



The Dunkers a Sociological Interpretation (Classic Reprint)

John Lewis Gillin

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Excerpt from The Dunkers a Sociological Interpretation

This paper is an attempt to apply the principles of sociological theory to the interpretation of the denomination of Christians variously known in early history in Germany, sometimes as Pietists, because most of them had originally been Pietists, often as Anabaptists because they baptised those who had been christened when infants, or, again, as Dompelaers, from the fact that their mode of baptism was immersion. Today they are popularly known by the various names, Dunkards, Dunkers, Tunkers, but among themselves as Brethren, or officially as German Baptist Brethren. Their popular cognomen today, Dunkers, is simply the anglicised form of the German noun, derived from the old German verb "tunken," to dip, which corresponds to the modern German verb "taufen," and means what our anglicised Greek word "baptists" means. By their very name, therefore, the Dunkers are to be classed as baptists.

From the sociological standpoint they must be classified as a voluntary, cultural association, whose purpose was the promotion of certain doctrines and customs. It was one of the constituent societies of the larger, half feudal, half civil, social unit, the province of Wittgenstein. Therefore, from the standpoint of the historical study of society, the Dunker church belongs to that stage called civilization, or Demogenic Association, as Professor Giddings has called it. Its origin lay within the military-religious subdivision of that stage, the greatest part of its history within the subdivision called the liberal-legal, and the latter part within the economic-ethical.

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