. This research shows in some detail how one church got to that breaking point. It also shows that the Bible played a very crucial and central role in American history. The Bible affected the daily decisions of people like the Brethren. Reading and following its teachings was not just a Sunday practice for people of many religious traditions outside the Brethren.

This paper is separated into three chapters. The first chapter will help the reader understand the Brethren, and where and how they originated. It will also briefly outline some important contextual data that will frame the remaining chapters. It will help the reader understand the significance of the Holy Bible to the Brethren. This chapter covers in broad strokes the Brethren experience through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and provides background on both Europe and America encounters.

Chapter two introduces two of the earliest Brethren periodicals, the *Gospel Visitor* published by Henry Kurtz, and the *Christian Family Companion* published by Henry Holsinger (Holsinger had apprenticed under Kurtz at the *Visitor* prior to starting the *Companion*). It analyzes the papers and their origins, and the motivations behind the editors in their creation. Primarily, however, it shows how the various contributors to,

¹¹ Ibid., 173.

¹² Donald F. Durnbaugh, ed., *Meet the Brethren* (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia, 1995), 26-7.

and editors of, the two papers used the Bible and other religious ideas to validate their arguments. The editors of these papers all claimed to advance unity, but in practice they propagated disunity. This chapter covers a period from about 1850, when the periodicals first began, through the mid 1870s.

The final chapter follows much the same pattern as the previous, though with some minor variance. It picks up where chapter two left off, in 1879 when Henry Holsinger, having quit and sold the *Companion*, decided to create another periodical, the *Progressive Christian*. It also introduces a fourth paper, the *Vindicator*. This chapter, like chapter two, also shows how these two papers, and their contributors and editors, founded their positions on the Bible and religious ideas. These two papers became the voices of the two primary polarities within the church, and created more controversy than in any previous time since the church was founded in 1708.

The Brethren, unable to remain completely aloof from the world around them, found themselves at a crossroads in the early 1880s, much like so many other religious groups had in the preceding century. They faced the dilemma of whether to adapt to popular religious and social currents and practices. Factions within the church divided because they each interpreted the Bible differently. Each used other religious and spiritual language to substantiate their individual claims when the Bible provided little or no direction. Schism resulted from this biblical interpretation, and use of other spiritual and religious rhetoric.

CHAPTER 1

ORIGINS

Eight devout Christian men and women congregated in secret in the first decade of the eighteenth century in Schwarzenau, Germany. During their meeting they composed a letter to a group of neighboring Pietists who resided in a region called the Palatinate. The group drew lots to determine who among them would pen the letter, but the records do not tell who that was; he or she remains anonymous. In the letter the author described the group's conviction involving their recent decision to baptize one another in "apostolic manner," which naturally invalidated their baptisms in infancy.¹³ The letter included scriptural references, and appealed to the Pietist recipients by stating that "if some more brethren wish to begin this high act of baptism with us out of brotherly unity according to the *teachings of Christ and the apostles* [emphasis added], we announce in humility that we are interceding together in prayer and fasting with God."¹⁴ They believed they had found truth and wanted others to join them.

These eight souls instigated and led the Brethren movement in Europe beginning in 1708. They had decided to separate themselves from all other religions, including Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Reformed, Calvinism, and other Protestant groups like Anabaptists, Pietists, Amish, and Mennonites. They believed, like so many others, that then-existing churches and religions did not follow the teachings of Christ and His Apostles as recorded in the Holy Bible, which led them to seek what they deemed a proper baptism as found in the sacred text.

¹³ Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 27-8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

The letter the group sent to the Pietists is revealing in at least one very significant way. The very reason the Brethren intended to baptize each other in the new manner was because of the way they interpreted the teachings of Christ and his apostles found in the Bible. Their entire lives revolved around, and were centered in, the words of the Bible. It informed all of their decisions, and was integral in their personal dealings within their own ranks and with others.

This chapter analyzes secondary source material to show that the founding of the Brethren movement originated from biblical interpretation in order to show the absolute crucial role the Bible played in Brethren lives from their very beginning. This chapter also provides important background and context in order to fully understand the analysis found in succeeding chapters.

BACKGROUND

The Brethren were a unique people, although they were often closely associated with the Amish, Mennonites, and Hutterites. These groups, including the Brethren, trace their lineage to Anabaptists of sixteenth-century Protestant Europe.¹⁵ The religious traditions of Anabaptism, Pietism, and Radical Pietism all contributed greatly to the doctrinal development of the Brethren.

¹⁵ Donald B. Kraybill and Carl F. Bowman, *On the Backroad to Heaven: Old Order Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, and Brethren* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 1. The connections found between these groups and others like Quakers, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Baptists are very complex. Carl Bowman provides a table in *Brethren Society* (74) that provides a “snapshot of the degree of similarity between Brethren practices and those of other groups during the mid-nineteenth century.”

The early Anabaptists were a group of young radicals who wanted the pace of the Protestant Reformation to move more quickly. They wanted to “break more sharply with established Catholic patterns.”¹⁶ Anxious students of the pastor Ulrich Zwingli directly challenged the Catholic, Protestant, and civil authorities by baptizing each other as adults in 1525 in Switzerland. Adult baptism threatened the long-established union between religious and civil authority, and was therefore a capital offense in sixteenth-century Europe.

Infant baptism in the Catholic and Protestant churches granted automatic citizenship to the individual, which also gave civil authorities power over taxation and conscription. Historians Donald Kraybill and Carl Bowman write that the question at stake for Zwingli’s students was therefore “not merely the age of baptism, but a much deeper issue of authority in church/state relations.”¹⁷ This practice of *rebaptizing* people as adults was the major component of Anabaptism. In fact, the word *anabaptism* derives from the Late Greek *anabaptizein*, which means to baptize again.¹⁸ Those who later called themselves brethren latched on to this idea of adult baptism despite its illegality.

In addition to the Brethren founded by Alexander Mack, many groups sprang from the Anabaptist movement, including the Mennonites founded by Menno Simons, the Hutterites led by Jacob Hutter, and the Amish founded by Jacob Amman. The Amish broke from the Mennonites in 1693. The largest influence on Alexander Mack and his brethren came from south German and Swiss Anabaptists, and the Mennonites.¹⁹ The

¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., 2

¹⁸ *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 4th ed. (New York: Dell Publishing, 2001), 30.

¹⁹ Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 4-5.

Brethren held to a number of basic Mennonite-Anabaptist principles that found credence in the Bible. These principles included, but are not limited to:

... commitment to an unadulterated biblically based doctrine; ... fidelity to the New Testament ordinances of believer's baptism, the Lord's Supper, and footwashing; ... refusal to swear oaths of allegiance or truthfulness; ... the loving use of mutual correction and church discipline ... to promote Christian living; and... commitment to religious liberty—freedom of conscience to practice one's faith without state interference.²⁰

The early Brethren were influenced by a number of religious movements, and therefore adopted practices they deemed appropriate for true followers of Christ.

The Brethren also had strong roots in Pietism and Radical Pietism. The catastrophic wars and famines of the seventeenth century, according to Diarmaid MacCulloch, “placed a heavy pastoral burden on Lutheran clergy in Scandinavia and Germany, and made them look for Protestant spiritual resources beyond their own tradition.”²¹ MacCulloch posits that although the clergy would have not wished to admit it, “they were also trying to find a substitute for something which the Reformation had destroyed: monastic life and spirituality.”²² Out of this, MacCulloch continued, “came a renewal of German and Scandinavian Protestantism, which has come to be known as Pietism.”²³ The nature of Pietism embodies a desire to express Christian devotion with the heart rather than through rote worship habits that existed before the Reformation.²⁴ Pietists opposed Orthodox or conservative Lutheran civil authority and clergy who

²⁰ Ibid., 5.

²¹ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 738.

²² Ibid., 738.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

impeded their spiritual path.²⁵ The Brethren adopted at least these aspects of Pietism, but also believed in separating themselves from institutions, which was a concept espoused by Radical Pietism.

Radical Pietism was important to Brethren origins primarily because of its emphasis on separation. This radicalism was a “dissenting wing of this pietistic reaction,” Bowman writes, “blending overtones of Christian mysticism with a radical living-out of the Christian faith, advocated complete separation from all institutionalized churches.”²⁶ To be sure, the most important difference between Pietism and Radical Pietism lay in the degree of separation from institutions, the extremity of which attracted early Brethren.

Bowman sums up the basis of Brethren doctrine and practice well. He writes that the Brethren were constructed by Radical Pietist understandings of spirituality and living a Christian life, and by Anabaptist perception of the church.²⁷ This means that they held that the church was a place for the “remnant of the faithful,” or those who had been “called out from the world” to gather as one.²⁸ Bowman adds that the church was simply a community within which Brethren could work together to “deepen their salvation, through faithfulness, obedience, and mutual correction.”²⁹ In short, the Brethren were both Pietist and Anabaptist while at the same time they considered themselves neither.³⁰ They adopted practices from each in order to restore what they believed to be the primitive church of Christ.

²⁵ For more on the treatment of the origins of Pietism refer to MacCulloch, *Christianity*, 738-47.

²⁶ Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 47. Bowman provides a table that shows the “*Contrasting Principles of Anabaptism and Pietism*” that can help one understand the two movements.

The Brethren were born when Alexander Mack and seven other men and women decided to act on their close study of the Bible, and baptized one another based on their findings. Before the Brethren sent their letter to the Pietists, they sent a letter to the leader of the Radical Pietists Ernst Christoph Hochmann von Hochenau while he was in prison. They did not believe the baptism they had received as infants was based on sound doctrine or biblical teachings. They wanted von Hochenau's advice relating to infant baptism, and whether to form a new community of believers. Hochenau's advice came from his own careful interpretation of the Bible. Nowhere in the Bible was infant baptism sanctioned, he argued, and a believer must follow the commandment to be baptized by immersion following a confession of faith, he told the group.³¹

The group of eight then acted on von Hochenau's response. Sander Mack, Alexander's son, recorded their actions.

... eight persons agreed together to establish a covenant of good conscience with God, to accept all ordinances of Jesus Christ as an easy yoke, and thus to follow after their Lord Jesus—their good and loyal shepherd—as true sheep in joy or sorrow until the blessed end.... These eight persons united with one another as brethren and sisters in the covenant of the cross of Jesus Christ as a church of Christian believers.³²

The Bible gave the group its direction. The Bible was their motivation. Its teachings and stories of Jesus led them into the waters of baptism to express their willingness to take up the cross and become saints. However joyful the experience may have been, this did not mean all would be well thereafter.

³¹ Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 27.

³² *Ibid.*

Von Hochenau warned the believers of the trials that inevitably awaited those who were baptized again. Because they had already been baptized as infants, their new adult baptism “fell under the rigorous penalties of existing law.”³³ At this point the brethren sent to the Pietists the letter that opened this chapter. The letter called on a passage from Matthew chapter 28, which calls for obedience to Christ’s commandments, and 1 Peter chapter 3, which identifies baptism as a covenant of a good conscience.³⁴ From the beginning of their existence, the Brethren drew from the Bible in every facet of life. They relied on its teachings and its precepts. It was the basis and foundation of their continuance. Their own interpretation of the Bible made up the very center of their belief structure.

While the newly baptized men and women believed they were on the right path toward exaltation, the authorities felt otherwise. The leaders of the surrounding territories grew more concerned as religious dissent spread throughout the area. They reacted slowly, however, and before too much trouble arose, the Brethren removed themselves from the Schwarzenau area.³⁵

The political authorities were not the only ones concerned with the recent Brethren baptism. Radical Pietists, with whom the Brethren had been closely associated, looked at the baptism with criticism. Von Hochenau tried to calm the growing storm between the groups. He wrote a letter to the “Pietist-minded Count of Solms” that he had taken the matter to God in prayer, and “came to the conclusion that I should remain in

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 27-8.

³⁵ Ibid., 29-31.

impartial Christian love with all, the baptized as well as the nonbaptized.”³⁶ Von Hochenau intended his message to spread among his fellow Pietists. In the letter he placed a higher priority on an inner spiritual baptism that gave meaning to the outward physical baptism.³⁷

As the Brethren gained followers and expanded, they met with continuous resistance and left their homes for the town of Krefeld situated on the Lower Rhine. A Swiss religious separatist in the area wrote a letter to a friend about the Brethren. He observed that “they have a great zeal to impress their beliefs upon the conscience of men through the authority of the Holy Scriptures.”³⁸ It was obvious to non-Brethren people just how central the Bible was to Brethren.

Historian Donald Durnbaugh explains that Brethren “basically shared the orthodox Protestant beliefs established in the Reformation—especially the authority of Scripture and the priesthood of all believers.”³⁹ He also explains that their problem with established churches was not about doctrine, but “religious freedom and the failure of the laity and the clergy of the churches to live moral lives.”⁴⁰ The way to live a moral life, they believed, was articulated in the Holy Scriptures. They determined to find religious freedom in another land. America would be their new home.

The early Brethren’s letters to both the local Pietists and von Hochenau indicate their dedication to living a Christ-centered life as taught in the Bible. The Brethren’s

³⁶ Ibid., 31.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 39

³⁹ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

origins as a separatist group and their belief in adult baptism came from their interpretations of the Bible. The Bible was their authority, and directed their thoughts and actions. The Bible was their source of what they determined was primitive Christianity, which they sought to restore.

TO AMERICA

Thirteen Quaker and Mennonite families relocated to America in the eighteenth century. They settled in the new colony established by William Penn. “They were the forerunners of perhaps a hundred thousand ethnic Germans who came to America in the colonial period,” historian Roger Daniels explains. These Germans from Krefeld settled what became known as Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1683.⁴¹

Brethren membership in the last quarter of the eighteenth century grew at an astounding rate, so did its geographical reach. They moved west as they exhausted farm land, looking for more fertile areas. As they moved they continued to establish congregations in their wake. Prior to about 1850 they expanded from Pennsylvania into Maryland and Virginia. After 1850 they moved into Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri.⁴²

⁴¹ Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Harper Perennial, 2002), 70; Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 265. Pennsylvania was founded by the devout English Quaker William Penn, who was, according to Taylor, an “ingrained elitist, both highly principled and habitually condescending.” King Charles II owed £16,000 to Penn’s father, Admiral William Penn, and agreed to grant the young William 45,000 square miles of land in America west of the Delaware River. Penn called the land Pennsylvania, meaning “Penn’s Woods.”

⁴² Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 95-6. See Brethren growth chart on 95.

As their numbers grew, the Brethren came into contact with more non-Brethren people and various religious traditions. Geographical movement and convert growth guaranteed that late-nineteenth-century Brethren would have to confront life outside their own communities and way of life, particularly in schooling. The common schools their children attended, beginning in the 1830s, required the learning of English, mathematics, and “a generous sprinkling of morality and national loyalty rounding out daily lessons.”⁴³ Those Brethren children educated in the 1830s were in their thirties during the country’s most tumultuous time, the Civil War during the first half of the 1860s, and coincidentally during their own fractious period as they became the church’s leaders.

The Civil War played a preeminent role on the nineteenth-century American stage, but was not the only event or change that went on around the Brethren from the 1850s to the 1880s. The Brethren, like nearly everyone east of the Mississippi River, could not avoid the Civil War and its repercussions, nor the changes in society that happened during the same time. While they largely did not participate in the fighting because of their nonresistant platform, Brethren took notice of events around them, and had to confront each as they appeared.⁴⁴

Other changes the Brethren confronted both before and after the Civil War were the move toward professionalism and specialization in the economy, industrialization, urbanization, and the problems created by new science and scholarship.⁴⁵ American

⁴³ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁴ Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 49. Durnbaugh explains that “as they read of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, they could see no other option than to follow the ‘Prince of Peace’ in his nonresistant walk.”

⁴⁵ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 735-40.

ministers, in order to remain relevant in a changing world, had to address all these issues and more in order to appeal to, and be understood by, “an active, socially prominent laity,” and therefore “carried out an important task of mediating Christianity to the modern world.”⁴⁶ As shown in chapters two and three, Henry Holsinger and his followers were aware of these changes, and knew that educated ministers would be more effective in spreading the gospel to the world.

AMERICAN RELIGION

To fully place the Brethren into the American context, we must first understand something of the religious landscape by which they found themselves surrounded in the nineteenth century. In many ways they were very similar to surrounding Protestant religious practices, such as their dependence on the Bible for doctrine and theology, but in some ways they were clearly different and stood apart, as with their pacifism, non-credal doctrine, and a three-fold immersion baptism.⁴⁷

Mark Noll, noted American historian of religion, explains the shift away from European theological traditions that “descended directly from the Protestant Reformation, toward a Protestant evangelical theology decisively shaped by its engagement with Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America.”⁴⁸ He argues that the difference between nineteenth-century American Protestant evangelicalism and the Protestant Reformation

⁴⁶ Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, 738.

⁴⁷ For a larger framework of American religion, see: Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*; Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Paul K. Conkin, *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ Noll, *America's God*, 3. Noll explains that evangelism means the spreading of religion primarily through the means missionary work.

was at least equal to the difference between the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic theological tradition. These American Protestants, particularly evangelicals, moved from “early-modern to modern religion made by heightened spiritual awareness, [and] a new confidence in individual action.”⁴⁹

Noll tells of Achille Murat who was an exiled Bonapartist, and whose background in, and idea of, religion was connected to the ideals of an established church. Murat’s view of American religion in the 1830s is telling. He was impressed by “the thousand and one sects which divide the people of the United States. Merely to enumerate them would be impossible, for they change every day, appear, disappear, unite, separate, and evince nothing stable but their instability.... Yet, with all this liberty,” Murat continued, “there is no country in which the people are so religious as in the United States.”⁵⁰ The Brethren found themselves within this common and constant flux in the mid-nineteenth century. The story of their schism in the 1880s is, at least according to Noll and Murat, indicative of American religious currents.

Americans had something else in common, according to Noll. By the end of the eighteenth century, a majority of Americans were leery of and mistrusted intellectual inherited authorities, and concluded that truth, knowledge, and understanding derived from their own choices and the use of their own senses. “Most Americans were thus united,” Noll contends, “in the conviction that people had to think for themselves in order to know science, morality, economics, politics, and especially theology.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁵¹ Ibid., 11.

By 1860, evangelical Protestants made up a very large majority of American congregations—more than 85%—but they were far from a uniform body of believers. The very opposite may be closer to the truth. The almost innumerable religious bodies argued over the best and proper way to interpret the Bible, and over a multitude of Christian doctrines, “including human free will, the atonement,... the meaning of the sacraments, and the nature of the church.” They argued over social and moral issues like slavery and over the proper ecclesiastical roles of women and laymen, and over whether to sing hymns or psalms only.⁵² They were far from being of the same mind.

Most evangelical Protestants shared some components, however. They invited individuals to recognize their sinful state before God, to view the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ as their savior and their chance at redemption, “and to exercise faith in this Redeemer as the way of reconciliation with God and orientation for life in the world.” Evangelicals generally believed in the centrality of the Bible because it came directly from God as revelation.⁵³

The Brethren were not evangelical in the early decades of the eighteenth century, in that they did not send out missionaries to preach. This changed, however, by the mid-nineteenth century. Carl Bowman suggests that a majority of the “most educated Brethren” found themselves interested in evangelism by the 1870s.⁵⁴ Yet they were reluctant to associate with “the methods of popular revivalists,” who employed “theatrical

⁵² Ibid., 170.

⁵³ Ibid., 170-1.

⁵⁴ Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 118.

or fire-and-brimstone tactics.”⁵⁵ They simply wanted to spread the gospel to unbelievers, and all non-Brethren.

Evangelism was one of the many components of the arguments that heated up between the Brethren members and congregations in the 1850s to 1880s that led to their schism. One particular aspect of evangelism loomed large, the problem of a paid or salaried ministry. Bowman offers that as early as 1860, a committee at Annual Meeting, the church’s governing body, called for “the formation of state districts to coordinate and finance mission work,” but the measure was not approved until 1868.⁵⁶ One of the measure’s key elements was the instruction that each congregation provide financial means to support the Brethren members participating in ministerial work. Bowman explains that “the plan noted that ‘the conviction of mind seems to be general among the brethren, that greater exertion should be made by the brotherhood to have the gospel preached in every place.’”⁵⁷

Henry Holsinger, a leading voice among the progressive Brethren in their mid-century debates, believed the church was in “great need of reformation” when it came to its preachers.⁵⁸ One of Holsinger’s greatest concerns, what he called an “unfortunate feature in the state of the church” during the time he and others called the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 133.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Holsinger, *History of the Tunkers*, 473. This Brethren progressivism is not to be confused with early-twentieth-century Progressivism, or any forms of it. The Brethren brand of progressivism (lowercase p) simply meant to believe in progress or advancement, particularly in knowledge and understanding, but also in religious practice. Like children that grow to adulthood, some believed, Brethren should grow in their maturity in Christ’s gospel. This belief in progress led them to advocate reform in church practice, like paying and educating their ministers, supporting Sunday-schools for their children, and a more modern, less-plain dress code. These ideas were anathema to most of the Brethren, particularly the Old Orders.

progressive era (ca. 1850-1880), was that Brethren congregations “were in the care of incompetent bishops,” meaning their leaders lacked proper education.⁵⁹ Everything else, he contended, suffered because of that educational deficit.⁶⁰ He claimed to understand the perceived problems vexing the Brethren because, at the time, he was the editor of the only Brethren weekly paper, and had access to more information than most others.⁶¹

Holsinger expounded on the education problem within the church. He wrote honestly, but maybe too rashly in his assessment. He wrote:

I can even now close my eyes and name a dozen churches whose elders I was personally acquainted who could not read intelligently a chapter from the Bible or a hymn from a hymn book, nor write an intelligent notice or announcement of a communion meeting for the paper. Some of them could deliver a pretty fair discourse in an extemporaneous way, more or less satisfactory to the people and community in which they lived, but the more discreet of them could not attempt to preach at a strange place or in a town.⁶²

The people Holsinger referred to were, in his estimation, among the best and most moral people in his community. This morality, however, was not enough to sustain a man whose official standing was bishop. Morality alone did not qualify the man, he needed to be more educated. Holsinger continued:

The office of a bishop carries with it more than piety and spirituality, even according to the sacred oracles. It bears with it a fitness to teach and a capability to use sound doctrine, to exhort and to convince gainsayers. And even more so according to the usages of church and in religious literature. When a Methodist bishop comes into a community everybody is expectant, and nobody is disappointed, because no Methodist minister can become a bishop unless he can preach anywhere.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 473-4.

Holsinger indicated that his brethren had “lost sight of the essential qualifications” of a bishop, who was an “important official.”⁶³

Holsinger’s own account of the history of the Brethren provides some important insight. First, and quite obviously, Holsinger saw what he believed was a problem: the lack of education among his brethren. Second, he compared Brethren preachers to the Methodists. The Brethren took pleasure in remaining aloof from the world, yet Holsinger had an intimate knowledge of at least some Methodist practices. This was because either he was more outward looking than other Brethren, or because avoiding Methodists was all but impossible. It may have even been a combination of both. Finally, it brings in the controversial topic of evangelism, as outlined above.

Methodism was a religious force to be reckoned with in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1771, when Francis Asbury landed in America, only four Methodist preachers oversaw a group of about three hundred people. Three years prior to Asbury’s death in 1816, Methodists claimed more than 171,000 white Americans, and nearly 43,000 Blacks led by 678 preachers. Roughly one in eight Americans attended a Methodist camp meeting each year.⁶⁴ American Methodism experienced growing pains and schism like so many other churches in American history. “From nowhere,” writes Noll, “in a period of very rapid general growth in church affiliation and over a remarkably short span, Methodism had become the most pervasive form of Christianity in the United States.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 474.

⁶⁴ Noll, *America’s God*, 168.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 169. The Methodist Episcopal Church, which was the main body in the North, counted 860,000 members, and 135,000 probationers—those under church discipline—in 1860. Ministers baptized more than

Holsinger took notice of Methodism's growth, and, along with many of his brethren, wanted the Brethren Church to go to all the world. Clearly the Methodists had the winning formula to carry that out. The best way for the Brethren to share their truth with the world, according to Holsinger, was through ministers who could travel anywhere, not unlike the Methodists, and preach intelligent sermons.

THE BIBLE IN THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

The Bible is central to America's past. Mark Noll argues that "it would be hard to imagine a nation more thoroughly biblical than the United States between the American Revolution and the Civil War."⁶⁶ He contends that between these years Americans used the Bible to understand not only their "private religious reality," but also the "public life of the country."⁶⁷ They used the Bible so widely that Noll argues calling the United States a biblical nation is quite accurate.⁶⁸

The Bible is clearly central to the Brethren's past, but how did later generations view it a century-and-a-half after coming to America? In 1859 a Brethren man appealed to the editors of the *Gospel Visitor* (the first publication authorized by Brethren

72,000 people, both adults and children, in the same year. More than 13,000 Methodist Sunday schools enrolled nearly 800,000 pupils taught by more than 146,000 lay teachers. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, claimed fewer numbers than the North, but given the population density below the Mason-Dixon Line, Methodism in the South cast a longer shadow.

⁶⁶ Mark A. Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776-1865," in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 39.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* See also Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds., *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 5. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark Noll make clear that failing to consider Scripture as a cultural force in America creates problems. One such problem, they contend, is that it leaves gaps and distortions in the record of America's past. The history of the Bible in America is incredibly complex, and leaving it out is like a painter creating a portrait, omitting his subject's head, and calling the work complete.

leadership, and discussed at length in chapter 2), and posed a simple question. He wanted to know on what was the Brethren doctrine founded? Was it founded solely on the New Testament, or on the Old Testament also? The editors printed his question and their answer to it in the “Queries” section of the paper, which was set aside for questions just like his. Their response illustrates perfectly how the Brethren valued the Bible in the mid-nineteenth century:

We believe as taught us by Paul, that ‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.’ 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. With this belief, we exclude no part of divine revelation, but take both the Old and New Testament, as the ground and illustration of our faith and practice.⁶⁹

The editors and contributors examined later sought, first and foremost, to be of one heart and one mind because the idea of oneness stems from biblical teachings.⁷⁰ In other words, they were not promoting disunity or division as some detractors of the periodicals thought. Participants in this controversial period of the Brethren used the Bible to their advantage when arguing their particular case to other members. No matter what side of the debate they were on, these men appealed to the hearts and minds of readers by using religious rhetoric that often depicted some ideas or courses of action as evil, and others as righteous. They invoked the image of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, and admonished readers to follow their example, which could also take on many

⁶⁹ E. H. S., “On What is Our Doctrine Founded?,” *Gospel Visitor*, July 1859, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>.

⁷⁰ See, among others: Romans 15:6; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 1:27, 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8; and Revelation 17:13 KJV.

connotations. Nearly all persuasive commentary stemmed from the Bible and its teachings.

Carl Bowman explains well the way early Brethren viewed the Bible through the succeeding decades and centuries. As a rule they avoided formal creeds and confessions, but, Bowman offers, categorizing them as noncreedal “could not depart more dramatically from their original uncompromising biblicism.... It is much more historically accurate to say that they adopted the entire New Testament as their creed.”⁷¹ Brethren hesitated to adopt practices for which they could not find biblical support.⁷² Brethren historian Marcus Miller provides a short list of beliefs of the Old German Baptist Brethren, the group that sprang from the schism, and which claimed to adhere closest to traditional Brethren teachings and the church that existed during Christ’s mortal ministry (the Brethren often used the term “primitive Christianity” to describe the church during Christ’s time).⁷³ First on his list is, “that there is a people who, as little children (Luke 18, 17), accept the Word of the New Testament as a message from heaven (Heb. 1:1, 2), and teach it in full (2 Tim. 4:1, 2; Matt. 28:20).”⁷⁴ In order to understand the

⁷¹ Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 29.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 172-6. The Brethren do not necessarily fall under the term Restorationism, even though they tried to restore or mimic the church Christ established during his mortal ministry. Durnbaugh articulates the difference, noting that Restorationists promoted a single, backward immersion baptism, while the Brethren practice a three-fold forward immersion. Another point of departure between the Brethren and Restorationists was their view on the correct way to observe the Last Supper. This does not mean, however, that there were no connection between Brethren and Restoration movements. Both were biblicist, immersionist, and non-creedal.

⁷⁴ Miller, *Roots by the River*, 25-6.

Brethren and the debates that surfaced largely between 1850 and 1883 involving a paid or supported ministry, one must grasp the centrality of the Holy Bible in their lives.⁷⁵

SCHISM

A short note on schism is relevant since it seems that a discussion on American religion is also incomplete without including dissent. Difference of opinion, according to historian Edwin Scott Gaustad, is healthy. “Like the secretions of the pituitary,” he writes relating to American dissent, “the juices of dissent are essential to ongoing life even if we do not always know precisely how, when, or where they perform their task.”⁷⁶ Gaustad warns, however, that should a society actually succeed in suppressing all discordant opinion, then “its own vital juices no longer flow and the shadow of death begins to fall across it.”⁷⁷

Dissent in America goes back to the very early decades of European settlement and factors directly into the Brethren schism in the 1880s. Early American settlers were largely dissenters rather than part of the mighty, state-supported Anglican system. The Great Awakening intensified religious dissention in America and increased the numbers of those dissenting traditions.⁷⁸ Religious historian George Marsden posits that while religion in early America was a significant factor, it was not “an isolated variable in political events.”⁷⁹ Alternatively, the rise of dissenting religious traditions in the

⁷⁵ During the years primarily discussed in this chapter, 1850-1883, the Brethren used the King James Version of the Bible.

⁷⁶ Edwin Scott Gaustad, *Dissent in American Religion*, rev. ed. Chicago History of American Religion Series, John Corrigan, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 29.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

eighteenth-century American awakenings fortified and bolstered other cultural and provincial allegiance that contributed to the Revolution.⁸⁰ Therefore, to be an American Protestant in the eighteenth or nineteenth century meant to believe in dissent on a fundamental level.

To be a dissenter does not necessarily include a desire to break from the established authority. It may simply mean to disagree, or differ in opinion rather than completely refusing to conform to authority.⁸¹ This is important to keep in mind because those Brethren printers in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly Henry Holsinger, merely intended to reform the church based on their various opinions founded on biblical teachings. What resulted, of course, was much different.

From the very beginning of the Brethren's creation the Bible played a central role in the founders' lives. It informed their decisions and guided their actions. Bible stories of Christ and his apostles were ever present in their minds. They baptized one another and created a brotherhood based on its teachings. They adopted every practice found in the Bible, and were leery of practices that had no scriptural foundation. The Brethren were not merely biblicists, they adopted the entire Bible as their creed. To fully understand the Brethren from their founding to the 1880s is to fully understand the Bible. They were inseparable. When Brethren printers began publishing periodicals in the 1850s it was inevitable that, given the central role the Bible played in their their lives, they would use its teachings throughout their work. In part, however, their individual interpretations of

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 250.

the Bible as printed in their papers led to the creation of factions and later breakup of the church.

CHAPTER 2

CHURCH PERIODICALS, THE BIBLE, AND INTERPRETATION, CA. 1851-1869

In June 1866, Archy Van Dyke sat down to write a letter to the editor of the *Christian Family Companion*, Henry Holsinger. Van Dyke had been pondering the meaning of a passage he knew so well in the King James Version of the Holy Bible, Romans 12:16, which begins, “Be of the same mind one toward another.”⁸² He wanted to share with other Brethren members his thoughts on the verse in light of something he observed that perplexed him. He began the letter to Holsinger, and explained that the people of his church, the German Baptist Brethren, learned from their preachers that if they believed and were baptized “aright,” then they would “receive the Holy Ghost,” whose office it is “to lead into truth.”⁸³

Members of the German Baptist Brethren Church at the time of Van Dyke’s letter differed greatly in opinion with one another about a number of topics relating to church doctrine and practice. In the letter Van Dyke observed the clash of perspectives among the leading Brethren council at the previous Annual Meeting, the church’s yearly gathering of members, and where chosen elders made decisions in behalf of the church body. Why, Van Dyke wondered, did even the council leaders disagree about important issues if the Brethren had the Holy Ghost, who guided them into truth? He wrote:

What some thought to be a great evil, others, claiming to be led by the same spirit, could see no evil in. Now the scripture says, ‘be of one mind.’ There appears to be something wrong here. Led by the same spirit and differ in opinion so much? I cannot reconcile this matter to my own satisfaction. Perhaps some of the brethren

⁸² Romans 12:16 KJV.

⁸³ Archy Van Dyke, “Exhortation to Unity,” *Christian Family Companion*, June 19, 1866, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>.

will be so kind as to give me some light on the subject. I see no other way than to bear with one another, until we can see eye to eye.

While some think it right to pay the minister, others think it entirely wrong.... We, perhaps, want to be termed wise. To say the least, we put too high an estimate on ourselves.... I am certain, the difficulty rests with ourselves, for I believe the spirit will lead us all aright, if we are willing to be led.⁸⁴

Archy Van Dyke and his letter provide insight into the disunity among Brethren caused by divergent perspectives between about 1850 and 1883 that resulted in a three-way, church-wide split that occurred between 1881 and 1883. The various and fractious viewpoints that arose roughly at mid-century were largely about whether the church should adopt and instigate changes in practice relating to different surrounding cultures and religions based on the sentiments advocated by its own members. The most conservative among them resisted change almost completely, and did not even publish their own paper to combat what they saw as evil within the other Brethren papers that started in 1851. Alternatively, as will be shown, the more forward thinking, or progressive, among them advocated changes that they believed would help keep the Brethren relevant in a changing society.

The schism among the German Baptist Brethren Church of the early 1880s is of central importance to the historical memory of all subsequent generations and different sects of Brethren churches. Most people of the various Brethren denominations believe that the Brethren periodicals of the mid-nineteenth century, and the ideas they advocated involving a change in practice, caused great friction and disunity among members and weakened the church to the point of breaking. Some of the most conservative members believed the papers in themselves could lead to disunity, and tried to prevent them from

⁸⁴ Ibid.

creating factions within the church by trying to thwart their existence.⁸⁵ This narrative of, and the way members view, the schism has not changed dramatically since the late nineteenth century.

While Brethren historians have not gone far enough in explaining the causes of the division, this is not to imply they are off track. They largely correlate the rift with geographic expansion and the creation of periodicals, and have previously centered their attention on the progressive ideas printed in the periodicals rather than explaining what lay at the foundation of the arguments.⁸⁶ They have not focused their research on the various interpretations of the Bible, or the use of religious and traditional rhetoric found within the pages of the periodicals that validated the publishers' and contributors' views, which is the main point of departure advanced here.

This chapter argues that the schism's foundations lay deeper than previously explained by Brethren historians. It will show that the roots of the schism lay in the interpretation of the very thing that should have bound them together, the Bible. It will also demonstrate how they used biblical verses and other religious, spiritual, and traditional phrases not only to justify the creation of their papers in the first place—because the papers alone created some controversy—but also to validate their positions on specific topics in order to persuade readers to believe the same.

This chapter begins by explaining the way the Brethren viewed and treasured the teachings of the Bible. It then analyzes the *Gospel Visitor* periodical, started in 1851 by

⁸⁵ Henry Kurtz, "Address to the Reader," *Gospel Visitor*, April 1851, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>.

⁸⁶ See footnote 3 in Introduction.

Henry Kurtz, and how Kurtz justified printing it given strong opposition from more conservative Brethren. Next, it examines the *Christian Family Companion*, started in 1865 by Henry Holsinger, and the ways Holsinger justified *his* paper. It concludes by showing that editors and contributors alike founded their arguments about one particular controversial topic of many, whether the church should support or pay their ministry, on the Bible, its teachings, and church tradition. Finally, it includes some additional minor but important context in order to place the Brethren within the broader American religious and cultural landscape. Neither the Brethren's nineteenth-century schism nor the arguments leading to it took place in a vacuum.

THE GOSPEL VISITOR

No history of the Brethren is complete without mentioning the controversial periodicals of the period, starting in 1851 when Henry Kurtz began printing the *Gospel Visitor*.⁸⁷ The *Visitor* was the first Brethren periodical of the nineteenth century not specifically prohibited by the church's leadership. Neither was not officially sanctioned.⁸⁸ The very existence of a paper was controversial among members. It received some criticism from the group of Brethren within the church who considered themselves the protectors of primitive Christianity, or the Old Orders. Kurtz defended his publication by extolling biblical precedent and spiritual promptings. He intended the *Visitor* to unite a

⁸⁷ The original spelling of the *Visitor* was with an *-er* instead of an *-or*, and changed later.

⁸⁸ Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 222.

brotherhood that was increasingly divided by both geography and ideas.⁸⁹ It was to act as a visitor to Brethren homes, or a “Visiter [*sic*] in the power and spirit of the Gospel.”⁹⁰

Kurtz began printing the *Visitor* prior to receiving official approval from Annual Meeting. He wrote in the first issue that he could not wait for their deliberation, which could last weeks or months. In the 1851 Annual Meeting, leaders decided to give the *Visitor* a one year probation. Then in 1852 they decided they would not interfere with the *Visitor* because it was a private enterprise.⁹¹ Some Brethren still objected to the paper, but Kurtz was not going to allow a little friction to prevent him from fulfilling what he perceived as a sacred duty, one he owed to his fellow brethren.

Kurtz’s religious and educational background was atypical for a Brethren member, and his later innovation and influence originated from it.⁹² Kurtz was born in 1796 in the German states, and received a sound classical education, which was unlike most Brethren he later associated with.⁹³ He left Europe for the United States at the age of twenty-one, and became a Lutheran pastor in 1819, achieving ordination some time later. The lay leadership of the Lutheran/Reformed parish in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania forced him to resign because of “factional disputes” relating to “rigorous church discipline.”⁹⁴ Kurtz moved to Ohio, tried establishing his own community, and edited and published a periodical that espoused communal ideas.⁹⁵ The paper experienced only mixed success,

⁸⁹ Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 98.

⁹⁰ Kurtz, “Address to the Reader,” *Gospel Visitor*, April 1851, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrenigitalarchives>.

⁹¹ Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 221.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 220.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Durnbaugh does not elaborate on what he means by “factional disputes,” and “rigorous church discipline.”

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

and ultimately failed. Kurtz moved on and later became familiar with Brethren in Stark County, Ohio.⁹⁶ He felt the Brethren practiced genuine Christianity, and decided to join the brotherhood.

Kurtz and his involvement with printing played a significant role in the changing currents within Brethren society. He farmed like many Brethren members, but enjoyed and was interested in publishing. He purchased his own press in 1830, and issued “a modest number of books.”⁹⁷ In 1851 Kurtz created the *Gospel Visitor*, which was a bit of a turning point in Brethren progress because, according to Henry Holsinger’s reflection some fifty years later, “the appearance of the *Visitor* ushered in the progressive era in the Tunker Church.”⁹⁸

In July 1849, Kurtz consulted with some of his brethren and determined that a majority of Brethren churches were in favor of a paper, and at least three hundred people subscribed to the *Visitor* before its initial printing. “Thus,” Kurtz wrote, he and the printer “felt encouraged” to press forward.⁹⁹ Kurtz admitted he never brought the subject of a Brethren paper before the Annual Meeting, but clearly felt little remorse for failing to do so.¹⁰⁰

The beginnings of the *Gospel Visitor* in the late-1840s and early-1850s came just one or two years after, and even during, some very significant events on the North American continent. The people commonly known as Mormons (officially members of

⁹⁶ Ibid., 220-1.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 221.

⁹⁸ Holsinger, *History of the Tunkers*, 470.

⁹⁹ Kurtz, “Address to the Reader,” *Gospel Visitor*, April 1851, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) made their first major push to settle west of the Rocky Mountains. Their exodus began early in 1846, leaving originally from Nauvoo, Illinois, and from many other locations later. They went west by the thousands, and carried their possessions in wagons and handcarts like so many other westward migrants did before the transcontinental railroad completed its course. Eventually the east- and the westbound tracks met in northern Utah in May 1869, evincing the rapid changes in transportation.¹⁰¹ Fortune-seeking travelers went to California to find gold beginning in 1849. The United States had not long been free of war with Mexico, and political debates relating to slavery's extension into the newly-acquired western territory raged. None, however, affected the Brethren like the rapid changes in communication. The ease with which people of common means could print their own papers increased dramatically in the nineteenth century, and affected the Brethren in a profound way, making the distribution of ideas central to church unity—or disunity.

Following prayerful consideration, Kurtz determined that printing the paper was a responsibility he shouldered as a Christian who was in a position to spread the gospel, and could not “shrink” from it. One particular word of God was staring him in the face, he wrote, and would deprive him of peace unless he obeyed.¹⁰² He had in mind James 4:17 in the Bible which reads, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”¹⁰³ Kurtz, like most Brethren, used Scripture to justify his beliefs and

¹⁰¹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 727-9.

¹⁰² Kurtz, “Address to the Reader.”

¹⁰³ James 4:17 KJV.

actions, even if others, including fellow Brethren, viewed things differently. He felt compelled by a spiritual sense of responsibility and duty, and could not delay any longer.

Kurtz further justified the *Visitor*, and drew readers' attention to the "thousands of presses," both secular and religious, that were daily issuing "a multitude of publication, some good, some indifferent, and some alas! too many absolutely bad and hurtful."¹⁰⁴

These papers were ubiquitous, he claimed, and every family had access to them. As Brethren migrated west like many others during this period, they would inevitably come into contact with various religious sects. Therefore, if he did not print a Brethren paper, one that would "hold forth and [defend] their peculiar tenets" like nearly every other denomination was doing, then the "popular errors and the most ingenious counterfeits of truth" would make their way to Brethren cabins where these errors and counterfeit truths could mislead and fool their children.¹⁰⁵

Kurtz believed, like all Brethren, that they alone held and taught the gospel of Jesus Christ in its purity and entirety, and wanted to prevent the world's evil tendencies from infiltrating their homes. The *Visitor* would glorify God and his truth "as it is in Christ Jesus," and provide a bulwark against evil.¹⁰⁶ Kurtz's intentions were pure, and he clearly hoped the *Visitor* would not only inform Brethren of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but persuade them to believe that a paper like his was a necessary tool to help them along on their path to salvation. His paper would be a source of truth and righteousness, and preserve unity within the church.

¹⁰⁴ Kurtz, "Address to the Reader."

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Communication was lacking between Brethren congregations, and between people, and threatened to challenge unity within the church. Noted Brethren historian Donald Durnbaugh states that as the Brethren spread throughout the country in the nineteenth century, it became increasingly difficult to preserve unity within the Brethren because of their distance from other Brethren, and from contact with divergent religious views. The instigation of District Meetings and Yearly, or Annual Meeting hoped to mitigate the problem, but did not eliminate it. Henry Kurtz believed that a periodical, particularly his own, could solve the problem of disunity altogether.¹⁰⁷ The *Visitor*'s front page indicates that the monthly publication was "devoted to the exhibition of gospel-principles [and] gospel-practice in their primitive purity [and] simplicity, in order to promote Christian union, brotherly love [and] universal charity."¹⁰⁸ Kurtz's use of the word "primitive" is important because, as will be shown, people on all sides of the coming debates claimed to be the bastion of primitive Christianity. Practicing primitive Christianity, as taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles as found in the New Testament, was central to Brethren teaching.

Not all Brethren believed publication was a righteous tool to spread the Gospel of Christ. Old Orders, or the ultra-conservative Brethren, questioned whether preaching must be done by word of mouth alone. Kurtz responded to critics of his paper by reminding them that "if the first preachers of the Gospel had not preached by writing too, we would have no written or printed Gospel at all."¹⁰⁹ In other words, they would have no

¹⁰⁷ Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 219.

¹⁰⁸ Kurtz, "Address to the Reader."

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Bible, the very foundation of their theology, and source of primitive Christianity they sought to emulate. Kurtz defended his position further, “seeing then, that we have apostolic example... we trust no more need be said even about printing.”¹¹⁰ If Christ’s Apostles wrote what they preached, why, as followers of Christ themselves, could Brethren not do the same, he argued.

The *Visitor*, as seen by Kurtz and his subscribers, provided a channel of spiritual growth and teachings from the Bible, which not only validated the paper, but embodied the Brethren creed. To critics of the paper, it was a seedbed of discord. As America expanded its borders, and as treasure hunters and other religious and non-religious peoples moved west to fill the expanse, Brethren followed suit, though not on as grand a scale. They needed something to tie them to their brothers in the east. The *Visitor*, Kurtz thought, could do just that. Henry Holsinger sought to accomplish the same thing in the *Christian Family Companion*.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY COMPANION

The *Christian Family Companion*, edited by Henry Ritz Holsinger, added extensively to the friction among the Brethren churches. Holsinger officially began printing the *Christian Family Companion* in January 1865 (two specimen papers appeared previously in 1864 in order to build an audience). The *Companion* was both an informative and persuasive paper. Holsinger hoped not only to share the Christian gospel of salvation, but also, like Henry Kurtz, promote and facilitate unity among a factious

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

brotherhood. Not insignificantly, the *Companion* came during a momentous year. Just as national hostilities waned and the American Civil War came to a close in the spring of that year, tension within the Brethren intensified.

The *Companion* became a point of controversy, however, between Holsinger and Brethren leadership, significantly more so than the *Visitor* because of its more controversial topics. It provides insight on Holsinger's beliefs, values, and progression of thought during a crucial time in the Brethren Church. He used biblical citations to warrant his seemingly progressive suggestions. It must be clear that while some of his proposals contradicted the common practice of the very plain, conservative Brethren, he did not envision disunion or separation from the body of the church, though he often takes much of the blame in Brethren accounts.¹¹¹ He simply wanted to improve the church by adopting practices that would allow it to be more relevant in society. Nevertheless, the *Christian Family Companion* became increasingly more divisive to the brotherhood than the *Visitor* had been because of Holsinger's more progressive views regarding church practices.

Holsinger was born in Morrison's Cove, Pennsylvania on May 26, 1833. Both his father and paternal grandfather were preachers in the church. His ancestry goes back to Alexander Mack, Jr., the man credited for starting the Brethren movement in Europe in 1708. He married Susannah Shoop on June 1, 1864, and they later had two daughters. Elder George Brumbaugh baptized him a member of the Brethren in the spring of 1855,

¹¹¹ Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 98-9. Henry Holsinger is often portrayed as the personification of the Brethren schism. Bowman posits that Holsinger was too abrasive in his approach, and was too passionate in his beliefs.

likely just prior to Holsinger's twenty-second birthday. Church members elected him to the ministry on October 28, 1866, and was ordained an elder on October 21, 1880.¹¹²

Holsinger's wedding fell on the second day of battle at Cold Harbor in Virginia, where 59,000 Confederates faced 109,000 Federals. Cold Harbor followed weeks of intense and bloody battles at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania.¹¹³ Historian James McPherson states that the time had been "exhausting as well as bloody beyond all precedent."¹¹⁴ There had been little reprieve for the armies over the previous weeks, having at least some form of contact, which exhausted both sides mentally and physically. Approximately 44,000 Federal and an estimated 25,000 Confederate casualties resulted from the relentless fighting through May and June.¹¹⁵ While the Brethren wanted nothing to do with the politics and wars of America, they nevertheless experienced war of another kind—a war of words and ideas perhaps—and Holsinger led many charges on the field of print in the *Companion* and later publications.

Prior to his work on the *Companion*, Holsinger attempted to establish himself as a political contributor through a paper called the *Tyrone Herald* (Pennsylvania) in the spring of 1863. Holsinger intended the *Herald* to be "in the interests of the new Republican party."¹¹⁶ The paper distinguished Holsinger because of the Brethren's non-political alignment, but his own account does not mention any reaction from the church. According to him the paper was quite successful in its first eighteen months. He

¹¹² Holsinger, *History of the Tunkers*, 7-8.

¹¹³ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 721-33.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 733.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 733-4.

¹¹⁶ Holsinger, *History of the Tunkers*, 472.

believed it could have continued to do well had he been willing to pursue the enterprise, but, he wrote, “politics was distasteful to my religious inclinations; besides, I had a preference to direct a religious paper.”¹¹⁷ He therefore gave up the *Herald* in order to pursue a religious paper.

Holsinger, determined to get back to his religious roots, though he probably never strayed far to begin with, began publishing a paper that reflected his religious “inclinations” and values. He was, and had been, in a place to get a feel for Brethren thought because he had access to the discarded correspondence that came through the *Gospel Visitor* office, where he had been working with Henry Kurtz as an apprentice over a decade earlier. He apparently went through Henry Kurtz’s trash, and found several letters or submissions from readers that Kurtz had not included in the *Visitor*. It is likely that Kurtz simply did not have the space to include every submission, thus discarding the letters not selected. Writing of the unused submissions Holsinger wrote that “they may not have been very dignified,” but they were “interesting and spiritual.”¹¹⁸ Holsinger clearly felt inclined to give voice to those who had been rejected by Kurtz, and had a clear vision about how to accomplish the task. He would do it through his own paper. He wanted all to have a voice. Members may not have been dignified in their writing, but were spiritual and should be heard nonetheless.

The middle district of Pennsylvania granted Holsinger permission to print his own paper for the Brethren some time during the spring of 1864. By the time Holsinger sent out the first official paper on January 1, 1865, four hundred eighty-four persons, likely all

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Brethren, subscribed to the *Christian Family Companion*.¹¹⁹ Holsinger noted that its publication was “one of the first tangible fruits” of the progressive era among Brethren.¹²⁰ He hoped and believed the paper would sell itself without any recommendation of his own, and believed that he could find an audience large enough to support it. The paper “must fall,” he wrote, if it could not recommend itself.¹²¹ He had confidence that the very content of the paper would be all that was needed to attract readers.

Holsinger expounded on his beliefs in the *Companion* early in the first issue. He emphatically declared that “without the shadow of a doubt, that the Church of the Brethren is now the only religious organization in the Western World, which teaches the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as it is revealed in the New Testament,” and that the church’s “sole object is the glory of God and the salvation of the soul.”¹²² He believed in the teachings of the church, and looked forward to a time when no one could say they had not heard of it. He did not believe that the press was the most effective means of spreading truth, missionary work was, but willingly admitted that it was the best medium at the time given a lack of missionary efforts within the church. Spreading what he believed was truth motivated him to create the paper.¹²³

Holsinger hoped and expected the *Companion* would be useful in at least four ways. First, he aimed to provide the brethren a weekly journal that was free “from all vanity, fiction, and falsehood,” while at the same time providing “all the information in

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 470.

¹²¹ Henry Holsinger, “Introductory,” *Christian Family Companion*, May 10, 1864, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

regard to the ‘signs of the times,’ that may be necessary to their spiritual edification or physical welfare.”¹²⁴ This way it would prevent families from having to come in contact with political journals which, he believed, had already done so much to disturb the peace and harmony of the church. Ironically he had tried his hand at one of those political papers. The *Companion*, Holsinger offered as justification, would provide a warning against evil.¹²⁵ Using the image of fighting evil fits in perfectly with other religious rhetoric used to justify one’s particular opinion. It also resonates with political rhetoric espoused by both northern and southern states in America during the previous decades, each one seeing themselves as good while the other was evil.

The *Companion* would also provide a place for discussion of all important subjects. Members could submit their opinions, even if their ideas were not exactly in line with church teachings. Holsinger knew that some members harbored unpopular thoughts, including himself, and needed a place to share them free of consequence so that members could resolve issues, and so that unity would prevail. If grievances could be aired, compromise could be achieved, he thought. Opposers believed that airing discordant views would foster further division. Holsinger clearly wanted cohesion and unity of thought among his brethren, but sought to do so through more democratic means.¹²⁶ Compromise in American politics did not forestall military action prior to 1861, but maybe it could prevent disunity within a church devoted to following the Prince of Peace, even Jesus Christ.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid. Holsinger was likely referring to teachings found in 2 Corinthians 13:11, quoting the Apostle Paul; Philippians 2:2, also Paul; 1 Peter 3:8, quoting the Apostle Peter; or maybe all three KJV.

Third, Holsinger continued, the *Companion* would provide “wholesome instruction and kindly admonition” from himself and others. It would provide learning to “the youthful mind,” and those who are “hungering after truth.”¹²⁷ It would guide individuals in their pursuit of salvation.

Holsinger also claimed he would avoid partiality, but there is no way he could include every submission in the *Companion*. He had to impose value on each one and select submissions with a higher perceived value, making partiality inevitable. This claim, however, may have at least led readers to *believe* he was unbiased in his selections. In at least some cases he was.¹²⁸

Holsinger set a precedent in his first specimen paper, showing the readers what they could expect in future volumes by airing a grievance of his own. In an article titled “Our Annual Meeting,” he proposed “some improvements” to the Brethren decision-making body, “not only in the manner of doing business, but also in fixing the authority of the meeting.”¹²⁹ Earlier he shamelessly declared devotion to God’s salvation as taught in the New Testament, and that the Brethren were the only church to espouse all of those teachings in full truth. His differences, in other words, were merely structural and logistical rather than theological and scriptural, but that is not how more traditional Brethren viewed it.

While Holsinger largely used the *Companion* for discussion about a variety of religious and spiritual topics, he occasionally inserted non-religious matters. On April 18,

¹²⁷ Holsinger, “Introductory.”

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Holsinger, “Our Annual Meeting,” *Christian Family Companion*, May 10, 1864, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>.

1865, Holsinger printed, in a small section near the back of the paper he titled “WORLDLY MATTERS,” an excerpt from his own diary from April 15. He wrote, “Abraham Lincoln died. How the news shocked me! And now, while the slow tolling of the bells is sounding in my ears, how painfully solemn my thoughts.”¹³⁰ Holsinger claimed Lincoln was possibly the greatest man in the world. He provided no reasoning for his thoughts on Lincoln, but he had been an advocate of the Republican Party earlier in his printing career. The Brethren did not and could not fully escape the reality of the world around them no matter how hard some of them tried.

In all, Henry Holsinger believed the membership wanted and desired a platform that allowed for open discussion, and that he had something to contribute to that discussion. It is clear he did not entirely agree with the way church leadership conducted church business, but intended to unify his brethren who already agreed with him, and likely sought to persuade others who had not yet agreed. He claimed to pursue impartiality and unity, but initiated a platform advocating reform in the church that ultimately proved divisive. His experience somewhat resembled the controversy in the United States House and Senate before the Civil War. Many in congress disagreed with the way the political river flowed, and many tried to prevent war through compromise, but as neither party backed down from its platform military conflict became more and more unavoidable.

¹³⁰ Holsinger, “Editors Diary,” *Christian Family Companion*, April 18, 1865, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrenigitalarchives>.

A PAID AND SUPPORTED MINISTRY

One of the largest points of controversy among the Brethren between 1850 and 1880 was whether the congregations should pay or support their ministers financially, which were two very separate issues to them (supporting a minister generally meant that the members of his congregation would provide him with food and possibly funds to enable his travels as opposed to a paid salary by the church). This section will show the way the *Christian Family Companion* and its contributors added to this discussion, and how contributors founded their arguments on Scripture and tradition. Most submissions came from common members from various Brethren congregations, and Holsinger continued with his claim of impartiality because he published contributors who argued different sides.

D.C. Moomaw from Cloverdale, Virginia submitted a letter to the *Companion* to express his opposition to a supported ministry, which he argued was something Brethren had not previously practiced. Holsinger, who championed the idea of a supported ministry, chose to print the letter despite its call to oppose the practice with “power” and “vehemence.”¹³¹ Moomaw called on readers to reflect on the traditions of the early church leaders who had denounced the idea entirely.¹³² Moomaw feared the change would bring evil to the way Brethren ministers spread the gospel. He feared that the wisdom and learning of the world would taint the purity and simplicity of Christ’s gospel, and that

¹³¹ D. C. Moomaw, “A Supported Ministry,” *Christian Family Companion*, Jan 30, 1866, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>.

¹³² *Ibid.*

“the sophistry and logic of a crooked and perverse generation” would be associated with the “truths of revelation.”¹³³

Moomaw further appealed to his readers by including Scripture in his denunciation of a supported ministry. If his spiritual and religious petition to the readers had not been forceful enough, he would turn to something more substantial, something the readers could not refute, specific verses in the Bible. He quoted Christ’s exhortation to two men sent by John, called the Baptist, to inquire of Jesus whether He was the one that should come according to prophecy. Jesus replied, stating they should return and report to John what they had both heard and seen: “the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”¹³⁴ Moomaw included the last line of the passage in order to illustrate an important lesson. If the poor received the gospel by preaching, no preacher, including Jesus himself, should require or expect money in return because the poor have none to give.¹³⁵ Unfortunately, it is impossible to know how readers received Moomaw’s rhetoric because of the absence of diaries and journals, but contributors could draw on nothing more substantial than Christ’s own words to convey their message.

Silas Thomas from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, another contributor who agreed with Moomaw, used similar methods to influence the *Companion*’s readers that there was no place for a supported ministry within their brotherhood. Thomas recounted briefly the story of the Brethren who, shortly after the church’s founding in Schwarzenau, Germany

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Matthew 11:1-5 KJV.

¹³⁵ Moomaw, “A Supported Ministry.”

in 1708, fled to America in order to experience a more secure religious future. After their arrival, their dedicated and faithful ministers went forth proclaiming “the word of truth and salvation to the people, ‘without money and without price.’”¹³⁶ He quoted Isaiah 55:1 in order to convey the ease with which men and women of any financial status could partake of the waters of salvation at no cost. Thomas appealed to tradition, something that was also significant and powerful among the Brethren, and claimed that a paid ministry would go against the practice of their forefathers, who were followers of Christ and his apostles.¹³⁷ If the Brethren chose to pay their ministers, they would be breaking from tradition, and not following Christ.

Thomas solicited the commonly accepted idea and practice among Brethren of avoiding the world to instill the severity of the implications of instigating a paid ministry. One scriptural reference Thomas used comes from Paul, in 2 Corinthians, when the apostle told the people to “come out from among [unbelievers], and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”¹³⁸ The unbelieving world was unclean, and association with it would preclude their salvation.

Thomas perceived an unmistakable difference between the Brethren and the world, which also included “fashionable and popular religion of the day.”¹³⁹ Thomas was afraid that submitting to a paid ministry would blur the line between Brethren and the

¹³⁶ Silas Thomas, “A Paid Ministry,” *Christian Family Companion*, June 5, 1866, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>.

¹³⁷ Thomas, “A Paid Ministry.”

¹³⁸ 2 Corinthians 6:17 KJV.

¹³⁹ Thomas, “A Paid Ministry.”

world, which was unacceptable in most members' eyes. "Everything of this kind," Thomas opined, "should be looked upon with distrust..."¹⁴⁰

In contrast to Moomaw and Thomas, Henry Holsinger, editor of the *Christian Family Companion*, advocated for a formally educated and paid ministry. The fact that Holsinger willingly published these letters points to his desire to give voice to all sides of the question, not to simply promote a single position. Holsinger dedicated himself to promoting unity, and the only way to accomplish that, in his mind, was to allow members to share with one another their difference of opinion, and come to a decided and happy compromise through democratic means. To Old Order Brethren, compromise went against the declared gospel of Christ found in the Bible. Christ did not determine doctrine based on compromise, but dictated it.

John Zug of Schaefferstown, Pennsylvania wrote to the *Companion* calling for some sort of compromise in regards to a supported ministry. He did not necessarily promote a paid ministry as a general rule, but held no qualms with members of a minister's own congregation helping him if he stood in need of their help. Zug's letter consumes an entire page (three columns) of the *Companion*, and includes more than a dozen scriptural references to validate his position. Central to Zug's argument are Christ's words found in Luke 22:36 which reads in part, "but now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip."¹⁴¹ Ministers who had means sufficient for travel and time away from their farms should do so, but if they were in need of purse or scrip, according to Zug, members of his home church should provide them for him to fulfil his

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Luke 22:36 KJV.

ministerial duties. Each minister's own congregation knew well their circumstances, and could therefore determine the minister's needs.¹⁴² Zug also referred to Acts 2: 45 which tells of a group of believers who sold all their possessions and gave to every man as he needed.¹⁴³ If the Brethren did provide support for some ministers, Zug argued, they should not publish it to the world because it might set a dangerous precedent.¹⁴⁴ He promoted congregations providing for those ministers who stood in need in order to preach, but did not feel it was a custom the Brethren should adopt church wide.

J. W. Beer from Shelbyville, Illinois, wrote something similar to Zug, and argued that a paid ministry was different than a supported one. He did not include scriptural reference, but clarified what was meant by each term. Beer opposed emphatically preaching for salary, but was aware that ministers sometimes needed support, much like Zug recognized. "When I say that ministers of the gospel should be supported by the church," Beer submitted, "I mean they should receive their temporal subsistence—their food and raiment, for their services."¹⁴⁵ E. Umbaugh from Pierceton, Indiana responded to Beer in the *Companion* four weeks later, directly refuting Beer's distinction, and declared that supporting a minister was only "a sly way" of advocating a paid ministry.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² John Zug, "On Supporting the Ministry," *Christian Family Companion*, June 19, 1866, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>.

¹⁴³ Acts 2: 45 KJV. The story of these baptized believers actually covers from verse 41 through 47.

¹⁴⁴ Zug, "On Supporting the Ministry."

¹⁴⁵ J. W. Beer, "Ministerial Support," *Christian Family Companion*, July 31, 1866, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>. Interestingly, the day of the month as printed on the front page of this volume is actually "32", not "31."

¹⁴⁶ E. Umbaugh, "Ministerial Support," *Christian Family Companion*, August 28, 1866, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives>. The editor did not include Umbaugh's full name.

Each contributor justified his stance in his own way with scriptural, religious, or traditional references in nearly every instance. Sometimes their arguments relied on a different verse than the ones quoted by other contributors, but sometimes two parties argued about the meaning of the very same verse. E. Umbaugh wrote several pieces about not supporting a ministry in any way, and Holsinger published another such article in the *Companion* in September, 1867. In the article, Umbaugh contended that those who advocated for a supported ministry did so because they wanted to follow the example of other churches whose ministers were in error, and preached for the love of money. “Here then we see that money is really the root of all evil,” Umbaugh argued.¹⁴⁷ In the *Companion* two weeks later, John Wise from Oakland, Pennsylvania, directly refuted Umbaugh’s argument by showing that Umbaugh’s case was flawed because he quoted the verse incorrectly. Umbaugh’s argument, therefore, had no foundation according to Wise. “Our young brother,” Wise proclaimed, “like many others, has taken a wrong view of his subject.”¹⁴⁸ He continued, “the brother says, ‘money is really the root of all evil.’ The [Apostle] says, ‘The *love* of money is the root of all evil.’”¹⁴⁹ Who loved money more, Wise asked, the minister who received and used his money for the spreading of the gospel, or the member who selfishly withheld his money from those ministers, thus stifling the advancement of truth and righteousness?¹⁵⁰ The answer, Wise figured, would be obvious to his readers.

¹⁴⁷ Umbaugh, “A Supported Ministry,” *Christian Family Companion*, September 17, 1867, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrenigitalarchives>. “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” 1 Timothy 6:10 KJV.

¹⁴⁸ John Wise, “A Supported Ministry,” *Christian Family Companion*, October 1, 1867, accessed September 29, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/brethrenigitalarchives>.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

All the above examples show that different interpretations of Scripture—sometimes different views of the same passage—and other religious or traditional rhetoric were central to arguments found in the *Gospel Visitor* and the *Christian Family Companion*. Also, Wise's example shows that some people either knowingly manipulated the exact words and phrases found in the Bible to fit their agenda, or were personally unfamiliar with the text and based their arguments solely on what they remembered (sometimes incorrectly) from previously heard sermons.

Archy Van Dyke, whose story appears at the beginning of the chapter, understood well the problems that arose when each person interpreted the Bible in their own way. Up to 1870, Brethren editors and contributors alike advocated in their papers changes that went against traditional Brethren views. They cited and interpreted the Bible, conjured religious or spiritual images and examples, and called attention to Brethren tradition in order to substantiate their papers and the progressive views found therein.

Up to 1870, no periodical existed that directly refuted the progressive ideas largely found in the *Companion*. That changed when Samuel Kinsey began publishing an ultra-conservative— or Old Order—Brethren periodical in 1870, the *Vindicator*. Kinsey's paper went in the opposite direction, and remained very conservative and traditional compared with those of Kurtz and Holsinger. Kinsey also advanced in his paper his convictions and grounded them in the same manner. He cited the Bible and used other religious rhetoric to persuade his readers of the validity of his arguments.

CHAPTER 3

VINDICATED, 1870-1883

In September 1875, Samuel Kinsey, the first editor of the periodical he aptly named the *Vindicator*, wrote a very brief article directed toward the paper's readers who intended to submit their writings for publication. He wrote that "A brother thinks that brethren, in writing, should mix in the Scriptures pretty freely, so as to give force and weight to their subjects. It is so; it adds much to the strength and force of that which we wish to impress if we can put in a scriptural 'prop' or 'brace' occasionally."¹⁵¹ The Bible played a central role in Kinsey's life, like all other Brethren. He knew that its words, the very words of God as he believed, could and would validate any righteous notion or argument.

Samuel Kinsey's very concise article is telling in at least one significant way. It reveals that contemporaries understood well the power of persuasion when they referenced the Bible to substantiate their beliefs, understanding, convictions, and arguments. It also shows that the argument presented in this work is not merely a vision that comes from the clarity of hindsight. Editors Henry Kurtz, Henry Holsinger, Samuel Kinsey, and all others who contributed their writings to the various Brethren publications knew that they could influence their readers by supplementing their ideas with Scripture because they gave "force and weight to their subjects." The biggest problem with this practice was that not all members used the Bible in the same way. These men used its verses to support their own ideals, even if they each believed they were in the right, but

¹⁵¹ Samuel Kinsey, "Mix it In' – Scripture in Articles," *Vindicator*, September 1875.

this does not necessarily suggest they manipulated the text. It simply means these men had convictions, and were able to support them with the most power sources, the Bible and its teachings, and other religious sentiments.

Marcus Miller, a member of the Old German Baptists, and author of *Roots by the River: The History, Doctrine, and Practice of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church in Miami County, Ohio*, adequately describes the three tumultuous decades before the first split in 1881, and the few years following, as one of “high emotion.”¹⁵² Miller is one of the few Brethren historians who recognizes that the schism in the church in the 1880s came in part because of differing opinions about various social topics, from differing interpretations of the Bible, and sometimes, as has been shown here, a combination of them both.¹⁵³

This chapter builds upon the second chapter by adding new perspectives from two papers that originated around the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the *Vindicator* and the *Progressive Christian*. These two periodicals evinced more forceful and antagonistic rhetoric towards each other and those who opposed their particular views, and represented the polarity within the church. Each was created to push the specific sentiments of its creator, and as much as their words promoted unity, reading between the lines indicates hostility from each party toward the other.

The first section of this chapter analyzes the *Vindicator*, edited by Samuel Kinsey, much like chapter two analyzed the *Gospel Visitor* and the *Christian Family Companion*, by introducing its editor and reasons for publication. It continues to show that Scripture

¹⁵² Miller, *Roots by the River*, 66.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

and other religious and traditional language lay at the very center of the arguments presented in both papers. The next section will follow the same pattern with the *Progressive Christian*, edited by Henry Holsinger.

THE VINDICATOR

When the year 1870 dawned, a new era had begun among the Brethren, specifically relating to their periodical printing. Until 1870, the Old Order Brethren, or the faction who claimed to remain closest to very early Brethren and Christian tradition, did not represent themselves or their position in print relating to the progressive school of thought within the church. The progressive elements within the church had a voice through the *Gospel Visitor*, and the *Christian Family Companion* prior to the *Progressive Christian*.

The Old Orders were quite appalled by the slow but sure move away from tradition as evinced in recent papers, like the push to pay Brethren preachers, and finally determined to fight fire with fire by defending their position through a periodical of their own. They called it *The Vindicator of the Ancient Order, and Self-Denying Principles of the Church, As Taught by the Saviour and Held Forth by the Fathers of Our Fraternity*, or simply *Vindicator* for short. It was a lengthy name, no doubt, but articulated well to the reader its purpose. It came in direct response to the ideas and concepts enumerated in the *Visitor* and *Companion*, and, ironically, broke with their stance that periodicals were divisive. They clearly felt compelled to adopt one progressive aspect in order to shore up all other traditional practices.

1870 saw the first issue of the *Vindicator* from Dayton, Ohio. Samuel Kinsey, editor of the *Vindicator*, began the volume this way: “DEAR BRETHREN: Please allow us to approach you with this little Paper which we thought proper to call *Vindicator of the ancient order, and self-denying principles of the Church, &c.*” Kinsey added that the church had been in a state of drift over several previous years, and felt compelled, much like previously mentioned editors, to publish a paper “for the use and benefit of the church.”¹⁵⁴ His language indicates that, even having consulted “our old experienced fathers,” they were reluctant to publish the paper because they had previously been against a church publication.¹⁵⁵ Kinsey wrote that he was duty-bound to produce the paper, regardless of the fact he felt unworthy and unequal to the task—this sense of duty was felt by previous editors.¹⁵⁶ All previous editors felt they had the antidote to the disease of division within the church, and Kinsey felt he could combat the disease of progressivism. Kinsey and the others at the *Vindicator* had a daunting task to perform, which was to defend the tenets of “PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION.”¹⁵⁷

Kinsey acknowledged that some Brethren may consider yet another paper useless and unnecessary because of those already issued by Brethren, but, he argued, his object in the matter was “to keep us in the ‘wilderness,’ if you can gather the idea....” Here Kinsey referred specifically to the twelfth chapter in the Book of Revelation. This chapter tells of a woman who fled into the wilderness, “where she hath a place prepared of God,” and

¹⁵⁴ Kinsey, “Our Prospectus,” *Vindicator*, March 1870.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

where she could be fed “a thousand two hundred and threescore days.”¹⁵⁸ He stated that if the brethren understood the concept of *wilderness* in that chapter, they would approve of the paper. Kinsey did not explain his thought process, but he likely meant that the paper would provide shelter and food in the religious and spiritual sense, and keep adherents aloof from the evils of the world. The *Vindicator* would act as a fountain of truth for those who thirst after righteousness.

Kinsey summed up well the purpose and object of the paper in just a few simple paragraphs. He wrote that it would fight

against the popular inventions, as well as the modern improvements, continually attempted to be made upon the simple doctrine taught by the Savior. Our object is to labor against all such innovations.

To contend for the order of the brethren as it has been established.

To furnish the many scattered brethren and churches with all necessary information as far as possible, and desired - with regard to church-government.

To labor against pride (that very prevalent and abominable evil) in all its various shapes and forms....¹⁵⁹

He and those who called themselves Old Order Brethren believed they were *the* bastion of light and hope.

Kinsey admonished other like-minded members to always labor in the church, and not forget their families, neighbors and their families, nor their “brethren and sisters by nature [everywhere]. There is much room yet for the enlargement of the borders of our ZION.”¹⁶⁰ Here, Kinsey likely drew on passages from Isaiah chapters 52 through 54 wherein Zion in the last days will “Enlarge the place of thy tent,...” and “lengthen thy

¹⁵⁸ Revelation 12:6 KJV.

¹⁵⁹ Kinsey, “Our Prospectus.”

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

ords, and strengthen thy stakes” that the Gentiles may be inherited, or adopted into the kingdom.¹⁶¹

Kinsey and his paper supported the church and its authority. His justification for his paper was right in line with those of Kurtz and Holsinger, but he failed to incorporate dissenting views like Holsinger. Kinsey also hoped and longed for a day that the church would be free from controversy, but argued if there were disputes they should be settled in the church’s district and annual meetings, not through the uncontrollable media. He further explained that another of the *Vindicator*’s objectives was “to UNITE upon the ancient principles of our body.”¹⁶² Here he drew on the idea of ancient principles, no doubt the ones espoused by Christ during his mortal ministry. Interesting and noteworthy is that the words *primitive* and *ancient* had also been used by the very people Kinsey and others associated with the *Vindicator* labored against. They all seemed to want the same thing, yet could not agree on how to achieve it.

PRIDE AND DRESS

As stated above, Samuel Kinsey and the *Vindicator* hoped to combat pride within the church. Pride, as they claimed, had many faces. One such face was the manner of dress among the Brethren. As fashions changed within their surrounding society, some Brethren thought it acceptable to adopt small changes themselves while others, like the

¹⁶¹ Isaiah 54:2-3 KJV.

¹⁶² Kinsey, “Our Prospectus.”

Old Orders, sought to prevent such vanity. Kinsey called pride a “loathsome and contagious disease,” and believed he had a remedy for it.¹⁶³

He brought to the fore the topic of pride particularly because, as he attended a funeral, he noticed children whose parents had, in his eyes at least, dressed them foolishly. “Why those short dresses?” he asked his readers. Why the lace and other displays of fashion? Little children, he believed, truly personified Christianity, and yet his brethren were teaching them to sin by way of pride.¹⁶⁴ What upset Kinsey the most was that this vanity came from those who professed to have forsaken the world by turning their backs to it, and from those who claimed to be born again. Pride was a sin, and anything that resembled pride ought to be forsaken, he believed.

Pride and its avoidance are critical to Brethren thinking. The word *pride* appears forty-nine times in the King James Version of the Holy Bible.¹⁶⁵ It is inseparably connected with haughtiness, contention, wickedness, foolishness, condemnation, destruction, and evil.¹⁶⁶ There should be little doubt why the Brethren aimed to combat it. Pride belonged to the world and the Brethren did not, or at least should not. “We are aware that pride has many avenues in which it branches out into various forms besides dress,” Kinsey wrote, “but, for the present, we will leave it at this.”¹⁶⁷

Just one year later, in April 1871, Kinsey answered a query from one of his paper’s readers, Joel Wagoner, who hoped the answer to his question would appear in the

¹⁶³ Kinsey, “Pride,” *Vindicator*, March 1870.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ This does not include any alternate versions of the word, like *proud*.

¹⁶⁶ See: Proverbs 13:10, 16:18; Mark 7:22; 1 Timothy 3:6; 1 John 2:16 KJV.

¹⁶⁷ Kinsey, “Pride.”

next paper, about the proper “cut of the coat.”¹⁶⁸ Wagoner wrote that some of his brethren claimed that the way they dressed did not matter. Those who claimed this, he added, said that as long as their hearts were in the right place, nothing else mattered. “Give all the grounds you can from the word of God” in your answer, Wagoner implored Kinsey in the end.¹⁶⁹ These last words further indicate the importance of the Bible in the lives of the Brethren, and their dedication and willingness to follow its teachings. Wagoner did not necessarily want Kinsey’s opinion, he wanted exhortation from the Bible.

Kinsey included his answer to Wagoner in a later issue, but answered in a way that likely did not fully satisfy Wagoner. “We have no scripture describing the shape and cut of the coat for the Christian,” the answer began. “Neither is it necessary to have it. There is enough recorded to show that our clothing should be plain and that we should *hear the church*.”¹⁷⁰ But what records did the author have in mind? If the Bible is silent, how were they to interpret the answer?

The answer to Wagoner’s question, likely written by Kinsey, claimed that those brethren who were meek and self-denying should “adorn themselves in ‘modest apparel,’” likely using a verse from 1 Timothy, which came from the Apostle Paul to Timothy.¹⁷¹ Paul advised women to dress modestly, and to avoid vanity in regards to hair and jewelry.¹⁷² The author of the answer in the *Vindicator* referred again to pride. The meek brother should know that “pride of life” and the “lust of the eye” had no place in

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² 1 Timothy 2:9 KJV.

the church.¹⁷³ Both phrases come from 1 John 2:16, which explain these things are not of God, but of the world.¹⁷⁴ In his same answer directed to Wagoner, Kinsey provided further insight into the existing debates over dress, which centered around unity within the church and among their brethren.

Brethren historian Carl Bowman articulates well these dilemmas that the Brethren faced during the mid-nineteenth century. Among the four major categories he presents is the dilemma of unity. One way the Brethren remained unified was their plain, non-fashionable clothing. The Brethren became increasingly divided over the issue of plain dress and vanity. “Of the many boundaries that were drawn,” Bowman posits, “none was more conspicuous or controversial than Dunker dress.”¹⁷⁵ Bowman adds that while the Brethren had dressed plainly from the beginning, the church and governing body at Annual Meeting did not specify any standards regarding clothing until the second half of the century.¹⁷⁶ There had been no reason to do so until then.

American industrialization in the mid-nineteenth century centered on the textile industry, states historian Daniel Walker Howe.¹⁷⁷ The increase in railroad construction after the Civil War, particularly in the South, facilitated easy access to cheaper land to produce cotton that would compete with inexpensive foreign cotton and increase productivity.¹⁷⁸ Most Americans, if not all, including the Brethren, were affected in some way by this increase in textile industrialization. The Brethren saw it as a threat to their

¹⁷³ Kinsey, “Pride.” The phrases “pride of life,” and “lust of the eye” are found in 1 John 2:16 KJV.

¹⁷⁴ 1 John 2:16 KJV.

¹⁷⁵ Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 114.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 136.

¹⁷⁸ H. W. Brands, *American Colossus: The Triumph of Capitalism, 1865-1900* (New York: Doubleday, 2010), 403.

simple and humble way of life, and believed decisions about the manner of dress threatened church unity.

Kinsey drew on the idea of retaining unity among the Brethren, and as in nearly every point of debate found within and between the Brethren periodicals, validated his views through the use of Scripture. The church must have order, he strongly contended. “Paul could joy in the ‘*order*’ and ‘*steadfastness*’ of the Colossian brethren,” he wrote, and further quoted Paul at length from 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to avoid divisions, and to be “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement.”¹⁷⁹ Kinsey did not stop there, and drew on additional scriptural reference to drive his point home.

Avoiding fashionable clothing kept Brethren unspotted from the world, Kinsey repeatedly argued. Only by remaining unspotted could the outside world see the Brethren as a “‘city on the hill which cannot be hid.’ And it is only then that we let our ‘light so shine before men,’ and do thus manifest to all around us that we are a *distinct* and *separate* people....”¹⁸⁰ Even though the Bible remained silent on an exact cut of clothing, it clearly indicated, according to Kinsey, a plain, simple dress that would set them apart from the world, prevent them from the damnation of pride and vanity, and create unity among an increasingly divided brotherhood.

Finally, on the question of plain dress as described and prescribed in the *Vindicator*, the writers and editor turned to the parable of the Ten Virgins found in

¹⁷⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:10 KJV.

¹⁸⁰ Kinsey, “Pride”; for Kinsey’s reference to “A City on a hill,” see Matthew 5:14 KJV.

Matthew chapter 25.¹⁸¹ To understand Kinsey's argument, one must understand the parable. In Matthew, Jesus explained to his followers the kingdom of heaven by relating a parable of ten virgins who waited for a bridegroom. Half of the virgins in the story were wise and filled their lamps with oil in order to have enough to burn while waiting because they knew not when he would come. The other half were foolish because they took "no oil with them."¹⁸² The ten virgins awoke when the bridegroom came at midnight. The five wise virgins trimmed their lamps and followed him to the marriage, but the five foolish had no oil, for it had all "gone out."¹⁸³ The text relates that while the foolish five were away looking, the door to the the marriage ceremony shut with the wise inside. When they returned, they asked the Lord to open the door. He said to them: "Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."¹⁸⁴ Kinsey knew the parable well, and believed using it would illustrate his ideas.

Kinsey used the story from Matthew to add credence to his convictions. "Is it true of us that our religion is chiefly on the outside?" Kinsey asked. "Pity if it be so. Poor Christian thou; yea, 'foolish virgin' thou who hast no 'oil in thy vessel,'" he chastised.¹⁸⁵ Those whom he called foolish were those who needed to fill their vessels, meaning their hearts and souls, with a religion that went much deeper than a plain costume worn on the

¹⁸¹ The parable consists of the first thirteen verses in Matthew 25 KJV. Kinsey did not include the entire parable, he knew all his readers understood the reference clearly.

¹⁸² Matthew 25:3 KJV.

¹⁸³ Matthew 25:8 KJV.

¹⁸⁴ Matthew 25:12-13 KJV.

¹⁸⁵ Kinsey, "A Suggestion - The Reason For Uniform Plainness in Dress," *Vindicator*, 1871.

outside of the body. Their religion should be founded on principle-based living, not material culture so readily available and easily attainable.

According to Kinsey, to be Christian meant to emulate and honor Christ. Kinsey wrote that “thy heart must be filled with God’s love and spirit; and when the heart is thus filled, it will manifest itself in thy outward appearance and doings. God should be wholly honored, and to this end His love should be predominant in us as to induce us to dedicate the entire man, to Him and His service.”¹⁸⁶ Again, he drew heavily on spiritual themes in order to appeal to his honor-seeking brethren. Kinsey knew well that that the Bible’s words were central to the lives of his fellow Brethren. He knew that the most effective way to reach the hearts and minds of his readers was to cite the Bible, draw on its teachings, and invoke the image of Christ to express his convictions.

A LEARNED AND SUPPORTED MINISTRY

The *Vindicator*’s editors and contributors were very much against the church accepting a formally educated, supported, or paid ministry. It came too close to mimicking popular religion that was moving toward professional clergy, which challenged the lay minister, and was therefore not a true display of a Christ-centered religion or life. The true Christian minister, they believed, should give freely of his time, and give of himself in the cause of Christ. On what did they lay the foundation of such a suggestion? The Bible.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

The mid-nineteenth century saw the rise of a new type of minister. He, as mentioned earlier, was one who could appeal to and retain in his congregation educated and socially prominent people. Sydney Ahlstrom explains that it was a time when “science seemed to undermine the Christian message and when many people doubted the relevance of the church in an industrial-commercial environment.”¹⁸⁷ The average clergyman had to adapt his messages to address changing moral and religious attitudes and scientific discoveries and theories, particularly as presented by Charles Darwin.¹⁸⁸ Educated and oratorically gifted ministers rose in prominence, and the public and their churches were willing to pay for their skills. The Brethren had to confront this change in the clergy, and decide whether they would pay their own ministers.

Nathan Haywood from Eaton, Ohio wrote several pieces for the *Vindicator* in order to warn readers of the evils that were associated with a learned and paid ministry. He denounced the papal clergy and their unholy claim to the “divine right to expound God’s word.”¹⁸⁹ He stated that the clergy unabashedly asserted that to comprehend and expound upon God’s word, one must be learned. This, Haywood posited, was a way to subjugate man, and came “at the expense of the supremacy of the Scriptures....”¹⁹⁰

Relying on the clergy, Haywood believed, prevented the majority of common believers from gaining access to the word of God, which was not in harmony with Christ’s teachings. Conversely, the papal clergy claimed that *not* relying on the clergy made salvation unattainable. If a learned ministry was required to expound upon

¹⁸⁷ Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, 738.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 763-4.

¹⁸⁹ Nathan Haywood, “The Evils of a Learned and Paid Ministry,” *Vindicator*, July 1880.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Scripture, then surely the text was not sufficient by itself, nor was it effectual. With vitriolic language against the “Holy Mother Church,” Haywood posited that the clergy was really a disguise created to deceive the people.¹⁹¹

Haywood further attacked the Catholic Church. He denounced the clergy for taking advantage of the unlearned and ignorant masses who thought that in exchange for their gold, silver, and riches, they would receive the “bread of life.”¹⁹² Christ, Haywood counter-argued, was solely responsible for saving men’s souls, not the clergy.

Silas Thomas from Philadelphia strongly opposed a paid clergy, and wrote to the *Vindicator* in July, 1880 to express his sentiments. Thomas presented to his readers seven principles of the ministry before it became corrupted by hirelings and the gratuitous ministry of the papal clergy.¹⁹³ The first principle he presented was “An elective, gratuitous ministry.”¹⁹⁴ He then showed how the same seven principles changed. The first principle of the ministry *after* the change was “A college graduate, hireling clergy.”¹⁹⁵ It is clear from these two lists that, not only did the more traditional Brethren think very little of the Catholic Church, but adamantly opposed a learned and paid ministry of any kind, unlike many Protestant groups.

Following the two conflicting lists, Thomas expounded on each of the seven items in order to qualify his argument, and used the Bible to do so. He proclaimed that the first principle of the ministry, meaning an elective and unpaid ministry, found a defence in

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Silas Thomas, “A Passage in History,” *Vindicator*, August 1880.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

part of Matthew 10:8, which reads: “freely ye have received, freely give.”¹⁹⁶ This verse contains the words of Jesus to his twelve Apostles whom he called, and “gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”¹⁹⁷ Christ commanded them to go among the Gentiles, who were the “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and preach to them that “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”¹⁹⁸ Like so many previously mentioned authors, Thomas called on the very words of Christ to his most trusted twelve disciples in order to support his own argument, even if he loosely interpreted the verse to fit his purpose. Little else invoked enough power, or pierced the readers’ hearts as easily.

In an 1881 piece for the *Vindicator*, Nathan Haywood presented a complicated argument against a learned ministry. He recounted the various language translations of the Bible through the ages, among them Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Dutch, German, and English, and asked his readers whether the English version of the Bible was correct. He answered his own question this way: “We have every reason for believing that they are.”¹⁹⁹ We believe such is the case, he continued, because “we know” that they were translated by some of the most educated men in England, “and at a time when sectarian influence was but little felt.”²⁰⁰ He also argued that the Bible had withstood the test of time, meaning three hundred years of contention and “violent strifes” among various sects, yet “none have invalidated or called in question the general correctness of the

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.; see also Matthew 10:8 KJV.

¹⁹⁷ Matthew 10:1 KJV.

¹⁹⁸ Matthew 10:5-7 KJV.

¹⁹⁹ Haywood, “The Evils of a Learned and Paid Ministry.”

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

present version.”²⁰¹ “After all this immense labor and diligent research by these truly learned men,” he continued, “the conclusion they arrived at is this: That a more correct translation can not be expected or made, that is our present English version of the Holy Scriptures.”²⁰² The last statement belied his intentions.

Haywood’s appeal to the authority of one English translation created an awkward tension in his argument. In the article, following his recitation of educated men translating the Bible, he *denounced* a learned ministry. He acknowledged that without these educated men with their lingual understanding, they would not have the sacred text, and yet he claimed that in no way did that suggest a learned ministry was justified. “For the Scriptures being once *correctly* translated, needs it no more forever!” he argued.²⁰³

Haywood further claimed the Bible provided no basis for the argument of a learned ministry, and that believing such destroyed the “purity of the gospel,” and opposed “the plain letter of revelation.”²⁰⁴ He finally argued that a learned ministry would cause people to neglect the sacred text “as a rule of faith and practice.”²⁰⁵ In other words, a learned ministry would preclude the Holy Spirit from instructing, or providing proper interpretation as pointed out by the example of Archy Van Dyke at the beginning of the second chapter. While Haywood did not use exact verses to validate his position, he claimed the Bible did not validate a learned ministry. Without scriptural backing the argument for a learned ministry held no weight with Haywood.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

Ironically, the *Vindicator* was an Old Order voice that adopted an atypical approach—meaning the use of print media—in order to preserve what they believed was the tradition of the early Schwarzenau Brethren. This means they fought fire with fire, or used a progressivism to fight progressivism. To them, the end justified the means. The *Vindicator*'s editors and contributors appealed to readers' minds by directly quoting Scripture, and used other spiritual and traditional references, like devotion and faith, and appealed to the practice of early Brethren. While the progressive forces they fought against within their own church came through in previous periodicals, none was as forceful and deliberate in its progressivism than what came after the *Vindicator*, Holsinger's *Progressive Christian*.

THE PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN

In 1879, Holsinger started printing his own paper again, and called it the *Progressive Christian*. While he occasionally informed his readers of what was happening in the world around them, Holsinger centered the vast majority of his paper on religious and church topics. He avoided speculation on political Reconstruction or the election of Rutherford B. Hayes, who became the nineteenth American president. Holsinger did not mention at all a former slave named Benjamin "Pap" Singleton who led six thousand ex-slaves, called Exodusters, on a significant pilgrimage from the banks of the Mississippi River to Kansas.²⁰⁶ Holsinger had ventured into politics, and found it was

²⁰⁶ Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 161.

not to his liking. He stayed close to his religious roots in the pages of the *Progressive Christian*.

The *Progressive Christian* was the most forward-looking of all Brethren papers. It provided a platform for Brethren members who wanted to adapt in some ways to the changes in surrounding society and religious culture, including adopting the practice of paying Brethren preachers. Holsinger, like every previous Brethren editor before him, found endorsement for his progressive ideas in the Holy Bible.

Holsinger had given up the *Christian Family Companion* in 1873, following continual warfare between himself and the leading elders of the church because of his seemingly tactless approach to reform some of the church's practices. "The burden appeared to have become too heavy to bear up the load," he wrote in his own account of Brethren history.²⁰⁷ He related that at the 1873 Annual Meeting, at least two full days "were devoted to the opposition of measures and methods inaugurated and advocated by myself."²⁰⁸ These measures to expel Holsinger did not get far, and "the matter was amicably disposed of, and I was sent out a free man."²⁰⁹ Nevertheless he determined to hand over the reigns of the *Companion* to Elder James Quinter.

Holsinger lamented the decision to turn over the paper. The censuring he endured at that Annual Meeting and the loss of the paper left an impression on his mind and heart thereafter. The problem, Holsinger thought, was that "the church was now practically

²⁰⁷ Holsinger, *History of the Tunkers*, 478.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 479; Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 304-5. Holsinger met with heavy opposition again in 1879 following during the first year of the *Progressive Christian*. The Annual Meeting declared Holsinger had ridiculed "some of the peculiar practices of the church, and admitting into the paper inflammatory and schismatic articles[,] some even from expelled member."

without a free rostrum or a progressive organ.”²¹⁰ Clearly this bothered him. He had committed himself to the cause of helping the church progress as to remain relevant in an ever-changing industrial and scientific society, and now without a way to advocate reform the future seemed bleak. How long could he remain quiet, and not print his progressive and often harshly critical views?

Holsinger’s patience lasted a full five years before he could no longer bear that there was no “progressive organ” in the church. In the fall of 1878, he and Elder Joseph W. Beer began publishing the *Progressive Christian* from Berlin, Pennsylvania. After the first six months both men were uncertain of the paper’s future for at least two reasons. First, six Brethren papers were already in circulation among the Brethren (three of which have been discussed here). Second, the Annual Meeting delegates of 1879 denounced the *Progressive Christian* for including “slanderous articles against the general order of the brethren,” particularly relating to the manner of dress among the Brethren.²¹¹ The delegates also argued that Holsinger and his paper sowed discord.²¹² The paper seemed doomed to fail due to overwhelming opposition from Annual Meeting and more conservative members, particularly the Old Orders.

Holsinger blamed the tumultuous state of affairs on the church’s preachers. They had neglected the “weightier matters of the law of God,” he claimed.²¹³ He adamantly

²¹⁰ Ibid., 479-80.

²¹¹ Ibid., 484.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid., 486.

contested that the preachers did not “advocate with sufficient force and frequency the peculiar doctrines of the Bible.”²¹⁴ He continued:

I also opposed all sinful extremes in dress and assumed that there is a happy medium, which was the position occupied by the progressive portion of the church, and that the principles of our holy religion require meekness, cleanliness, plainness, and modesty, and that any garment which comes with these restrictions is sustained by the gospel, and is acceptable to God, and may not be rejected. The ancient customs of the church should be respected, but ought not to be compared to the teachings of God’s Word.²¹⁵

Holsinger, like Kinsey, advocated plainness, but argued against the extreme conservative dress. It merely needed to be clean and modest to have God’s approval. He called on ancient customs instead of quoting Scripture because Brethren tradition often appealed to conservative members just as much. Despite the opposition he faced, Holsinger held firm that what he advocated was not as extreme as his detractors claimed. His paper, while progressive, called for a sort of common sense, or a mind willing to think outside the box for just long enough to realize he was not calling for anything unnatural. In fact, progressivism was very much natural to Holsinger.

The front page of the very first issue, W. J. H. Bauman from Nora Springs, Iowa submitted a short but persuasive article titled, “Man’s Progressive Nature.” No doubt the publishers included it in order to lay a firm foundation for everything that would follow in succeeding issues. He defined what he meant when using the word *progression*. It means to advance, he wrote. Progression is a “fixed principle in the human mind,” meaning it cannot be changed or removed.²¹⁶ The principle is indispensable to

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ W. J. H. Bauman, “Man’s Progressive Nature,” *Progressive Christian*, January 3, 1879.

knowledge, he added. “To learn means to progress. Christians by virtue of their profession are learners in the school of Christ; hence to profess [Christianity] implies to favor progression.”²¹⁷ Bauman used simple, powerful rhetoric to show that those who are not progressive cannot possibly be Christian as they claimed to be.

Bauman pressed further the point of man’s progressive nature, and really tried to make a solid argument lest the entire theory of progression, and therefore the paper, collapse. He turned to language that would most strongly convince his readers of the virtue of his claim that progress was natural. “Paul says: ‘I press (progress) toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’ John writes to the ‘little children,’ to the ‘young men,’ and to [‘fathers’] in Christ, which implies progression.”²¹⁸ Bauman quoted Philippians 3:14, and likely assumed the reader knew the preceding verses wherein Paul exhorted the Philippians to look forward to righteousness, perfection, and resurrection, not backward. If Paul, the greatest of teachers aside from Christ, advocated progression, and taught his followers to look forward rather than backward, then true followers of Christ and his apostles must do the same in order to gain “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”²¹⁹ Bauman, however, was not the only one who felt the need to firmly proclaim the validity and efficacy of progressive values.

James A. Ridenour from Clifton Mills, West Virginia also provided an article for the very first issue of the *Progressive Christian*. He claimed that without the principle of progression “nothing can be accomplished. Progression signifies advancement; pressing

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Bauman, “Man’s Progressive Nature.”

²¹⁹ Philippians 3:14 KJV.

forward; an unwillingness to rest satisfied with present attainments, and a zealous effort to attain higher, holier and safer ground.”²²⁰ Ridenour not only backed up what Bauman suggested, he elaborated and expanded upon similar themes.

Ridenour used Scripture more thoroughly than Bauman to prove his point. He professed that every Christian should seek more zeal, love, humility, self-denial, piety, and “more of the Divine nature.”²²¹ Ridenour drew heavily from Paul’s words to the Romans and Corinthians to also show that conversion to the gospel and salvation were progressive by nature. The gospel, he shared, is a seed planted in the heart of good and honest seekers of truth. When the seed quickens it renews the heart and renovates the person. As that person follows the word of God, or the Bible, the seed in their heart is “watered by the dews of divine grace,” until they are born again to become “‘new creatures in Christ,’ having received the ‘renewing of the Holy Ghost.’” These followers, however, “are only [‘]babes in Christ,’ desiring to be fed upon the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby; and that thus growing, or *progressing*, they finally become strong men and women in the Lord Jesus Christ.”²²² The very nature of man and Christ’s gospel were progressive.

Ridenour fleshed out his argument further. What he called minor matters of speculation and mere opinion were what the sisters’ head-covering should consist of; how men should cut and comb their hair and wear their beard; and how they should cut their coats, vests, and pants. “When the attempt is made to enforce such matters as these, for

²²⁰ James A. Ridenour, “Progression,” *Progressive Christian*, Friday, January 3, 1879, vol. 1 no. 1.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*

which there is not a shadow of Gospel authority, we may generally expect trouble and retrogression instead of peace and progression.”²²³ He was absolutely correct. The arguments among the Brethren that he presented and more, all of which were either based in scriptural, religious, or traditional teachings, caused friction and disunity among the Brethren when in reality they all hoped for cohesion and unity. Disunity was retrogression to Ridenour.

Brother Howard Miller from Elk Lick, Pennsylvania offered his opinion in the *Progressive Christian* about paying Brethren preachers in the February 7, 1879 issue, and used scripture to validate his words. He prefaced his remarks that related to ministerial support, and acknowledged that the Brethren, as a rule, did not pay its preachers. He wrote that the “church has no well organized system of supporting her workers, and upon the defects of the system we propose writing.”²²⁴ He believed that both pros and cons about such a system existed, but felt it necessary to expound upon the arguments relating to a paid ministry for those readers who had not been well acquainted with them.²²⁵

Miller offered that he saw “no danger” with the church paying a salary to its preachers, and roundly proclaimed his advocacy for it by way of the Bible.²²⁶ He drew from Luke chapter 10 wherein Jesus called and appointed seventy of his followers to go and preach two by two. The first sixteen verses of the chapter contain Jesus’s instructions and exhortations to the seventy. Jesus told them to speak and leave peace in the houses

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Howard Miller, “Paying the Preacher,” *Progressive Christian*, February 7, 1879.

they visited, and “if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it.”²²⁷ If they remained in the same house, Jesus continued, they should eat and drink what the host offered, “for the labourer is worthy of his hire.”²²⁸ “It is wrong,” Miller adamantly decreed, “openly, meanly wrong, all around, to not pay *any* man for work done. ‘The laborer is worthy of his hire.’”²²⁹ He did not, however, address the fact that Jesus’s very same instructions to the seventy contain the direction to “Carry neither purse, nor scrip,” which the adversaries of a paid ministry frequently used to argue against the practice.²³⁰

In the very same issue of the *Progressive Christian* appeared another article about a supported ministry. This shows that, like Samuel Kinsey’s article in the *Vindicator* mentioned above, contemporaries themselves knew that their brethren often used Scripture to validate their arguments. They knew the power biblical passages had over the minds of the readers, and used verses unsparingly in their articles to add weight and substance. Though the article does not credit an author, it may have come from either Henry Holsinger, or J. W. Beer, who co-edited the paper. The author responded with some sarcasm to his “dear old brother Silas Thomas,” who persisted in “pelting away at the Educated and Hireling Ministry, through the ‘Vindicator.’”²³¹ The author quoted Thomas who had lamented that the only voice of reason, meaning one that upheld traditional opposition to an educated and paid ministry, was the *Vindicator*. “There is reason for this change of sentiment and conduct among us, dear brother,” the writer

²²⁷ Luke 10:5-6 KJV.

²²⁸ Luke 10:7 KJV.

²²⁹ Miller, “Paying the Preacher.”

²³⁰ Luke 10:4 KJV..

²³¹ *Unknown author*, “Supported Ministry,” *Progressive Christian*, February 7, 1879.

offered. The brethren had improved and learned better, he argued. He continued scathingly yet pointedly:

Thomas can establish his gratuitous unprepared ministry, by quoting isolated and irrelevant passages of scripture.... We thank God that time is bringing us farther away from all such errors, and that our brethren are betaking themselves to PREACHING THE WORD and endeavoring to convert sinners instead of combatting the opinions of the other men, and indulging in a senseless harangue upon subjects which they do not understand. The 'Vindicator' and his venerable correspondent might take a profitable hint from these remarks.²³²

Few passages in the previously-analyzed papers drive home the point as well as this one. These editors of and contributors to the papers on both sides of any and all arguments knew well the power of Scripture, and used it to further their cause, or to undermine the cause of the other.

The ideas presented in both the *Vindicator* and the *Progressive Christian* increased the tensions among the Brethren in the 1870s. The publishers of both papers understood well the power of persuasion when they used the Bible to certify their respective positions. While the arguments presented in each paper caused friction, each argument was founded firmly on scriptural, religious, and traditional grounds. One notable difference between the two is that Holsinger often published views contrary to his own, while Kinsey did not.

When all was said and done, unity had not been achieved through airing grievances or through attacking one another. In 1881 the Old Orders split from the main body because they felt the church was moving in a direction that was anything but traditional. They would not tolerate a number of practices, including Sunday Schools, a

²³² Ibid.

paid ministry, and adhered to a strict uniformity of plain dress for men and women.²³³

Roughly two years later in 1883, the progressive branch under Holsinger's leadership also broke from the main body because it was not progressive enough. The large majority—roughly 85 per cent—joined neither group because each was too extreme in their own way, though many members in this group leaned slightly one way or the other.

²³⁴ The schism affected all Brethren in some way. They each had to determine for themselves which path to take, if any, or choose to remain with the majority of members.

²³³ Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine*, 298-9.

²³⁴ Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 126-31.

CONCLUSION

The early Schwarzenau Brethren had convinced themselves, and felt in their hearts, that the practice of infant baptism found no justification in scriptural teachings. They believed the Bible was intended to be read, understood, and its teachings practiced by men and women who wanted to live a life as described by Jesus and his apostles. Having written a letter to the trusted saint Ernst Christoph Hochmann von Hochenau, their hopes were confirmed. Von Hochenau believed infant baptism found no validation in the Bible. The eight who then daringly acted and rebaptized each other as Christ-believing adults did so because their source of authority, their compass and guide, the Holy Bible, informed them that their baptism as children had no foundation.

Brethren printers in the mid-nineteenth century took to printing in order to spread the Word of God that the early Brethren saints had passed down through many generations, the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified, and share with the world the beliefs and practices of the Brethren church and people.²³⁵ The Brethren community was a city on a hill that could not be hid, they believed, and they endeavored to shout it to the world from the rooftops, so to speak, but more literally through their periodicals.

In the early years of the period presented here, ultra-conservative Brethren, or Old Orders, viewed the very existence of periodicals as too worldly, and believed they did not belong in a church that founded much of their practice in avoiding the world, a principle that found traction in the Bible. As additional Brethren papers appeared, the amount of schismatic material increased apace. These progressive and schismatic ideas that related

²³⁵ The use of the phrase “Christ and Him crucified” comes from Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 2:2 KJV.

to the way the Brethren should or should not interact with the world, whether to adopt societal and cultural practices common in America, the paying of preachers, and the manner of dress among members, created factions within the church. But what gave any of these arguments any credence, and fundamentally what caused the eventual break, was the publishers' use of language from the Bible and other religious and traditional rhetoric.

Archy Van Dyke, cited in the beginning of chapter two, saw the arguments and the discord for what they were. He recognized that the fighting among his brethren was caused at least by differing interpretations of the Bible, the very thing that should have brought them together, but the evidence indicates that there were more contributing factors. In an effort to unite the Brethren, all publishers highlighted here sowed the seeds of dissent by airing their grievances through print media, and the results were far from what they all originally intended. Disunity resulted from the quest for unity.

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