



The Old German Baptist Brethren: Faith, Farming, and Change in the Virginia Blue Ridge

Charles D. Thompson Jr.

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Since arriving nearly 250 years ago in Franklin County, Virginia, German Baptists have maintained their faith and farms by relying on their tightly knit community for spiritual and economic support. Today, with their land and livelihoods threatened by the encroachment of neighboring communities, the construction of a new highway, and competition from corporate megafarms, the German Baptists find themselves forced to adjust. Charles D. Thompson Jr.'s *The Old German Baptist Brethren* combines oral history with ethnography and archival research--as well as his own family ties to the Franklin County community--to tell the story of the Brethren's faith on the cusp of impending change. The book traces the transformation of their operations from frontier subsistence farms to cash-based enterprises, connecting this with the wider confluence of agriculture and faith in colonial America. Using extensive interviews, Thompson looks behind the scenes at how individuals interpret their own futures in farming, their hope for their faith, and how the failure of religiously motivated agriculture figures in the larger story of the American farmer.

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