

GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHERN (DUNKERS)

GENERAL STATEMENT

The general statement of the early history of the Brethren, Dunkers, or German Baptist Brethren, is presented very largely in the section for the Church of the Brethren (Conservative Dunkers), the oldest and largest of these bodies. In view of the fact that they have been popularly known, not as "German Baptist Brethren," but as "Dunkers," or "Dunkards," that name has been preserved.

The denominations grouped under the name German Baptist Brethren (Dunkers) in 1926, in 1916, and in 1906, are listed in the table below, with the principal statistics as reported for the three periods. The denomination reported in 1916 as German Seventh Day Baptists is now known as Seventh Day Baptist (German, 1728), and the denomination then reported as Old Order German Baptist Brethren is now shown under its correct name, Old German Baptist Brethren; one body listed in 1916 was not reported at the census of 1906.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR THE GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHERN (DUNKERS), 1926, 1916, AND 1906

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
1926								
Total for the group	1,279	158,248	1,206	\$11,110,013	1,182	\$2,293,622	1,067	133,483
Church of the Brethren (Conservative Dunkers).....	1,030	128,392	968	8,630,499	951	1,744,755	895	109,891
Old German Baptist Brethren.....	62	3,036	59	161,450	53	18,781	-----	-----
The Brethren Church (Progressive Dunkers).....	174	26,026	166	2,274,064	166	523,681	160	22,917
Seventh Day Baptists (German, 1728).....	4	144	4	18,000	3	2,400	3	144
Church of God (New Dunkers).....	9	650	9	26,000	9	4,005	9	531
1916								
Total for the group	1,283	133,626	1,188	5,055,835	1,154	924,630	1,097	136,365
Church of the Brethren (Conservative Dunkers).....	997	105,102	928	3,990,898	911	705,725	899	111,686
Old Order German Baptist Brethren.....	67	3,399	60	107,212	43	7,120	-----	-----
The Brethren Church (Progressive Dunkers).....	201	24,060	184	896,725	185	204,562	183	23,728
German Seventh Day Baptists.....	5	136	3	33,000	4	1,980	3	152
Church of God (New Dunkers).....	13	929	13	28,000	11	5,243	12	799
1906								
Total for the group	1,090	97,144	974	2,802,532	-----	-----	866	78,575
German Baptist Brethren Church, Conservative.....	815	76,547	741	2,198,957	-----	-----	708	66,595
Old Order German Baptist Brethren.....	68	3,388	57	89,800	-----	-----	-----	-----
The Brethren Church (Progressive Dunkers).....	202	17,042	172	472,975	-----	-----	156	11,850
German Seventh Day Baptists.....	5	167	4	40,800	-----	-----	2	130

OLD GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHREN

STATISTICS

Summary for the United States, with urban-rural classification.—A general summary of the statistics for the Old German Baptist Brethren for the year 1926 is presented in Table 1, which shows also the distribution of these figures between urban and rural territory.

The membership of the Old German Baptist Brethren churches comprises baptized believers who have been enrolled as members upon personal profession of faith. Baptism is by trine immersion.

TABLE 1.—SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, 1926: OLD GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHREN

ITEM	Total	In urban territory ¹	In rural territory ¹	PER CENT OF TOTAL ²	
				Urban	Rural
Churches (local organizations).....	62	6	56		
Members.....	3,036	413	2,623	13.6	86.4
Average per church.....	49	69	47		
Membership by sex:					
Male.....	1,230	174	1,056	14.1	85.9
Female.....	1,806	239	1,567	13.2	86.8
Males per 100 females.....	68.1	72.8	67.4		
Membership by age:					
Under 13 years.....					
13 years and over.....	3,036	413	2,623	13.6	86.4
Church edifices:					
Number.....	66	6	60		
Value—Churches reporting.....	59	6	53		
Amount reported.....	\$161,450	\$29,600	\$131,850	18.3	81.7
Average per church.....	\$2,736	\$4,933	\$2,488		
Expenditures during year:					
Churches reporting.....	53	5	48		
Amount reported.....	\$18,781	\$8,552	\$10,229	45.5	54.5
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$13,533	\$8,046	\$5,487	59.5	40.5
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$5,084	\$506	\$4,578	10.0	90.0
Not classified.....	\$164		\$164		100.0
Average expenditure per church.....	\$354	\$1,710	\$213		

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 presented herewith for the year 1926 represent 62 active churches of the Old German Baptist Brethren, with 3,036 members. The classification of membership by sex and by age was reported by all of the 62 churches, none of which reported members under 13 years of age.

None of the local organizations reported a debt on church edifices. No parsonages and no Sunday schools were reported in this denomination.

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: OLD GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHREN

ITEM	1926	1916	1906	1890
Churches (local organizations)	62	67	68	135
Increase ¹ over preceding census:				
Number.....	-5	-1	-67	-----
Per cent ²	-----	-----	-49.6	-----
Members	3,036	3,399	3,388	4,411
Increase ¹ over preceding census:				
Number.....	-363	11	-1,023	-----
Per cent.....	-10.7	0.3	-23.2	-----
Average membership per church.....	49	51	50	33
Church edifices:				
Number.....	66	73	66	63
Value—Churches reporting.....	59	60	57	-----
Amount reported.....	\$161,450	\$107,212	\$89,800	\$80,770
Average per church.....	\$2,736	\$1,787	\$1,575	-----
Expenditures during year:				
Churches reporting.....	53	43	-----	-----
Amount reported.....	\$18,781	\$7,120	-----	-----
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$13,533	\$5,058	-----	-----
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$5,084	\$2,062	-----	-----
Not classified.....	\$164	-----	-----	-----
Average expenditure per church.....	\$354	\$166	-----	-----

¹ A minus sign (-) denotes decrease.² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

State tables.—Tables 3, 4, and 5 present the statistics for the Old German Baptist Brethren by States. Table 3 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches classified according to their location in urban or rural territory and the total membership classified by sex. Table 4 gives for selected States the number and membership of the churches for the three censuses from 1906 to 1926. Table 5 shows the value of church property and also the church expenditures for 1926, showing separately the amounts expended for current expenses and improvements, and for benevolences, etc. Separate presentation in Table 5 is limited to those States in which three or more churches reported the principal items shown (values or expenditures), in order to avoid disclosing the financial statistics of any individual church. The States omitted from these tables can be determined by referring to the complete list which appears in Table 3.

TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, AND TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: OLD GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHREN

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX		
	Total	Ur- ban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Males per 100 females (¹)
United States.....	62	6	56	3,036	413	2,623	1,230	1,806	68.1
Middle Atlantic:									
Pennsylvania.....	4	1	3	202	16	186	79	123	64.2
East North Central:									
Ohio.....	19	1	18	967	65	902	398	569	69.9
Indiana.....	11		11	652		652	264	388	68.0
Illinois.....	3		3	70		70	27	43	
Michigan.....	3		3	89		89	36	53	
Wisconsin.....	1	1		12	12		4	8	
West North Central:									
Iowa.....	1		1	24		24	13	11	
Missouri.....	2		2	47		47	18	29	
North Dakota.....	1		1	26		26	8	18	
Kansas.....	5		5	295		295	116	179	64.8
South Atlantic:									
Maryland.....	1		1	120		120	50	70	
Virginia.....	4	1	3	202	75	127	83	119	69.7
West Virginia.....	2		2	33		33	14	19	
North Carolina.....	1		1	28		28	11	17	
West South Central:									
Oklahoma.....	1		1	14		14	5	9	
Mountain:									
Colorado.....	1		1	10		10	4	6	
Pacific:									
California.....	2	2		245	245		100	145	69.0

¹ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION ¹

DENOMINATIONAL HISTORY

Up to the latter part of the nineteenth century the history of the Dunkers was one of peace. Whatever disparity of individual opinion there was did not pass the bounds of mutual forbearance. As, however, social customs developed along more modern lines during the latter part of that century, certain influences were manifested among the communities which tended to lessen the emphasis upon many of the special customs of the earlier times. Accordingly, some of the members, fearful lest the traditions of the founders of the denomination should be overborne, and "the Scriptures suffer violence," and desirous of perpetuating the type of life, as well as of belief, observed by the early Brethren, withdrew in 1881 and formed the organization known as the "Old German Baptist Brethren."

DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION

In certain matters of doctrine and also in some features of church organization the Old Order Brethren are in essential agreement with the other branches. They accept the literal teaching of the Scriptures in regard to the Lord's Supper and foot washing; hold close communion; practice nonconformity to the world in war, politics, secret societies, dress, and amusements; refuse to swear or take

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 Rev. J. M. Kimmel, publishing agent of the "Vindicator," Brookville, Ohio, and approved by him in its present form.

TABLE 4.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, 1906 TO 1926, BY STATES:
OLD GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHREN

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches in either 1926, 1916, or 1906]

STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS		
	1926	1916	1906	1926	1916	1906
United States.....	62	67	68	3,036	3,399	3,388
Pennsylvania.....	4	5	3	202	319	235
Ohio.....	19	18	20	967	1,199	1,204
Indiana.....	11	13	13	652	659	790
Illinois.....	3	2	4	70	72	102
Michigan.....	3	4	3	89	90	98
Kansas.....	5	3	3	295	203	106
Virginia.....	4	6	6	202	289	280
West Virginia.....	2	3	3	33	65	114
Other States.....	11	13	13	526	503	459

TABLE 5.—VALUE OF CHURCH PROPERTY, AND CHURCH EXPENDITURES, BY STATES, 1926: OLD GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHREN

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches reporting value of edifices]

STATE	Total number of churches	Number of church edifices	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR				
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Total amount	For current expenses and improvements	For benevolences, missions, etc.	Not classified
United States.....	62	66	59	\$161,450	53	\$18,781	\$13,533	\$5,084	\$164
Pennsylvania.....	4	5	4	16,600	3	557	557		
Ohio.....	19	20	18	48,300	14	4,532	2,181	2,351	
Indiana.....	11	12	11	30,200	10	2,283	1,305	978	
Illinois.....	3	3	3	4,900	3	438	230	208	
Michigan.....	3	3	3	3,100	3	279	200		79
Kansas.....	5	5	5	9,800	5	967	604	363	
Virginia.....	4	5	4	16,750	4	939	779	75	85
Other States.....	13	13	11	31,800	11	8,786	7,677	1,109	

oath under any circumstances; reject a salaried ministry; anoint with oil those who are sick, not so much for the healing of the natural body as for spiritual healing; strictly enjoin temperance upon all their members; and allow none to traffic in alcoholic or malt liquors. They believe that nothing but death can break the marriage vow, and refuse to perform a marriage ceremony for any divorced person.

WORK

Specially organized missions, Sunday schools, and ecclesiastical schools are regarded by these Brethren as opposed to essential Christianity, but they are charitable in deed as in word, support their own poor, and extend a helping hand to all needy persons, whether they are or are not members of their own religious organization.