

SCHWENKFELDERS

STATISTICS

Summary for the United States, with urban-rural classification.—A general summary of the statistics for the Schwenkfelders for the year 1926 is presented in Table 1, which shows also the distribution of these figures between urban and rural territory. All of the organizations reported in 1926, as in the earlier censuses, were in the State of Pennsylvania.

The membership of the Schwenkfelder Church comprises those persons who have subscribed to its doctrines and have been enrolled in the local churches.

TABLE 1.—SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, 1926: SCHWENKFELDERS

ITEM	Total	In urban territory ¹	In rural territory ¹	PER CENT OF TOTAL ²	
				Urban	Rural
Churches (local organizations)	6	3	3		
Members	1,596	825	771	51.7	48.3
Average per church.....	266	275	257		
Membership by sex:					
Male.....	677	324	353	47.9	52.1
Female.....	919	501	418	54.5	45.5
Males per 100 females.....	73.7	64.7	84.4		
Membership by age:					
Under 13 years.....					
13 years and over.....	964	672	292	69.7	30.3
Age not reported.....	632	153	479	24.2	75.8
Church edifices:					
Number.....	6	3	3		
Value—Churches reporting.....	6	3	3		
Amount reported.....	\$183,000	\$85,000	\$98,000	46.4	53.6
Average per church.....	\$30,500	\$28,333	\$32,667		
Parsonages:					
Value—Churches reporting.....	2	2			
Amount reported.....	\$18,500	\$18,500		100.0	
Debt—Churches reporting.....	1	1			
Amount reported.....	\$5,700	\$5,700		100.0	
Churches reporting "no debt" on parsonages.....	1	1			
Expenditures during year:					
Churches reporting.....	6	3	3		
Amount reported.....	\$48,311	\$19,644	\$28,667	40.7	59.3
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$28,709	\$17,301	\$11,408	60.3	39.7
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$19,602	\$2,343	\$17,259	12.0	88.0
Average expenditure per church.....	\$8,052	\$6,548	\$9,556		
Sunday schools:					
Churches reporting.....	6	3	3		
Officers and teachers.....	151	95	56	62.9	37.1
Scholars.....	2,042	1,291	751	63.2	36.8

¹ Urban territory includes all cities and other incorporated places which had 2,500 inhabitants or more in 1920, the date of the last Federal census; rural territory comprises the remainder of the country.

² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

The data given for 1926 represent 6 active Schwenkfelder churches, with 1,596 members. The classification of membership by sex was reported by all of the 6 churches and the classification by age was reported by 3 churches, none of which reported any members under 13 years of age. None of the local organizations, in 1926, reported debt on church edifices.

Comparative data, 1890-1926.—Table 2 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this denomination for the censuses of 1926, 1916, 1906, and 1890.

TABLE 2.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1890 TO 1926: SCHWENKFELDERS

ITEM	1926	1916	1906	1890
Churches (local organizations)	6	6	8	4
Increase ¹ over preceding census:				
Number.....		-2	4	
Per cent ²				
Members	1,596	1,127	725	306
Increase ¹ over preceding census:				
Number.....	469	402	419	
Per cent.....	41.6	55.4	136.9	
Average membership per church.....	266	188	91	77
Church edifices:				
Number.....	6	6	8	6
Value—Churches reporting.....	6	6	8	
Amount reported.....	\$183,000	\$76,000	\$38,700	\$12,200
Average per church.....	\$30,500	\$12,667	\$4,838	
Parsonages:				
Value—Churches reporting.....	2			
Amount reported.....	\$18,500			
Debt—Churches reporting.....	1			
Amount reported.....	\$5,700			
Expenditures during year:				
Churches reporting.....	6	6		
Amount reported.....	\$48,311	\$6,552		
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$28,709	\$5,081		
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$19,602	\$1,471		
Average expenditure per church.....	\$8,052	\$1,092		
Sunday schools:				
Churches reporting.....	6	6	5	
Officers and teachers.....	151	131	101	
Scholars.....	2,042	1,511	991	

¹ A minus sign (-) denotes decrease.

² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION¹

DENOMINATIONAL HISTORY

Among the early enthusiastic advocates of the Reformation was Kaspar von Schwenkfeld, a councilor at the court of the Duke of Liegnitz in Silesia. At the time of Luther's manifesto he was a young man, 25 years of age, and he threw himself into the new movement with energy. Although never ordained as a clergyman, he took a prominent part in religious work, and it was mainly through his efforts that the Reformation gained a stronghold in Silesia. He was, however, independent in his thinking and developed certain lines of belief which were not acceptable to other reformers.

¹ This statement, which is substantially the same as that published in Part II of the Report on Religious Bodies, 1916, has been revised by Mr. S. K. Brecht, secretary, General Conference of the Schwenkfelder Church, and approved by him in its present form.

Strongly opposed to the formation of a church, he did no more than gather congregations, and was compelled to flee from one place to another to escape persecution, until he died in Ulm in 1561. After his death, under the conditions of the times, any ecclesiastical organization of his followers was impracticable, although meetings, and occasional conferences, were held in Silesia, Switzerland, and Italy.

Early in the eighteenth century the question arose of emigration to America, and in September, 1734, about 200 persons landed at Philadelphia. Allegiance to the civil authorities having been pledged on September 23, they devoted the next day to thanksgiving for their deliverance from oppression, and they have continued to celebrate it as a memorial day ever since. Unable to secure land, as they desired, for a distinct community, they obtained homes in Montgomery, Bucks, Berks, and Lehigh Counties, Pa., where the greater number of their descendants are now to be found. The character of their early life in this country is indicated by their literary and doctrinal activities, the adoption of a school system in 1764, and the establishment of a charity fund in 1774, through which they have since cared for the unfortunate members of the community.

Toward the close of the Revolutionary War it became evident that a closer church organization was necessary, and one was formed and a constitution adopted in 1782. In common with the Quakers, Mennonites, and other kindred bodies, they gave their testimony against war, secret societies, and the taking of oaths. More recently a responsiveness to modern influences has changed their former attitude on these matters; all rules and regulations against secret societies have been dropped; the participation in war has been left to the individual conscience; and, in the war with Germany, not only was no exemption asked on the ground of religious belief, but a considerable number of the young men entered the national service.

The establishment of the Perkiomen School has had a marked effect in increasing the number of college graduates in the churches and the general interest in higher education. As a result, they have gained in strength and in numbers.

DOCTRINE

The church holds that theology should be constructed from the Bible alone, but affirms that the Scriptures are dead without the indwelling Word. Christ's divinity, it is held, was progressive, His human nature partaking more and more of the divine nature without losing its identity. They believe that an absolute change through faith and regeneration, and subsequent spiritual growth, are primary essentials to salvation, but that justification by faith should not obscure the positive righteousness imparted by Christ, imitation of whom is the fundamental feature of the Christian life. The Lord's Supper, symbolic of both His humanity and His divinity, is regarded as a means of spiritual nourishment without any change in the elements, such as is implied in consubstantiation or transubstantiation. They look upon infant baptism as not apostolic and the mode of baptism as of no consequence.

The Christian Church is held to be a unity, whose discipline should be rigorous, and whose members should be those who give experimental evidence of regeneration, and who pass a satisfactory examination in the doctrines and customs of the church. The activity of the laity is considered to fulfill the doctrine of the Christian priesthood. The right of the State to force the conscience of the citizen is denied.

ORGANIZATION

The only officers are ministers, deacons, and trustees, who are elected and ordained by the local churches, the ministers for an unlimited period, the deacons for a term of three years, or until their successors are chosen, and the trustees annually. The public worship is simple and flexible as to time and manner.

Until the close of the nineteenth century ministers served without compensation, but since then most of them have received financial support, and at present the younger clergy are all college-bred men, graduates of the best institutions in the country. There has been, also, a notable change in the type of church edifice, the plain, small buildings in use in earlier days having been replaced frequently by large and well-equipped churches, with Sunday school rooms and rooms for social purposes.

The members of the local churches meet in a district conference at least once a year. The district conferences are members of the General Conference, in which all church members have equal rights and privileges without distinction of sex. The General Conference has original and appellate jurisdiction in all matters relating to the Schwenkfelder Church. It elects the members of the mission board, the trustees of Perkiomen School, and the members of the board of publication.

WORK

During the year 1926 about \$4,000 was contributed toward the support of mission work, carried on through the boards of other churches, in China, India, and the Philippines. The church contributes largely to the support of two of its own members who labor in China under the jurisdiction of the American Board of Foreign Missions. Special emphasis is placed upon Sunday schools, which have been maintained since the migration in 1734, and upon catechetical instruction of the young in the doctrines of the church. It maintains a fund to help the poor and suffering and has a board of publications and a board of missions. The Perkiomen School for Boys, at Pennsburg, Pa., has 200 students, property valued at more than \$200,000, and an endowment of approximately \$100,000. The amount contributed toward the support of educational work in 1926 was approximately \$25,000. There are 11 Christian Endeavor societies, with 400 members.

Since 1907 the Schwenkfelder Church, in conjunction with Hartford Theological Seminary, has published 9 volumes of the Corpus Schwenkfeldianorum, a critical edition of the works of Kaspar von Schwenkfeld, which is to be contained in 17 volumes of more than 1,000 pages each. This enterprise was begun in 1884; more than \$40,000 was spent in collecting and editing the material before the first volume appeared, and since that time more than \$100 000 has been spent in editorial investigation and publication expenses.