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**The Pietist theology and ethnic mission of the General Conference of  
German Baptists in North America, 1851-1920**

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November, 2000

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment  
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Résumé

La Conférence Générale des Baptistes Allemands était avant tout une organisation confessionnelle de l'Amérique du Nord établie au dix-neuvième siècle. Cette organisation a adopté la politique des Baptistes Américains afin de construire des communautés religieuses pour les convertis qui étaient des descendants allemands. Entre 1851 et 1920, la Conférence Générale des Baptistes Allemands a résisté à l'union institutionnelle avec des organisations plus importantes des anglophones, en revanche ils ont développé une mission ethnique avec l'aide financière de la Société de la Mission Domestique du Baptiste Américain. Au fur et à mesure que le temps avance, l'adhésion à l'église allemand devient de plus en plus américanisée dans le domaine de la langue et des habitudes. La pression extérieure d'assimilation s'augmente. Pourtant la direction du Baptiste Allemand s'est orientée au sens contraire de l'Américanisation totale des églises et elle a essayé de préserver le principe différent du Piétist théologique ainsi que la mission ethnique de la Conférence. On y a compris l'indépendance institutionnelle initiée en 1920 avec la dissolution de l'Accord Coopérative qui reliait la mission des Baptistes Allemands, l'ABHMS, et l'Union Baptiste du Canada de l'Ouest.

### **Abstract**

Organized in the nineteenth century, the General Conference of German Baptists was primarily a North American denominational body that adopted the polity of the American Baptists to build religious communities of converts of German ethnic background. From 1851 to 1920, the General Conference of German Baptists resisted institutional unity with the larger English-speaking bodies. Instead, it developed an ethnic mission with the financial aid of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. With time the German church membership became more Americanized in language and habits. The external pressure to assimilate increased. Yet, the German Baptist leadership moved away from complete Americanization of the churches and sought to preserve the distinct Pietist theological basis and ethnic mission of the Conference. The General Conference of German Baptists embraced institutional independence beginning in 1920 with the dissolution of the Cooperative Agreement that bound the mission of the German Baptists, the ABHMS, and the Baptist Union of Western Canada.

### Acknowledgements

It is with great humbleness and gratitude that I acknowledge the people who assisted me through the process of completing this dissertation. While a dissertation project often seems to take on a life of its own (and to take over the life of its author), it cannot be completed without the assistance of many people. The supervisors of this project certainly deserve recognition. The late Rev. Dr. E. J. Furcha, knowing my interest in the diversity of nineteenth-century Protestantism, directed me to the study of the German Baptists in North America. After his untimely death, Dr. Torrance Kirby of McGill University and Dr. Philip Anderson of North Park University graciously agreed to supervise this dissertation project. Their comments on content and skills in editing were most helpful throughout the entire process. Their advice was invaluable. Moreover, their constant encouragement was greatly appreciated.

The collections of several libraries were consulted during the research phase of this project. Special mention must be made of the archival collection at the North American Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. George Lang, the archivist, was a gracious host during my two brief visits to Sioux Falls. Also, Dr. George Dunger, retired from his career as a missionary and professor, allowed me to interview him. He provided insight, information, and inspiration. Much of the primary source materials in the North American Baptist Archives were also available at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee. The staff there, including Dr. Bill Sumners, Jean Forbis, and Peggy Hester, could not have been more welcoming or helpful. The regular research trips to Nashville were made possible through the Lynn E. May travel grant awarded by the Southern Baptist Historical Library Association. A word of gratitude must also be expressed to the directors and staff at the libraries of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Vanderbilt University, Duke University, and Emory University.

Many of the primary sources consulted for this project were published in German. Nineteenth-century German texts are often complex and somewhat

arcane. The translation work of Rosemary Greenman was of great assistance. She provided polished translations of many of the most difficult sections of *Der Sendböte* and August Rauschenbusch's autobiography. Dr. Susanna Zhang, professor of French at Emory and Henry College, assisted with the French translation of the dissertation abstract.

I am also thankful for the support of my family. My parents have provided financial and moral support throughout my years of higher education. They encouraged me to complete this dissertation, knowing that earning a Ph.D. has been my educational goal since my teen years. There are not enough words to express the gratitude I have for their constant love and support. I have been blessed by their generous spirits. Last and most of all, I must acknowledge the help and support of my husband, T.J. When I doubted myself, he believed in my abilities. When my resolve to write waned, he reminded me to make the dissertation a priority. When I became distracted or disheartened, he encouraged me and held me accountable. He made many sacrifices so that I could have the time and peace I needed to write. Without him I simply would not have completed this project. I am grateful to T.J., the love of my life, for his willingness to be coach, comforter, and friend. If one can dedicate a dissertation, then this one is certainly dedicated to him.

## Introduction

### Pietist and Ethnic Studies in the History of North American Denominational Development

#### Introduction: Scope of the Study

The General Conference of German Baptists in North America began as a group of separate churches that were independently organized and only loosely associated with one another. In 1851, pastors and representatives of these churches met at the First German Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (now called Fleischmann Memorial Baptist Church). At this meeting, they formed the General Conference of German Baptists. Nearly one hundred and fifty years later, the German Baptist heritage in the United States and Canada continues through the North American Baptist General Conference, with an approximate membership of 25,000 persons and two seminaries.<sup>1</sup>

It would be far too large a task for a thesis paper to detail the development of the denomination throughout its entire history. This has been accomplished in denominational histories published by the North American Baptist Conference.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Conference changed its name in 1942 to reflect a broader mission focus and to remove the "German" reference in the midst of WWII. While the proper title of reference for the denomination is now North American Baptist Conference (NABC), in this thesis they will be referred to as General Conference of German Baptists or simply as German Baptists, for this is how they referred to themselves during the period under consideration. The General Conference of German Baptists is not to be confused with the Church of the Brethren, or "Tunkers," who were often referred to as German Baptists.

<sup>2</sup> There are several denominational historical accounts of the North American Baptist Conference. They differ in their purposes and levels of scholarship. The first history was written by Albert J. Ramaker, a professor at the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester. It was published as Albert J. Ramaker, *The German Baptists in North America* (Cleveland: German Baptist Publication Society, 1924). Two more historical works on the denomination were published in the mid-twentieth century. The first of these was an edition edited by Hermann von Berge, *These Glorious Years* (Cleveland: Roger Williams Press, n.d.). The next work was Otto Krueger, *In God's Hands* (Cleveland: Roger Williams Press, 1958). The last published monograph history of the



The dissertation, therefore, examines the theology and mission of the General Conference of German Baptists in the first seventy years of its existence, 1851-1920. During this period the General Conference of German Baptists moved from being a loose affiliation of German-speaking churches to a connected Conference, with regional sub-conferences. It established a home for orphans, a home for the elderly, publications in German and English, a publication society and publishing house, as well as a seminary for training its ministers. It also moved from being a branch of the American Baptist Home Mission Society responsible for the "German work" (i.e. the evangelization of German speaking immigrants), and a beneficiary of funds from the ABHMS, to developing its own General Mission Society and a foreign mission station in West Cameroon.<sup>3</sup> By 1921 the Conference had many structures in place that would allow it to exist separately from the Northern Baptist Convention, the Western Baptist Union (Canada) and the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS).

During the first seven decades of its existence, the General Conference of German Baptists resisted institutional unity with the larger English-speaking bodies; it was determined, instead, to develop its ethnic mission with the aid of the ABHMS. With time the German church membership became more Americanized in language and habits. The external pressure to assimilate increased with the Christian Americanization movement and the anti-German hysteria during and after World War I. Yet, the German Baptist leadership

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denomination, and by far the most complete, was Frank Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry of the North American Baptist Conference* (Forest Park, IL: North American Baptist Conference, 1979).

intentionally moved away from the complete Americanization of the churches and sought to preserve the distinct theological basis and ethnic mission of the Conference. The theology of the German Conference in this early period reflected continental Pietism.

A study of the primary documents reveals that the early German Baptist pastors were influenced by German and Swiss Pietist movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when Pietism experienced a revival in continental Europe. The denominational histories of the German Baptists in North America pointed to the influence of Pietism upon the leadership of the churches. The historical works also indicated that the German Baptists believed they had a distinctive mission to German-speaking immigrants, which was the largest non-English immigrant group in the United States during the nineteenth century.

While essentially a North American phenomenon that adopted the American Baptist ecclesiological structure to build religious communities of converts from immigrants of a specific ethnic background identified by the language name "German," the German Baptists did not form "American" churches as that concept was defined by mainstream English-speaking Protestants. In other words, they did not organize English-speaking, Anglo-Protestant congregations. Instead, the German Baptist churches ministered to German-speaking immigrants, maintained German culture, identity, and language, and preserved within the denomination the German Pietist theological tradition.

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<sup>3</sup>Charles Weber, *International Influences and Baptist Mission in West Cameroon: German-American Missionary Endeavor under International Mandate and British Colonialism* (Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1993).

The theology and ethnic focus of the German Baptist churches helped the German-speaking Baptists form an identity that was distinct from that of the English-speaking Baptists. This identity was the foundation for resisting the complete surrender of their churches to the forces of Americanization. Indeed, the Pietist theology and ethnic mission of the Conference and its churches during the first seventy years of its existence became stumbling blocks in the relationship between the German-speaking Baptists and the English-speaking American and Canadian Baptists. The commitment of the German Baptists to their theology and ethnic mission prevented their complete institutional assimilation into the conventions and unions of the English-speaking Baptist denominations.

#### **Source Materials of the General Conference of German Baptists**

The study of the dynamics of theology and ethnicity in the relationship between the General Conference of German Baptists and their English-speaking counterparts from 1851-1921 has been based on the study of primary documents. The German Baptists were not prolific writers of theological, doctrinal, or historical materials. While some of the early pastors were well-educated German and Swiss immigrants who had skills in writing and editing, the focus of their work was evangelism. They did not produce many essays or monographs. Many of the individual churches wrote covenants and statements of doctrine applying to the members of that particular congregation, but the General Conference chose not to develop a Confession of Faith during the period under study.<sup>4</sup> The denominational publication *Der Sendbote* carried articles that reflected the

theological beliefs of the German Baptists who wrote them.<sup>5</sup> Articles, essays, and sermons published in *Der Sendbote* addressed German Baptist views of the Bible, salvation, morality, sanctification, missions, current events, Americanization, German language and culture, and the relationship with the American Baptists. *Der Sendbote* was the published “voice” of the General Conference of German Baptists and was usually edited by a well-respected pastor elected by the Conference. The publication communicated news of the churches and the home and foreign mission fields, devotional materials, and commentaries on social problems to the majority of German Baptist households. It seemed, therefore, reasonable to conclude that the writings on matters of doctrine, theology, or morality were normative of German Baptist viewpoints.

Other primary sources related to the theology of the early German Baptist pastors include the autobiographical work of August Rauschenbusch, who was the first professor at the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester and father of the Social Gospel exponent Walter Rauschenbusch. *Leben und Wirken des August Rauschenbusch* was written primarily by August Rauschenbusch and edited after his death by his son, Walter Rauschenbusch, who included his own introduction,

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<sup>4</sup> David Priestly, “Doctrinal Statements of the German Baptists in America,” *Foundations* 22 (January-March, 1979): 58-61.

<sup>5</sup> *Der Sendbote* began as a monthly publication in 1858 in Philadelphia with Konrad Fleischmann as the first editor. Over the years it became a semi-monthly paper and then a weekly paper. As the church membership moved increasingly toward using English, *Der Sendbote* steadily lost subscriptions. While still published, it became an insert in the English language publication of the Conference, *The Baptist Herald*. Articles from *Der Sendbote* in the period of 1858-1921 have been essential to the arguments developed in this thesis. Original copies of the paper are available at the North American Baptist Archives at the North American Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. It has been microfilmed with copies available for study at the Southern Baptist Archives in Nashville, Tennessee, and at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

editorial notes, and lengthy additions to some chapters.<sup>6</sup> The *August Rauschenbusch Papers* also provides a look into the life of the man who, perhaps, had the most influence upon the long-term development of the General Conference of German Baptists.<sup>7</sup> The collection includes handwritten letters, journal entries, and notes from his autobiography. It also contains a handwritten report in English from his work with the German division of the American Tract Society. Among the English language documents in the collection is a series of handwritten lectures on the history of the Baptists. Rauschenbusch referred to these lectures in a letter to *Der Sendbote*, in which he reported that he had accepted the invitation of his English-speaking Baptist colleagues to deliver these lectures to the faculty and students in the American Baptist seminary in Rochester.<sup>8</sup> Insights into the life of August Rauschenbusch are invaluable because he was the teacher of the Conference.<sup>9</sup> As professor at the seminary for close to forty years, Rauschenbusch taught part of the first and most of the second and third generation pastors in the Conference, as well as the seminary professors who were his colleagues and successors. It could be concluded, therefore, that his

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<sup>6</sup> August Rauschenbusch, *Leben und Werken von August Rauschenbusch, Professor am theologischen Seminar zu Rochester in Nordamerika*, Walter Rauschenbusch, ed. (Cassel: J. G. Oncken, 1901).

<sup>7</sup> The original collection of August Rauschenbusch's papers is housed in Hamburg, Germany. After retiring from the seminary, A. Rauschenbusch returned to Germany to live with his daughter and son-in-law. While in Germany he produced another work, *Handbüchlein der Homiletik für freikirchliche Prediger und für Stadtmissionare* (Cassel: J.G. Oncken). Interestingly, his papers include handwritten lectures in English on the history of the Baptists. These were probably the lectures that he was asked to deliver to the students and faculty at Colgate Rochester Theological Seminary beginning in the 1860s. The August Rauschenbusch Papers collection is on microfilm and is available at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>8</sup> *Der Sendbote* (May 8, 1867): 74.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, "August Rauschenbusch, D.D.," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* (September 1898): 324.

theology and influence were formative within the denomination and were experienced in the succeeding generations of leadership.

The German Baptists occasionally wrote articles or editorials in English in publications such as *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, *The Standard*, and *The Examiner*.<sup>10</sup> These articles reflected their support of the distinct mission of the German-speaking churches, the need to preserve and maintain German language and culture within separate German churches, and often provided brief biographical sketches of influential pastors of the early period. In the area of missions, George Schulte, the long-time Missions secretary for the General Conference of German Baptists, made regular reports to the annual meetings of the American Baptist Home Mission Society.<sup>11</sup> These reports revealed the emphasis upon the ethnic mission of the Conference and what seemed to be the frustration Schulte expressed at the declining funding received by the German work from the ABHMS.<sup>12</sup>

One additional primary resource was the minutes of the various conference meetings of the German Baptists. Some reference has also been made to the decisions of the General Conference tri-annual meetings or one of the

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<sup>10</sup> The American Baptists did not have a sole publication representative of their views. *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* was the publication of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. *The Examiner* was published in New York and gave voice to the views of some Baptists who were ardent supporters of rapid Americanization of immigrants and opponents of self-perpetuating German-speaking congregations. It merged with *The Watchman*, to become *The Watchman-Examiner*. *The Standard* was usually very moderate to sympathetic in its opinions on immigrants. *The Journal and Messenger* supported political measures to limit immigration.

<sup>11</sup> The American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) Annual Reports are available on microfilm at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee. Bound editions of some years are also housed there, but the series is incomplete.

<sup>12</sup> ABHMS Annual Report 1893, 68. ABHMS Annual Report 1894, 95. ABHMS Annual Report 1895, 96. ABHMS Annual Report 1896, 105. ABHMS Annual Report 1899, 104.

annual regional Conference meetings.<sup>13</sup> Minutes of these meetings, which were in German until the 1940s, were compiled and bound. While a useful resource as to decisions made by the Eastern, Western, and General (or *Bundeskonzferenz*), at times the minutes did not give the full detail of debates on controversial subjects.

The general history of the German Baptists in North America has been outlined in several denominational historical works. These works have merit and provide useful information about the general historical outline and leadership of the denomination. Denominational histories usually have the dual purpose of providing information as well as encouragement. Historical works written by those within the denomination help instill a sense of pride in the members of the denominational body. The histories written by those within the General Conference of German Baptists seemed to have this dual purpose of providing information and creating a corporate memory of the accomplishments of the German Baptist churches.

In 1924 Albert Ramaker, professor at the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester, wrote *The German Baptists in North America: An Outline of Their History*. Of the early denominational histories, this is certainly the most balanced and informative. Ramaker wrote the history in English at the request of the young people of the churches, who wanted to know the story of their denomination in their common language.<sup>14</sup> The work was meant for informational purposes, as a textbook or study guide, and provided no critical study of the denomination.

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<sup>13</sup> The minutes of the meetings of the triennial General Conferences have been filmed and can be viewed on microfilm at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives. The minutes of the annual meetings of the Eastern and Western Conferences are also on microfilm at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.

Ramaker placed the German Baptist churches within the larger movement of evangelical denominations, whose purpose was:

[T]o bring the ever increasing numbers of Germans who have made their permanent home here to accept a personal, vital Christianity in place of the often formal type in which large numbers of them had been trained in the State-churches of the native land. To this end the German language has been employed in this work because it proved the best medium to attain the end sought for.<sup>15</sup>

Ramaker's work is especially helpful in its details concerning the first German Baptist churches in North America and the men who organized these churches. It was apparent from his description that the majority of early German Baptist pastors came from a Swiss or German Pietist background.

Three more historical works on the denomination were published in the twentieth century. While providing useful information and insights, two of the volumes were intended to be celebratory of the accomplishments of the small denomination. The first of these was a collection of articles about the different missions and institutions of the Conference, including the seminary, mission society, young people's societies, publication society, home for the elderly, and the orphanage. The work, entitled *These Glorious Years*, was edited by Hermann von Berge. The next work was Otto Krueger, *In God's Hands*, which was written as a study guide for churches. The last published history of the denomination was Frank Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry of the North American Baptist Conference*. Woyke's monograph was and is, by far, the most complete of any of the historical works. He made extensive reference to primary source materials. In fact, the work was, to some degree, a documentary of the NABC. Woyke did not treat

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<sup>14</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 5.



issues critically, but tended to recount the history in a straightforward, chronological structure with references to the primary document materials.

To date, three doctoral dissertations have examined the history of the German Baptist Conference in North America. All three theses were written in the 1970s. Much literature in the subject areas of ethnicity, denominationalism, and theology has been written in the intervening decades. Although these studies have contributed to the understanding of the place of the German Baptists in the history of Baptist groups, the work presented has needed updating.

The first thesis on the North American Baptist General Conference was written by Reinhold J. Kerstan, for many years a professor at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Kerstan's thesis, entitled "Historical Factors in the Formation of the Ethnically Oriented North American Baptist General Conference," had the benefit of being the first in the subject area; thus the primary task of the paper was to survey the factors that led to the development of the German Baptists.<sup>16</sup> The study revealed and explained the economic, political, social, educational, and religious reasons that prompted German-speaking emigrants to leave the areas of what is now modern Germany, Poland, and Russia for the United States. In tracing these European roots, Kerstan sought to explain why an American-based religious group retained "many characteristics common to German people."<sup>17</sup> The thesis contributed to the general understanding of the origins of those who became the constituency, as well as the leadership, of the

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Reinhold Johannes Kerstan, "Historical Factors in the Formation of the Ethnically Oriented North American Baptist General Conference," unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Northwestern University, 1971.

North American Baptists. His work did not, however, delineate issues prevalent in the study of ethnicity or the contribution of ethnicity to denominationalism in the broader landscape of North American church history. Neither did the writer intend to describe the particular theological viewpoints of the early German Baptists nor the role these may have played in the denomination remaining ethnically oriented.

A second thesis was completed two years after Kerstan's dissertation. Eric Henry Ohlmann, currently the dean of Eastern Baptist Seminary, studied the relationship between the American Baptists, particularly the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS), and the General Conference of German Baptists in his thesis, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans: A Case Study of Attempted Assimilation."<sup>18</sup> The dissertation contributed to the body of work on home missions in North America. Ohlmann believed that the motivations and attitudes behind home missions was an area that had been neglected in the denominational histories of the American Baptists, as well as the North American (German) Baptists.<sup>19</sup> In the thesis paper he noted that the ABHMS worked among twenty-six foreign-language groups and that its mission to German-speaking Americans was its largest home mission endeavor among immigrants.<sup>20</sup>

Ohlmann demonstrated that a motivating factor of the ABHMS mission to German Americans was a desire to assimilate this large immigrant group into the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Eric Henry Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans: A Case Study of Attempted Assimilation," unpublished Th.D. dissertation, the Graduate Theological Union, 1973.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 9.

American way of life and the English-speaking Baptist churches.<sup>21</sup> This process was generally called Americanization. Throughout its relationship with the foreign-speaking Baptist churches, the ABHMS policy, adopted in 1850, remained that the organization of foreign speaking churches, associations, conventions, conferences, and other institutions "was to be permitted as a temporary expediency for reaching newcomers. But they were to be dissolved as soon as the necessity for them ceased."<sup>22</sup> Although this policy dominated the thoughts and attitudes of the American Baptists, the assimilation of the German mission never occurred. The German Baptist churches did not become fully assimilated into the larger American or Canadian Baptist denominational structures.

Ohlmann equally demonstrated the corresponding drift of the German Baptists away from the American brethren and into a separate denominational structure and existence. He argued that the German Baptists became Americanized in their religious, political, and cultural views, but they continued to become more separated from the American Baptists.<sup>23</sup> In order to provide a partial explanation of the German Baptist movement away from their English-speaking counterparts, Ohlmann constructed an argument that the German Baptists imbibed so-called tenets of American Puritanism and adhered to them more strictly than the American Baptists.<sup>24</sup> The American Baptists perceived that

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 217-218.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 217. ABHMS Annual Report, 1913, 33-35.

<sup>23</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 218-225.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. By Puritanism Ohlmann seems to mean piety in outward behavior, such as an adherence to and promotion of temperance, an objection to theatre attendance, a rejection of fashion

their German brethren were more “puritanical” and attributed this to their Americanization.<sup>25</sup> Ohlmann pointed out that there were differing perspectives on theology and proper Christian praxis between the American and German groups, and argued that a hindrance to assimilation was created as the German Baptists viewed the American Baptist as less pious and more lax in Christian behavior.<sup>26</sup> One must, however, take issue with this “more American than the Americans” aspect of his argument. Did the German Baptist opposition to the perceived moral laxity of the American Baptists originate from an internalization of American “puritan” religious culture or did it originate in theological perspectives that were more indigenous to their ethnic heritage, to German-speaking culture and theological traditions? In other words, their theological and moral emphases were founded in the German and Swiss Pietism that influenced the theological outlook of the early leaders and constituents of the German Baptist churches in North America.

In a master’s thesis completed at Southern Baptist Seminary nearly thirty years ago, Ohlmann demonstrated the influence of Pietism upon the leadership of the German Baptist Conference during its formative years.<sup>27</sup> Since the time that thesis was written, Ernest Stoeffler and other scholars have subsequently published several important works on Continental Pietism and Protestantism in

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accompanied by an encouragement of simplicity in dress and adornment. In his view, the German Baptists became more pious than their American counterparts.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 224.

<sup>27</sup> Eric Ohlmann, “A Historical Study of the Influence of Pietistic Thought on the German Baptist General Conference During Its Formative Years,” unpublished Th.M. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1966.

North America.<sup>28</sup> In his master's thesis, Ohlmann did not provide a thorough discussion of the context of the German and Swiss Pietist traditions that were so formative in the experience of the early German Baptist pastors. A discussion of the European theological context would contribute to understanding the theological climate from which most of the early German Baptist leaders in North America emerged.

Additionally, Ohlmann did not argue in his master's thesis that Pietism was a factor in establishing the ongoing cultural and theological identity of the denomination. Yet, the German/Swiss Pietist tradition was a significant factor that separated the German Baptists from their American and Canadian brethren. In his doctoral thesis, Ohlmann did not draw on his understanding of German Pietism in making conclusions about the theological "Puritanism" of the German Baptists. In fact, Ohlmann left the question of German Baptist theology, as well as the theological differences between the German and American Baptists, rather open to exploration. His doctoral dissertation fulfilled its purpose of studying and explaining the relationship between the ABHMS and the German Baptist Conference. The current thesis has attempted to explore the internal factors of

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<sup>28</sup> Dale Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978). Donald Dayton and Robert Johnson, eds. *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991). Mary Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England, Württemberg and Prussia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Richard Gawthrop, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth Century Prussia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Stephen Longenecker, *Piety and Tolerance: Pennsylvania German Religion, 1700-1850* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994). Gary Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good: A Brief Introduction to the Life and Writings of August Hermann Francke* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1982). James Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1986). Ernest Stoeffler, ed., *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976). Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971). Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976).

theology and ethnicity that caused the German Baptists to move steadily away from the English-speaking Baptists.

A third thesis, written by Ernest Pasiciel and entitled "The Interrelationship Between Sociocultural Factors and Denominationalism: A Comparison of the Early and Modern Sociocultural Profiles of the North American Baptist General Conference, 1874-1974," employed methodology familiar to the sociology of religion to discuss issues of ethnicity within the early and later periods of the denomination. Pasiciel recognized the work of H. Richard Niebuhr, who developed arguments exploring the relationship between sociocultural factors and denominational divisions. Pasiciel, however, did not believe that sociocultural factors were the sole source of denominational divisions in the United States. It was his contention that if this were the case, then "some distinctive unifying factor should be operative in each denomination."<sup>29</sup> Examining only the non-theological variables of national background and language, denominational background, socioeconomic status, geographic location, racial composition, size, age distribution, and sex ratios, Pasiciel showed that in the period of study the North American Baptist Conference demonstrated significant change in each of these areas. Thus, no single unifying sociocultural factor accounted for the denomination's continued existence.<sup>30</sup> While one may conclude that its early existence was dominated by the factors of national background and language, this conclusion did not carry into the present.

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<sup>29</sup> Ernest Pasiciel, "The Interrelationship Between Sociocultural Factors and Denominationalism: A Comparison of the Early and Modern Sociocultural Profiles of the North American Baptist General Conference, 1874-1974," unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Baylor University, 1974, 10.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 267.

In establishing the framework for discussion of his thesis, Pasiciel discussed the concept of ethnicity, which he phrased in terms of nationality or national feeling.<sup>31</sup> His discussion of nationality was most useful as it addressed national feeling among immigrants and the development of a group consciousness or identity in the midst of a larger society where the immigrant may be denied participation. His insights were applicable in a very general study of ethnicity or nationality. In discussing the German-speaking immigrants who formed the German Baptist churches that eventually became the North American Baptist Conference, he concluded that the German Baptists churches were drawn together into a Conference by their common national background and language.<sup>32</sup> His discussion, however, did not lend itself to an in-depth understanding of issues surrounding German-American ethnic identity and community development. Pasiciel viewed ethnicity as a nontheological factor in the formation of the General Conference of German Baptists/North American Baptist Conference. One could take issue with treating ethnicity in isolation from theology in the case of the German Baptists. While traditions, language, and cultural identity were all factors that compose ethnicity, commonly held theological concepts and traditions were also dynamic factors in ethnic community development.<sup>33</sup>

Significant work has been published in this area in the decades since Pasiciel completed his doctoral thesis. Of particular interest has been the work of

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 24-30.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 130-131.

<sup>33</sup> Kathleen Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century German American on Parade," in Werner Sollors, ed. *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Jay Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 73.

Kathleen Conzen on German communities and religious life, as well as works by Frederick Luebke, La Vern Rippley, Willi Paul Adams, Heinz Kloss, and others working in the field of German-American ethnic studies.<sup>34</sup> The current thesis has sought to enhance the understanding of the role of the German Baptists in the religious life of North America and the connection between ethnicity and religious life. The works of scholars who have examined the ties between immigration, ethnic identity, religion, and community development were essential to this study. The work of social historians, in addition to church historians, demonstrated that the experience of the German Baptists was, in some ways quite

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<sup>34</sup> Willi Paul Adams, "Ethnic Leadership and the German-Americans," in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds. *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, v. 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 148-59. Willi Paul Adams, *The German-Americans: An Ethnic Experience*, translated and adapted by LaVern J. Rippley and Eberhard Reichmann (Indianapolis: Max Kade German American Center Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1990). Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Germans," in Stephan Thernstrom, ed. *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1980), 405-25. Kathleen Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century German America on Parade," 44-76. Kathleen Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds. *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, v. 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 131-47. Kathleen Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee 1836-1860: Accommodation and Community in a Frontier City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976). Kathleen Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity: Historical Issues," *The Journal of American History* 66 no. 3 (December 1979): 603-615. Kathleen Conzen, "Mainstreams and Side Channels: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11 (Fall 1991): 5-20. Kathleen Conzen, *Making Their Own America: Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1990). Kathleen Conzen, "The Place of Religion in Urban and Community Studies," *Religion and American Culture* 6 (Summer 1996): 108-114. Frederick Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and WWI* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1975). Frederick Luebke, *European Immigrants in the American West: Community Histories* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998). Frederick Luebke, "German Immigrants and the Churches in Nebraska, 1889-1915," *Mid-America* 50:2 (April 1968): 116-30. Frederick Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in Honor of the History of Immigration* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990). Heinz Kloss, "German-American Language Maintenance Efforts," in Joshua Fishman et al, eds. *Language Loyalty in the United States: The Maintenance and Perpetuation of Non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 206-52. LaVern J. Rippley, "Ameliorated Americanization: The Effect of World War I on German-Americans in the 1920s," in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds. *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, v. 2 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 217-30. LaVern J. Rippley, "Germans from Russia," Stephan Thernstrom, ed. *Harvard*



unique. At the same time, the German Baptists shared many characteristics with other churches developed in immigrant communities. The churches of the General Conference of German Baptists were part of a larger picture of the immigrant experience in North America. The story of the German Baptists was also indicative of the diversity of evangelical Protestantism in North America.

### **The Study of Immigration, Ethnicity, and Denominationalism**

The study of the relationship between theology and ethnicity in the formation of the General Conference of German Baptists has a place in the broader study of the role of the church among immigrants and within immigrant communities. It also adds to the understanding of the ethnic diversity of North American Protestantism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The effect of immigration and ethnicity upon Protestant denominational development and division has not, perhaps, been given the attention it warrants.

Among the scholars who have written about the dynamic relationship between immigration, religion, and ethnic identity in nineteenth century North American religious history, Jay Dolan has been an advocate for the study of the religious experience of the immigrant. Indeed, he has viewed immigration as an "organizing principle" of American religious historiography.<sup>35</sup> In other words, it is a theme around which research and writing in the area of North American

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*Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1980), 425-30. LaVern J. Rippley, *The German Americans* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976).

<sup>35</sup> Jay Dolan, "The Immigrants and Their Gods: A New Perspective in American Religious History," *Church History* 57 (March 1988): 68. John Higham, *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 1-8. Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 1. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (Boston:

religious history should be conducted, but it has often been neglected. Dolan has argued that religion was an integral part of the experience of the immigrant. In times of displacement and suffering, many immigrants of different backgrounds expressed their faith in the providence and care of God. His study of the letters of nineteenth-century immigrants has revealed that "God-talk was an integral part of the immigrant letter."<sup>36</sup> "The God of the immigrants was always present," he wrote, "watching over the people, and many letters refer to God in this manner."<sup>37</sup> The harshness of immigrant life in North America had its share of suffering. The immigrants seemed to view suffering in a religious context; in other words, they theologized their experiences.<sup>38</sup> Religion was a powerful tool for helping immigrants adjust to life in America

If a complete understanding of the role of religion in North America, and particularly the denominational character of religion in North America, is to emerge, then the role of the immigrant churches cannot be ignored. Immigration and ethnicity are significant themes in the religious history of North America. The argument of Jay Dolan that the examination of immigration and ethnicity should be a theme in the study of American denominationalism is a guiding framework for this thesis.

Dolan has argued that the study of immigration by church historians is important for three reasons. The first reason is that immigration was typical of

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Little, Brown, and Co., 1951) 3. Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Immigrant in American History* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964).

<sup>36</sup> Dolan, "The Immigrants and Their Gods," 68.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 70.

the American experience.<sup>39</sup> No denomination was unaffected by influxes of foreign-born people. The denominations that are predominantly white and English-speaking in the present were once much more diverse. Prior to World War I, 132 of the 200 denominations in the United States reported that part or all of their congregations used a language other than English.<sup>40</sup> The Baptists had over twenty foreign-speaking conferences. The Methodists reported the use of twenty-two languages, while the Roman Catholics reported forty-two languages in use in their churches.<sup>41</sup> Immigration is a theme that cuts across denominations and gives a broader perspective on issues within the varying churches. Also, the history of a particular denomination is incomplete without recognition of the leadership and influence that immigrants brought to the churches that now seem much more homogenous in character. Furthermore, since immigration affected nearly every denomination, it lends itself to comparative study. Dolan writes, "Immigration can provide that comparative perspective of the nineteenth century and force historians to look beyond the American scene and ask if what happened in American may have differed from what went on the in Old World."<sup>42</sup> By so doing, the historian may discover how churches that were transplanted from the Old World evolved into American denominations through the process of defining and redefining group identity and mission in the North American religious, social, and political environment.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Dolan's source for this information was the 1916 census of religious bodies.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 67.

Dolan has articulated a third relevant and important argument regarding the study of immigration by religious historians. Studying the relationship between immigration and denominational development pushes church historians to examine historical resources beyond the boundaries of their field.<sup>43</sup> Historians who study immigration discover that they must learn about the religion of the immigrants because it is such a significant part of their lives and has an important role in the immigrant experience. Church historians need to draw on the works of social historians, sometimes referred to as secular historians, in order to see the development of denominational life as part of the larger history of the development of national life in the United States and Canada. One cannot understand the history of Roman Catholicism in North America without examining the impact of immigration, the tension between different immigrant groups, and the development of national parishes. Likewise, the history of the Lutherans in North America hardly makes sense without an understanding of the dynamic relationship between ethnicity, language maintenance, and the pressures of Americanization. The understanding of the growth of evangelical Protestantism in North America is incomplete without the study of immigration, foreign-speaking conferences, and the process of social, economic, and cultural assimilation.

It would be difficult to examine the impact of immigration on the religious life of North America on a grand scale. The study of the relationship between immigration and North American denominationalism must begin on a smaller scale. While the broader purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the body of

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 67.

knowledge concerning the impact of immigration on the history of denominationalism in the United States, it is a narrow study of the General Conference of German Baptists in North America. On the one hand, this study is an attempt to examine the issues of theology and group identity within a denomination built by German-speaking immigrants during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the assistance of English-speaking Baptist mission societies, particularly the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS). On the other hand, the study is intended to add to the understanding of the diversity of North American Protestantism. North American Protestantism in the nineteenth century was as diverse as society itself. It was deeply affected by the massive influxes of immigrants.

German immigrants began settling in North America in the colonial period. Masses of German immigrants, however, arrived in the United States in the 1830s and 1840s. After the economic recession of the 1850s and the Civil War in the United States during the 1860s, German immigration numbers again rose, peaking in 1882 with 220,000 German immigrants. Some who came were committed to the Reformed, Lutheran, or Catholic churches of their birth. Others were intellectuals committed to Rationalism. Some were Mennonite or Moravian and a very few were Methodists or Baptists. German Americans formed the second largest ethnic group among Caucasians in the United States, with those of British heritage being the largest. Their language was the second most common language in the United States during the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Kloss, "German-American Language Maintenance Efforts," 213.

Numerous Anglo-Protestant denominations, meaning English-speaking denominations with British roots, developed missions to the large German-speaking immigrant population. The Methodists created a separate German Conference, as did the Baptists. They saw the work as an opportunity to communicate a personal experience of faith to an immigrant group that was largely unfamiliar with an emphasis on experiential Christianity.<sup>45</sup> Ramaker noted that the emphasis on personal religious experience in the United States was one of the primary reasons the German Baptist churches were formed. He wrote:

There was a second reason for the founding of new organizations for the German people in our country, and this reason accounts largely for the type of Christian life which obtained in these churches: the aggressive, evangelistic preaching among the English speaking churches which followed the successive periods of revivals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This kind of personal appeal in American preaching made a profound impression on nearly all of the German movements planted here. Such a type of religion Germans had scarcely known in their own country outside of Moravian and Pietistic circles. And it has not only influenced the "New" denominations, as the German immigrants were wont to designate Baptists and Methodists, it has even made itself felt among the adherents of the Lutheran and Reformed churches to a considerable degree.<sup>46</sup>

Concern for the immigrant and concern about the impact that immigration would have on the character of the United States gave impetus to the Protestant home missions movement. The English-speaking Protestants viewed evangelization as a means to fulfill their dream of a Christian America. The best means to Americanize the immigrants was to Christianize (and/or Protestantize) them. Through involvement in the church, the immigrant would learn about religious freedom and political freedom. The best means to this end was the

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<sup>45</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 11. *Der Sendbote*, November 1855, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 12.

evangelization of the immigrants in their own languages.<sup>47</sup> The separate, immigrant Protestant churches would be a way station along the journey toward complete Americanization.<sup>48</sup>

Since all of the mainline Protestant denominations in the nineteenth century had foreign language churches and conferences or synods, nineteenth-century Protestantism were quite ethnically diverse. Yet, the impact of this diversity was hardly given recognition by historians in the early and mid-twentieth century. The contributions the immigrant churches and immigrant church leadership made to North American Protestantism was not acknowledged.

### **Historiographical Study of Ethnicity, Immigration, and Denominationalism**

In 1927, Richard Niebuhr lamented the division of the Christian Church into denominations in his work, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. Niebuhr was one of the first American scholars of religion to recognize the impact of ethnicity upon the Christian churches of North America.<sup>49</sup> In his list of sources of denominationalism within North American society, he devoted two chapters to dealing with questions of ethnicity, which he also referred to as nationalism. For Niebuhr, national background was a strong cultural factor in the creation of denominations:

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<sup>47</sup> Hermann Schaeffer in *Baptist Home Missions in North America, Including a Full Report of the Proceedings and Addresses of the Jubilee Meeting, and a Historical Sketch of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. Historical Tables, etc. 1832-1882* (New York: Baptist Home Mission Rooms, 1883), 129, 133.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 133. Walter Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans?" *The Examiner* (January 10, 1895): 13. Stephen Shaw, *The Catholic Parish as a Waystation of Ethnicity and Americanization: Chicago's Germans and Italians, 1903-1939* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1991), 71-99, 131-37.

<sup>49</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1927, thirteenth edition 1970), 106.

Among the social forces which contribute to the formation of classes and so to the schism of churches, economic factors may be the most powerful; but they are not the only sources of denominationalism. Sometimes, indeed, they seem to be less important than ethnic and political or generally cultural factors. Alongside the churches of the poor and of the bourgeoisie, ethnic and national churches take their place as further manifestations of the victory of divisive social consciousness over the Christian ideal of unity.<sup>50</sup>

Niebuhr was realistic about the role of nationality in the division of religious life in North America at a time when leading scholars were interested in smoothing over differences in the interest of demonstrating unity. Niebuhr, however, was uniquely equipped to do so having been raised in a German-speaking family and attending parochial and German schools, where instruction was typically in the German language, until he entered Elmhurst College. Niebuhr was raised in the German-speaking Evangelical Synod of North America.

North American church historians were slow to recognize the importance of national, ethnic, and linguistic commonalities in the development of North American denominationalism. Although immigration was a common experience in North America in the nineteenth century, mainline historians of the period gave the minority only an inconsequential role in their accounts of religious development on the continent. Some sought to explain the immigrant experience on the American frontier, viewing the frontier experience as a great melting pot, from which the "new American" emerged, but few professional church historians in the early and mid-twentieth century took up this cause, leaving it instead to sociologists and social historians.<sup>51</sup> The non-English-speaking immigrants were

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists 1783-1830*, vol. 1 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931). William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American*



treated as the objects of home missions, but not as significant subjects in the building of denominational Protestantism in North America. Mainline Protestant denominations of British origin, such as the Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, and indigenous white dissenting or sectarian groups, such as the Campbellites, Millerites (Adventists), and Mormons, encompassed the discussion of North American denominationalism. Little mention was given to the religious impact of the immigrants who flooded the Atlantic and Pacific shores of the nation and settled the farmlands of the Ohio Valley and the plains of Iowa and the Dakotas. The non-Anglo immigrant population was treated simply as a focus of greater Anglo-Protestant mission work.

A brief perusal of the sweeping histories of North American Christianity, written in the mid-twentieth century, demonstrated the omission of immigration and ethnicity as factors in the denominational development of North America. These works revealed the prevailing attitude toward the historical impact of immigration and ethnicity on the history of the churches. Among these, Winthrop Hudson gave the most recognition to ethnicity, devoting some attention to immigration in both *Religion in America* and *American Protestantism*.<sup>52</sup> In his longer account of the religious experience of the United States, *Religion in America*, Hudson allocated a chapter to a discussion of the impact of immigration

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*Frontier 1783-1840: The Methodists*, vol. IV (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946). Sidney Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963). Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

<sup>52</sup> Winthrop Hudson, *Religion in America*, (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1965) and *American Protestantism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

upon the social and religious history of the United States. The bulk of the chapter, "New Americans," examined the tension that developed in urban areas over the massive influx of foreigners into the United States:

Social apprehensions were aroused by the poverty, illiteracy, and unsanitary habits of many of the immigrants. Whether the immigrants were herded into slums or created slums, there was widespread agreement that they constituted a social hazard...The political impact of the new arrivals was expressed in the saying that the immigrants "landed on Monday and voted on Tuesday," being met at the dock by the "bosses," quickly registered, and then shepherded to the polls...From an economic point of view, the new Americans also were not an unmixed blessing. They did provide cheap labor for an expanding America, but not too many of the native born appreciated this fact.<sup>53</sup>

Apprehension about the influence of the foreign element in the United States took political embodiment in The Order of United Americans, also known as the "Know-Nothing" Party, in the 1850s and in movements to legislate limits on immigration during the 1880s. This nativism was characterized by the sentiment of "America for the Americans," with Americans defined as white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and English-speaking.<sup>54</sup> Nativism tended to be anti-Catholic in its focus and was directed less significantly toward the foreign-born, who populated Protestant Churches. Hudson reported that the leading Protestant denominations organized missions to non-English-speaking immigrants. For example, the

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<sup>53</sup> Hudson, *Religion in America*, 239.

<sup>54</sup> John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 4 defined Nativism in this way: "Nativism, therefore, should be defined as intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., "un-American") connections. Specific nativistic antagonisms may, and do, vary widely in response to the changing character of minority irritants and the shifting conditions of the day; but through each separate hostility runs the connecting, energizing force of modern nationalism. While drawing on much broader cultural antipathies and ethnocentric judgments, nativism translates them into a zeal to destroy the enemies of a distinctively American way of life." Dale Knobel, *America for the Americans: The Nativist Movement in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 187. Theodore Roosevelt, "What Americanism Means," *The Forum* 17 (1894): 198-206.

Baptists maintained home missions among more than twenty different national groups, including German immigrants. The account written by Hudson did not examine the leadership of the foreign conferences of the mainline Anglo-Protestant denominations, many of which were led by well-educated pastors and teachers. Nor did ethnicity continue to be a significant factor in Protestant denominational development in his story of America.

Sydney Mead's influential work, *The Lively Experiment*, which was an early treatment of the influence of American democracy upon the character of Christianity in the United States, did not recognize the immigrant or ethnic element at all. In his chapter "Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism," Mead described the importance of the American frontier and the sense of freedom that allowed for the development of the denominational division of American Protestantism. Highlighting the sectarian tendency of American denominations to justify their own beliefs, the freedom of the church as a voluntary organization, pietistic missionary emphasis of the churches, revivalism, the rejection of reason, and competition, Mead explained the denominational character of American Christianity. Each of the characteristics Mead mentioned were of great significance to denominational development in the North American context; however, in trying to describe this pluralism, Mead actually seemed to push a rather homogeneous view of American Protestantism. His work was typical of accounts of the history of Christianity in North America. Rather than dealing creatively with the reality of ethnic and racial differences in the American churches, Mead and William Warren Sweet, tended to homogenize the history of

American Protestantism. Sweet, for example, treated the development of American religious life on the frontier. He followed Frederick Jackson Turner's view of the frontier experience as a crucible in which all forms of difference were dissolved and a new American emerged.<sup>55</sup> Yet, in recent decades, local histories of immigrant settlements on the frontier, as well as broader examinations of ethnicity in American history, have demonstrated that ethnic differences, in part but not entirely characterized by language usage, persisted to the third, fourth, and fifth generations.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, nineteenth and early twentieth century documents often addressed the issues of immigration, racial and ethnic differences, and Americanization. Concerns were expressed in Protestant denominational publications about the immigration, Americanization, and immigrant churches in the United States.<sup>57</sup> Immigration and urbanization were

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<sup>55</sup> William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America* (New York: Harper, 1939).

<sup>56</sup> Kathleen Conzen, *Making Their Own America*, 7-9, 32-33. Thomas Archdeacon, *Becoming American* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), 201. Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant* (May 15, 1937 address to the Augustana Historical Society, Rock Island, IL. Reprint. Rock Island, IL: Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center and Augustana College Library, 1987), 12-26. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963). Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). Timothy Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America," in Martin Marty, ed. *Modern American Protestantism and Its World, Volume 8 Ethnic and Non-Protestant Themes* (New York: K. G. Saur, 1993), pp. 3-49. originally published in *American Historical Review* 83 (December 1978): 1155-1183. Timothy Smith, "Religious Denominations as Ethnic Communities: A Regional Case Study," *Church History* 35 no. 2 (June 1966): 207-26. Timothy Smith, "The Ohio Valley: Testing Ground for American's Experiment in Religious Pluralism," *Church History* 60 (December 1991): 461-79. Timothy Smith, "New Approaches to the History of Immigration in Twentieth-Century America," *American Historical Review* 71 (July 1966): 1265-79.

<sup>57</sup> Daniel Potter, "What to Do with the Foreigner," *The Examiner* 66 (January 17, 1889): 2. George Schulte, "The Other Side of the German Question," *The Examiner* (July 6, 1882): 2. Walter Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans?" *The Examiner* (January 10, 1895): 12-13. Samuel Zane Batten, "The New Problems of Immigration," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 25 (July 1903): 175-85. Hermann Schaeffer, "Does the American Baptist Home Mission Society Americanize Germans?" *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 13 no. 11 (November 1891): 312-14. Thomas Villers, "Immigration a Providential Opportunity of Evangelization," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 22 (August 1900): 225-31. George Curtis,

driving factors in the development of home missions, urban revival meetings, the Social Gospel movement, and the growth of mainline Protestantism.

Late twentieth-century volumes on North American church history have been more inclusive and have attempted to portray the diversity of the North American religious experience. At the same time, however, the role of the immigrant in the development of denominationalism has not been given warranted attention. The general historical works continue to describe the problems of mass immigration and urbanization as the primary cause for mission and social outreach work in the United States during the post-Civil War period.<sup>58</sup> Apart from recognition of the role of immigration in the development of Roman Catholic parishes, Mennonite/Amish settlements, and the creation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, little has been said about the affect of immigration upon evangelicalism in North America. Instead, one must turn to volumes that focus on issues of immigration and/or ethnicity. Jay Dolan described the divisions between Irish and German Catholic immigrants in New York in *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics 1815-1865*. Ethnic divisions, including the desire for ethnic leadership and the existence of different liturgical traditions, fed by influxes of immigrants, resulted in the creation of ethnic parishes in New York City. Migration, upward mobility, the Americanization of second and third generation immigrants, and other changes in the ethnic communities eventually

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"Duty of This Nation and the Church toward Immigration," *Methodist Review* 73 (1891): 721-26. W. H. Wilder, "The Evil of Immigration," *Methodist Review* 73 (1891): 715-20.

<sup>58</sup> Edwin Scott Gaustad, *A Religious History of America* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990) 178-97. Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 304-307. A study of the social concern movement in the cities of the United States is Norris Magnusson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work 1865-1920* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1977; reprint Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990).

diminished the need for the ethnic parishes. The work provided an insightful view into the importance of ethnic issues in the development of Roman Catholicism.

Few such works have been published with regard to Protestantism. Lawrence Davis surveyed the perspectives of the American Baptist Home Mission Society on immigration from the beginning of home missions in the 1830s until the outbreak of World War I. He demonstrated that in the early period of home missions, prior to the Civil War, the Baptists were fearful of the impact of immigration upon the social and moral development of the nation.<sup>59</sup> In the post-war period, the Baptists moved into a phase of cosmopolitanism, accepting the immigrant Baptist conferences as their partners in missions.<sup>60</sup> It seemed, at least, that this was the official position of the ABHMS. In the post-World War years, the Baptists pushed a policy of Americanization of all non-English-speaking immigrants and churches that used languages other than English in worship and missions. The work of Davis was an interesting look into the attitudes and expectations of the American Baptists toward Northern European, Southern European, and Chinese immigrants. Davis provided information about the relationship between the leaders of some of the foreign language mission conferences, such as the German Baptists, and the ABHMS. Some work has been published on the General Conference of Swedish Baptists in North America. Their history is similar to that of the General Conference of German Baptists in that they tended to be Pietists in their theology and they never assimilated

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<sup>59</sup> Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind*, 97.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 102.

institutionally with the American Baptists. J. O. Backlund wrote a history of the Swedish Baptists in the early twentieth century that did not provide critical or documentary materials.<sup>61</sup> The work of Virgil Olson has given greater attention to the development of the Swedish Baptists within the broader context of immigration, ethnicity, and the relationship to the American Baptists.<sup>62</sup>

The Anglo-Protestant mainline denominations have not studied the impact of non-English-speaking immigration, immigrant churches, or immigrant leadership on their development.<sup>63</sup> This has been no less true of Northern European immigrants than those from other regions of the world. The only existing monograph on the German Methodists was written in 1939 by Paul Douglass.<sup>64</sup> No study of the impact of the German Conferences, or of immigration in general, upon the development of nineteenth and early twentieth-century American Methodism has been published. With the exception of a few published articles, the same is true for the Presbyterians.<sup>65</sup> The Evangelical Covenant Church, which was Swedish in origin, was supported in its development

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<sup>61</sup> J.O. Backlund, *Swedish Baptists in America: A History* (Chicago: Conference Press, 1933).

<sup>62</sup> Virgil Olson, "An Interpretation of the Historical Relationships Between the American Baptist Convention and the Baptist General Conference," *American Baptist Quarterly* 6 no. 3 (September 1987): 156-171.

<sup>63</sup> This does not include those denominations that were historically German in constituency, such as the Church of the Brethren, the United Brethren in Christ, the Evangelical Association, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and Wisconsin Synod. These denominations began independently of Anglo-Protestant mission efforts and were never connected in synods or conferences to a larger English-speaking Protestant body. A few works available on these denominations include:

<sup>64</sup> Paul Douglass, *The Story of German Methodism: Biography of an Immigrant Soul* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1939). Also, Carl Wittke, *William Nast: Patriarch of German Methodism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1959).

<sup>65</sup> Paula Benkhart, "Changing Attitudes of Presbyterians toward Southern and Eastern European Immigrants, 1880-1914," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 49 (Fall 1971): 222-45. Maynard Brass, "German Presbyterians and the Synod of the West," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 56 (Fall 1978): 237-51. James Weis, "The Presbyterian Mission to German Immigrants," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 43, no. 3 (September 1965): 264-91.

in the United States by the home missions division of the Congregationalists. Again, however, the Covenant Church has been responsible for compiling and communicating its history in North America. It has not been given significant attention in the history of Congregationalism or in the broader scope of denominational development in North America.

Within the developing denominations, and in American evangelicalism as a whole, in the nineteenth century there was heterogeneity in ethnic character. Some European immigrants, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, who were accustomed to the security provided by the state church, were often shocked and disoriented by the very characteristics that Mead believed brought American Protestantism together, namely revivalism, missionary zeal, and the voluntary nature of the church. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod vehemently rejected the revivalism of the Methodists and struggled to build their first churches as their members became acquainted with the system of voluntary contributions to the church.<sup>66</sup> Other European immigrants were deeply affected by the freedom of the American environment. Some left the denominations of their birth for the revivalistic, free churches of the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, building churches that accommodated non-English speaking congregants. Denominationalism and evangelicalism were not homogeneous movements as suggested by Mead and others, but dynamic movements that involved ethnicity, theology, and accommodation to the changing American environment.

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<sup>66</sup> Frederick Luebke, "The Immigrant Condition as a Factor in the Conservatism of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 38 (April 1965): 19-28.



The study of ethnicity in North American social and religious history has been revived in recent decades. Will Herberg wrote the now classic *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* in which he developed the relationship between religion and ethnicity.<sup>67</sup> The role of ethnicity in the mainstream, evangelical Protestant denominations in North America has yet to be explored or explained fully.<sup>68</sup> Those who studied immigration history realized the significance of ethnicity, as well as the connection between the group identity of immigrants and the role of the church or synagogue.<sup>69</sup> A few historians of North American religious development have sought to describe the importance of group identity in the

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<sup>67</sup> Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, 1960).

<sup>68</sup> One might think of these denominations as Anglo-American. Some scholarly works have been published on the role of ethnicity in the development of German Catholic parishes, e.g. Jay Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*. Jay Dolan, "Philadelphia and the German Catholic Community" in Randall M. Miller and Thomas D. Marzik, eds. *Immigrants and Religion in Urban America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), 69-83. Stephen Shaw, *The Catholic Parish as a Waystation* and in the organization and early history of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, e.g. Luebke, "The Immigrant Condition as a Factor in the Conservatism of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod". However, denominations with their roots in Britain or the United States, such as the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopal (Anglican) and Congregational communions, are usually considered rather homogenous, with the exception of the black churches within the larger denominational umbrella. Yet, most of these denominations that, in the present, have the appearance of being homogenous had rather significant ethnic divisions in the nineteenth-century. For example, the Methodists had a German Conference of more than 65,000 members prior to WWI; the Presbyterians had a significant mission to westward moving German immigrants/migrants; the Swedish Covenant Church began its work in America under the auspices of the Congregational Church Mission Society; and the American Baptist Home Mission Society had, at one time, approximately 26 foreign-speaking conferences, the largest being the General Conference of German Baptists. The Swedish Conference was also very strong. Donald Dayton is mentionable for his attempts to demonstrate the diversity of American Evangelicalism, and particularly for his efforts to show that Evangelicalism did not emerge solely from the Reformed tradition in America. Donald Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds. *The Variety of Evangelicalism*.

<sup>69</sup> Numerous social historians have been led to examine the role of religion in the experience of emigrants to North America. For example, Kathleen Conzen has found it necessary to address the religion of German-Americans in her works on immigration history, including: essay on "Germans" in Stephan Thernstrom, ed. *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, 405-25, esp. 418ff. Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture," 44-76. Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," 132-147. Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee 1836-1860*, especially pages 159-167. Conzen, *Making Their Own America*. Also, Frederick Luebke has delved into both the social history of German-Americans, as well as into the relationship between immigration and developments within the Lutheran Church, Missouri-Synod, see *Bonds of Loyalty* in which Luebke discusses German-speaking congregations; "The Immigrant Condition as a Factor in the Conservatism of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," 19-28.

character of North American denominationalism.<sup>70</sup> They also brought to light the gaps in historiography caused by the omission of self-conscious reflection on issues of ethnicity.

Martin Marty's presidential address to the American Society of Church History, "Ethnicity: The Skeleton of Religion in America", attempted to map out the study of the relationship between ethnicity and religious development. In this historiographical essay, Marty revealed the lack of treatment of ethnicity issues in the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) denominations. He explained that earlier generations of scholars sought to homogenize the history of mainline, white Protestantism, and "overlooked ethnic and racial factors because these usually reinforced senses of difference."<sup>71</sup> The implication of this view of North American religious history was that WASP traditions were universal and that other ethnic religious expressions were deviations from the norm. Marty saw ethnicity as the 'supporting framework' of American religion, rather than as an historical factor to be proverbially swept under the rug.<sup>72</sup> In his discussion, Marty did not refer to issues of ethnicity only in terms of racial divisions within mainline Protestantism. Whites composed an ethnic group and the history of mainline Protestantism was driven by ethnic issues, including the preservation of an Anglo-

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<sup>70</sup> The classic work is Will Herberg's, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*. Also, Martin Marty has addressed the issues of ethnicity within mainstream North American Protestantism in *The Righteous Empire* (New York: Dial Press, 1970).

<sup>71</sup> Martin Marty, "Ethnicity: The Skeleton of Religion in America," in Martin Marty, ed. *Modern American Protestantism and Its World: Historical Articles on Protestantism in American Religious Life, Vol. 8 Ethnic and Non-Protestant Themes* (New York: K. G. Saur, 1993), 41. Also reprinted in Russell Richey, ed. *Denominationalism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977), 251-272. The original essay was Marty's presidential address to the American Society of Church History published as "Ethnicity: The Skeleton of Religion in American," *Church History* 41 (1972): 5-21.

<sup>72</sup> Marty, "Ethnicity," 38.

Saxon religious ideal of a Protestant, Christian North America.<sup>73</sup> Marty called for the examination of WASP histories as expressions of ethnicity. From this perspective, "WASP and white ethnic American historians would be able critically to revisit their own older traditions, traditions which were once racially and ethnically self-conscious, for better and for worse."<sup>74</sup> The melting pot or assimilationist approach to the religious history of North America did not give a clear picture of the development of mainline Protestantism. The issues of ethnicity were significant throughout the nineteenth-century, though they were overlooked or minimized in the attempts of twentieth-century historians to homogenize denominational histories.

The need for new research into the relationship between group identity and religion was recognized also by Timothy Smith.<sup>75</sup> Smith argued for closer examination of the relationship between the development of religious life in North America and ethnicity. He defined ethnicity as the sense of peoplehood, which transcended political nationality, and has noted that there was widespread belief in the nineteenth-century that peoplehood would be replaced by nationhood through the melting pot process.<sup>76</sup> Immigrants often developed a sense of peoplehood, group identity, or ethnicity after their arrival in North America.

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<sup>73</sup> This is, in essence, his argument in *The Righteous Empire*. Marty looks at the WASP assimilationist drive within North American Protestantism from a critical point of view.

<sup>74</sup> Marty, "Ethnicity," 48.

<sup>75</sup> Timothy Smith, "Congregation, State, and Denomination: The Forming of the American Religious Structure," *The William and Mary Quarterly* (Third Series) 25 (1968): 155-76. Timothy Smith, "New Approaches to the History of Immigration in Twentieth-Century America," 1265-79. Timothy Smith, "The Ohio Valley: Testing Ground for America's Experiment in Religious Pluralism," 461-79. Timothy Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America," 3-49. Timothy Smith, "Religious Denominations as Ethnic Communities," 207-26.

<sup>76</sup> Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America," 3.

Religion had a role in the definition and redefinition of ethnic identity among immigrants. Indeed, Smith explained that the relationship between religion and ethnicity was a dynamic relationship. Religion had a role in the way that immigrants defined themselves, and in the creation of cultures and subcultures among immigrants in the same linguistic group.<sup>77</sup> Smith noted that scholars and journalists had often written about linguistic groups with the assumption that language defined ethnicity; however, there were often divisions within a linguistic group as different branches created an ethnic life based on religious identification.<sup>78</sup>

Nineteenth-century German emigration to North America resulted in the formation of several new "ethnoreligious communities," including the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church-Wisconsin Synod, the Jewish community, the German Catholics, as well as a community of political and intellectual freethinkers who mostly rejected religion.<sup>79</sup> In the North American context, there was interplay between the faith of the German immigrants and predominant, evangelical, revivalistic Protestantism. Some ethnoreligious communities, such as the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, sought to shield their churches from the influence of frontier revivalist preachers. They were appalled by both the message and methods of revivalism. At the same time, however,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 6, 18. Smith cites as an example the settlement of Germans in colonial Pennsylvania. Religion was important in the creation of ethnic subcultures (or in the division of the German linguistic groups) as the German immigrant population was divided between Lutheran and Reformed Protestants on one hand, and the sectarian Protestants (Mennonites, Moravians, Church of the Brethren) on the other. See also the discussion of American religious groupings presented by Kloss, "German-American Language Maintenance Efforts," 224-225.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America," 17.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 18.

other German denominations employed the preaching styles, methods, and goals of evangelical, revivalistic Protestantism.

The North American social and religious environment caused groups to define themselves against or adapt themselves to its accompanying emphasis on personal experience of faith. This form of Christianity often caused internal conflict and resulted in change within German congregations. Some German ethnoreligious groups retreated from this form of Christianity.<sup>80</sup> Others embraced it as Evangelicalism resonated with the Pietist tendencies adopted prior to immigration. This was part of the dynamic of defining group identity. Smith wrote:

Immigrant congregations served diverse family, group, and individual interests. They were not transplants of traditional institutions but communities of commitment and, therefore, arenas of change. Often founded by lay persons and always dependent on voluntary support, their structures, leadership, and liturgy had to be shaped to meet pressing human needs. The same was true of the regional and national ethnic denominations or subcommunities which emerged in America. They had to justify themselves by nurturing those morally transforming experiences that the whole membership perceived to be "saving."<sup>81</sup>

The immigrant experience of displacement pushed groups of newcomers to create an ethnic identity around common experiences and interests. For some this took the form of membership in a *Turnerverein*, a choral society, or a political club. Others turned to the churches of their childhood, searching for something that was familiar, that had remnants of the life they had left. According to Smith:

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<sup>80</sup> The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod leadership were highly critical of American forms of religious expression. They were critical of the Methodist and Baptist circuit riders and revivalists. They also deplored the methods used in revivals. Some Missouri Synod pastors refused communion to anyone who attended a revival meeting. Luebke, "The Immigrant Condition," 23-25.

<sup>81</sup> Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America," 26.

Separation from both personal and physical associations of one's childhood drew emotional strings taut. Friendships, however, were often fleeting; and the lonely vigils – where sickness, unemployment, or personal rejection set individuals apart – produced deep crises of the spirit. At such moments, the concrete symbols of order or hope that the village church or priest and the annual round of religious observances had once provided seemed far away; yet the mysteries of individual existence as well as the confusing agonies of the *anomie* cried out for religious explanation. For this reason...migration was often a theologizing experience – just as it had been when Abraham left the land of his fathers, when the people of the Exodus followed Moses into the wilderness, and when Jeremiah urged the exiles who wept by the rivers of Babylon to make the God of their past the hope of their future.<sup>82</sup>

Smith and others have demonstrated in their work that ethnicity, particularly when linked to religious communities, persisted several generations after the arrival of the first generation of immigrants. Indeed, ethnic and religious themes within community continued even after outward signs of Americanization, such as the adoption of English as the primary language of communication, were present. A gap still exists, however, in the application of ethnic and immigrant themes to the history of Protestant Evangelicalism in North America. One purpose of this thesis is to give the General Conference of German Baptists their place in the puzzle of North American Evangelicalism and denominationalism.

Although the majority of German Baptists were not Baptists at the time of their emigration to the United States, the German-speaking Baptist churches became centers of community life and meaning. In the churches they sang the hymns of their culture, heard the Scriptures read from Martin Luther's translation of the Bible, set the parameters for acceptable behavior, and prayed in their mother tongue. They adapted the methods of revivalism to the German work, emphasizing an inward and personal experience of the faith that was outwardly

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 23.

demonstrated in a simple, sober lifestyle. In their new surroundings they identified themselves as Baptists and German-Americans. There was a dynamic relationship between their ethnic identity, theology, and immigrant experience. Because of their Pietist theology and ethnic mission the German Baptists have earned a place for themselves in the mosaic of North American evangelicalism and denominationalism.

### **Outline of Chapters**

The chapters that follow will demonstrate the importance of Pietist theology and ethnic identity during the formative years of the General Conference of German Baptists. The first chapter provides an introduction to the history of German Pietism during the seventeenth century. The chapter also provides a brief overview of the major theological emphases of Pietism as explained in the works of Philipp Jakob Spener and August Hermann Francke. It is not intended to provide insight or develop new arguments with regard to the beginnings of Pietism. The chapter is intended to provide background information that should be useful in examining the impact of Pietist theology upon the German Baptists in North America.

The second and third chapters of the thesis relate Pietist theology directly to the General Conference of German Baptists. The significant influence of Pietism on the early leadership of the Conference is examined in the second chapter. Not only did many of the early German Baptist pastors show the influences of Pietism in their backgrounds, they also communicated the emphases of Pietism through their ministry, publications, and seminary courses. The third

chapter continues the examination of the relationship between Pietism and the German Baptists by demonstrating that the theological emphases of the German Baptists closely matched those of classical German Pietism. It is certainly true that streams of Pietist influence flowed through Evangelical Protestantism in the United States throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This does not, however, indicate that the early generations of German Baptists acquired their Pietism after emigrating to North America. Indeed, one finds Pietist theological concepts in the earliest publications and church covenants of the German-speaking immigrants who formed the early Baptist churches. Their Pietism was transplanted, but found a welcoming environment in North America.

In the fourth and fifth chapters of the thesis, the emphasis shifts away from theology to examine the importance of ethnic identity in the work of the German Baptists. Ethnicity and theology are not treated as completely separate influences. Instead, it was the interaction between theology and ethnicity that allowed the General Conference of German Baptists to move toward complete independence from the American Baptists. Chapter four provides an overview of German immigration to North America. It also surveys literature addressing the formation of a German American ethnic identity, the formation of German-American neighborhoods, and the role of religious groups in reinforcing ethnic differences during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chapter five applies the arguments presented in the previous chapter to the General Conference of German Baptists. The German Baptists formed an ethnic identity as Germans and a religious identity as Baptists. Moreover, they developed a mission that was



specifically directed toward evangelizing German-speaking immigrants. In order to preserve this ethnic mission, it was necessary to preserve their language, identity, and theology. They maintained their identity and mission even as the American Baptists, and certain social and economic factors, pressured them to Americanize.

The final chapter is a brief summary of the conclusions of the thesis. It reexamines the goals of the study and notes what has been accomplished. Perhaps more importantly, it also discusses what has not been accomplished in this thesis. In other words, it gives suggestions for further research and study concerning the role of immigrant churches in the development of religious history in North America.

## Chapter 1

### The Theological and Historical Background of Pietism

#### Introduction

The historical and theological movement known as Pietism has been highly influential in the development of evangelical Protestant Christianity in North America.<sup>1</sup> The impact of Pietist traditions upon European immigrant groups, and the subsequent influence of immigrant churches and church leaders upon the religious life of North America, warrants further study. German immigrant churches in the United States provide particularly interesting opportunities to examine the influence of continental Pietist traditions upon theology, leadership, and the practice of Christian living in ethnic churches.

The early German Baptists in North America were essentially Pietists in their religious views and practices. They discovered the full expression of their Pietism in Baptist theological and ecclesiastical structures in North America. The piety expressed by the German Baptists was drawn from the mystical, spiritual, and practical traditions of continental Pietism. Indeed, many of the first pastors in the General Conference of German Baptists had been German, Swiss, or Dutch Pietists.<sup>2</sup> The theological emphases of the German Baptists were closely related to the theological points of classical German Lutheran Pietism. Additionally, their emphasis upon Christian *praxis* was characteristic of both seventeenth-

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<sup>1</sup> Stoeffler, ed. *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* is a collection of essays that explores the influence of German Pietism upon the development of Evangelical groups in North America.

<sup>2</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 13-36.

century Pietism and the Neo-Pietist revivals of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

In order to provide background for the examination of the influence of Pietism upon the early generations of the General Conference of German Baptists, this chapter describes the historic movement known as Pietism as it emerged in the seventeenth century under the theological leadership of Philipp Jakob Spener.<sup>3</sup> The primary theological tenets of Pietism, articulated by Spener and his younger colleague, August Hermann Francke, are explained.

### **Pietism as an Historical Movement**

Pietism was a renewal movement within Protestantism that began in the seventeenth century. As Ernst Troeltsch and others acknowledged, Pietism, defined as a broad movement emphasizing reform and practice of the Christian life, was present in Catholicism, as well as Reformed and Lutheran Protestantism.<sup>4</sup> For the most part, Pietism was a spiritual movement that emphasized the spiritual regeneration of the individual, the priesthood of all believers, the authority of the Scriptures, and the practice of the highest ethical standards in the life of the Christian. Pietism defined the central core of Christianity as a personal and meaningful relationship with God through Jesus

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<sup>3</sup> Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* is the leading scholarly biography in English of Pietism's leading figure. Authoritative works in German include Kurt Aland, *Spener-Studien* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1943). Hans Bruns, *Philipp Jakob Spener: Ein Reformator nach der Reformation* (Giessen und Basel: Brunnen-Verlag, 1955). Paul Grünberg, *Philipp Jakob Spener* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906). Johannes Wallmann, *Philipp Jakob Spener und die Anfänge des Pietismus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, vol. 2, trans. Olive Wyon (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 714. Troeltsch also notes that the umbrella of Pietism included

Christ. This relationship was inward, experiential, and personal. At the same time, it found outward expression in the practice of the Christian life, which included the love of neighbor and a lifestyle that was simple and somewhat ascetic. For the purposes of this study, the term Pietism refers primarily to the movement that emerged within German Lutheranism during the seventeenth century. It revived again in the eighteenth century and continued to be influential in the Lutheran churches of certain German states, namely Württemberg and Westphalia, into the nineteenth century. Classical German Lutheran Pietism developed as a reaction and response to two elements within its religious and social context: the physical, geographical, and moral devastation of the Thirty Years War and the dominance of Lutheran Orthodoxy.

### **The Thirty Years' War**

The Protestant Reformation in Germany resulted in a disastrous war between Roman Catholic and Lutheran forces. Unable to resolve the theological and political differences highlighted by the Lutheran Reformation, the Catholic and Protestant forces went to war in 1618. The Thirty Years' War, which ended in 1648, devastated the German states. It has been estimated by historians that one-third of the population of the German states was decimated by the war. Entire villages disappeared. Food supplies were ravaged and the land was laid waste. As with every war, there were refugees. The refugees moved from village to village, begging for food or stealing in order to live. Accompanying the war was the devastation of fertile lands and the spread of disease. Yet, it was not only

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British Calvinist Puritanism, movements within continental Calvinism and Lutheranism, as well as

the material loss that affected the people. Contemporary reports suggested that there was a disintegration of the morality of the people at every level of society.<sup>5</sup> Drunkenness was common among all classes. The war also left the class structure rigidly set.

### **Lutheran Orthodoxy**

Lutheran Orthodoxy was a theological system that resulted from doctrinal disagreements within the Lutheran ranks after the death of Martin Luther.<sup>6</sup> The Lutheran Reformation, which began in 1517, was a dynamic movement that brought a tremendous change to the religious landscape of the Holy Roman Empire. Through the period of controversy, the dynamic concepts of the movement Luther initiated were honed into what Lutheran theologians considered pure doctrine. The result was the Formula of Concord in 1577, and a rigid confessionalism within Lutheranism. Stoeffler writes:

Not only did the guardians of orthodoxy endeavor to keep pure the teaching of their communion but the truth had to be stated in accepted phrases. Any deviation in phraseology was immediately viewed with great suspicion...In this heavily dogmatic atmosphere the essence of Christianity came to be regarded as consisting in a series of rationally ordered propositions. Faith had largely been redefined so as to consist in personal assent to these propositions. Confessional theology and Christianity were regarded as being almost synonymous.<sup>7</sup>

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the more radical the Left Wing movements that developed during the seventeenth century.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Stoeffler offers a quote from a contemporary of the period, "'Old and young,' complained pastor Heinlin of Württemberg, 'can no longer tell what is of God or of the devil, poor widows and orphans are counted for dung, like dogs they are pushed into the street, there to perish of hunger and cold.'" Quoted in *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 180. Stoeffler's source for the quote was F. Uhorn, *Geschichte der deutschen-lutherischen Kirche*, 1911, vol. I, 171.

<sup>6</sup> John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity: Interpreted through Its Development* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1988), 81-84.

<sup>7</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 183.

It was characteristic of Lutheran orthodoxy to stress the authority of the Scriptures as the written Word of God. Asserting the inspiration of the biblical text, proponents of orthodoxy held that every word of Scripture was inspired directly by the Holy Spirit, and thus the original biblical texts were inerrant. Moreover, the Word of God had the authority or power to create faith in the hearer. Orthodoxy disregarded Luther's idea that the Holy Spirit was the agent through which the Bible becomes God's Word for the individual hearer or reader. Instead, it was not the continued work of the Holy Spirit that made the Bible revelatory for the individual, for it had this power on its own. Dillenberger and Welch explained:

The Bible as Bible, understood through the Book of Concord, was synonymous with the Word of God. Faith in revelation meant assent to statements derived from the Bible. And these were set forth with the rigor of theological method in which sensitive spirituality was often lacking. Men were now more concerned with being correct than with the revivifying power of the Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

Doctrinal formalism spread and led to a formalism of religious life and spirituality. Luther had held a personal view of God. Sin was the revolt of the individual against the will of God and was found in the individual's rejection of God. Since the human will was not inclined toward God or the will of God, it was necessary to receive the grace of God, for this alone saved the individual from God's wrath and justified the individual's sin. While orthodoxy retained the Lutheran emphasis upon grace, the emphasis that Luther had placed on a personal God who affected the personal and spiritual lives of individuals did not find favor. Instead, orthodoxy, according to its critics, intellectualized Christianity and made

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<sup>8</sup> Dillenberger and Welch, *Protestant Christianity*, 85.

the Christian faith seem as if it were nothing more than assent to a rigid set of doctrinal statements. One was a good Lutheran if one listened to the preached Word, partook of the sacraments, and obeyed the letter of the Lutheran confessions. As Stein wrote, “Later Lutheranism defined sin as an infraction of a divine law. A more formal, quite objective, and creedally correct atmosphere was developing.”<sup>9</sup> Also, whereas Luther’s earlier writings showed the influences of the *Theologia Germanica* and other mystical writings concerning the development of the inner spiritual life of the individual, little was said within orthodoxy about the inner spiritual life of the individual.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Theological Background of Lutheran Pietism**

Philipp Jakob Spener has been credited with being the father of Lutheran Pietism. Spener drew his ideas from a number of sources, including streams of thought already present within Lutheranism. His university years at Strasbourg pointed to the influence of the Reformed and Lutheran traditions upon his theological development. Strasbourg, situated at the crossroads of trade routes, benefited from the flow of ideas from the British Isles to the continent. The faculty at Strasbourg was familiar with the devotional writings of the English Puritans. It is known that Spener himself read the Puritan devotional writings of Lewis Bayly, Immanuel Sonthom, Jeremiah Dyke, and Richard Baxter.<sup>11</sup> He also had contact with the French/Swiss reformer, Jean de Labadie, who encouraged the use of conventicles for instructing the laity.

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<sup>9</sup> Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Luther in fact published a new edition of the *Theologia Germanica* with an introduction he wrote in late 1516, just prior to serving as the catalyst for the Reformation in 1517.

These facts do not detract from the assertion that German (Lutheran) Pietism emerged from currents within German Lutheranism. While the movement shared the same primary aim as English Puritanism, and Dutch and German Reformed Pietism, namely the practice of the pious life, Kurt Aland argued that they followed different paths to that purpose. "Puritanism, in line with its historical background, sought to usher in the rule of Christ on earth, while Dutch Pietism attempted to make an entire people holy; when we compare this with German Lutheran Pietism we immediately see that, despite their common understanding of the goal, they followed different routes to it."<sup>12</sup> He further suggested that the confessional barrier between the Lutheran and Reformed communions did not allow for much cross influence.

Ernest Stoeffler was not as convinced of the lack of Reformed influence upon Spener. According to Stoeffler, Spener's Pietism had a Reformed cast to it with its emphasis on attention to daily piety and proper behavior.<sup>13</sup> He also noted that in his younger years Spener traveled in Reformed territories almost exclusively. It was during his travels that he attended the services of Labadie in Geneva. This encounter resulted in Spener publishing a German translation of Labadie's *Manual of Piety*.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, however, Stoeffler placed Spener in the shadow of Johann Arndt, an earlier Lutheran writer who drew from the early writings of Luther and the medieval mystics to oppose the doctrinal rigidity of orthodoxy.

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<sup>11</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 231-32.

<sup>12</sup> Kurt Aland, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 2 *From the Reformation to the Present* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 236.

<sup>13</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 232.



Arndt's devotional writings, the most famous and widely read of which was *True Christianity*, were extremely influential upon the Pietist movement that developed a century later.<sup>15</sup> In fact, some scholars have gone so far as to label him, and not Spener, as the father of Pietism.<sup>16</sup> Arndt believed that he represented true Lutheranism. His theological emphases foreshadowed those of Spener. Indeed, Spener noted his own dependence upon the work of Arndt, who stressed the spiritual renewal of the individual through the work of God's grace.<sup>17</sup> This renewal consisted of inward repentance and the conversion of the heart to God, and resulted in faith that demonstrated absolute trust in Christ and commitment to him. He referred to this renewal as conversion or new birth, and asserted that it resulted in the individual living a holy life.<sup>18</sup> His emphases were his reaction against orthodoxy "which treated the perfection resulting from baptismal regeneration as if it precluded the necessity of living a holy life."<sup>19</sup>

The critical point of Arndt's theology was the spiritual perfection of the individual.<sup>20</sup> The Christian was to continue growing in faith until he was able to turn away from the ways of the world and commit himself totally to God. From this commitment would result personal behavior of the highest ethical standard.<sup>21</sup> In addition to his emphasis on perfection, Arndt stressed the imitation of Christ

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 231.

<sup>15</sup> Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, ed. and trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

<sup>16</sup> Among these is Ernest Stoeffler who believes that Arndt's role as the father of Pietism has been given little attention due to Albrecht Ritschl's contention in *Geschichte des Pietismus* that the conventicles were the manifestation of Pietism. Arndt did not hold conventicles, thus according to Ritschl's view he was not a Pietist. *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 202-211.

<sup>17</sup> Arndt, *True Christianity*, 21, 39, 167.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 25, 167.

<sup>19</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 208.

<sup>20</sup> Arndt, *True Christianity*, 167, 180, 204.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 47, 49, 50-51. Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 209.

and the daily personal spiritual examination of the Christian. Christ was the model that was to be ever in the mind of the Christian. Also, the Christian was to take time apart every day for inward spiritual examination, prayer, and meditation.<sup>22</sup>

Arndt was also the most widely read devotional writer within late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Lutheranism. His *True Christianity* was read along with Luther's translation of the Bible in the home of pious Lutherans. Under August Hermann Francke's leadership, every student at Halle knew Arndtian devotional literature because Arndt's writings had a great influence upon Francke.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Francke understood his Lutheranism through the lens of Arndtian Pietism.<sup>24</sup> Arndt was a powerful preacher whose words addressed the inward spiritual needs, rather than the objective intellectual needs of his listeners. He was also a pastor who believed that pastors must nurture their own spiritual lives through daily prayer and Bible study. These emphases, among others, were echoed in the Pietism developed by Spener and Francke, who both acknowledged that Arndt had sown the seeds of the Pietist movement.<sup>25</sup> Stoeffler wrote, "In the background of everything Spener thought and did is the Arndtian piety from the central emphases of which he never really departed."<sup>26</sup>

Arndtian piety took root and inspired a reform party that objected to Lutheran orthodoxy on theological grounds in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Among the reform party leaders were Paul Turnow and

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<sup>22</sup> Arndt, *True Christianity*, 211-12.

<sup>23</sup> Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 211.

John Turnow, from the University of Rostock, and John Andrae, on the faculty at Tübingen. They were extremely critical of the moral laxity and lack of discipline within the Church. They argued that the emphasis upon guarding right doctrine came at the expense of right living. The faculty at Rostock knew the writings of Puritan and Reformed Pietists and many were in agreement with the Reformed emphasis on practical piety.<sup>27</sup> Among others in the reform party were Matthias Meyfart, a member of the faculty at Erfurt who advocated special seminaries for training pastors; Balthasar Meisner, Joachim Lutkemann, and Henry Muller, who wanted to awaken the living faith and direct it into channels of personal morality and biblical piety.<sup>28</sup>

In reformed Lutheranism, Pietism was found in its embryonic form. Aland noted, "When we read those Lutheran writers from the sixteenth century onward with an impartial eye and see how they were demanding an internal renewal of the church and an improvement of ecclesiastical conditions and how they were circulating a profusion of reform proposals, we think again and again that here we are meeting Pietism, at least in its preliminary stages."<sup>29</sup> A direct connection between Reformed piety, which gave rise to the Baptist movement in England, and German Lutheran piety cannot be made. German Lutheran Pietists were familiar with the works of Puritans and other Reformed Pietists, but their own emphases came from streams of thought that were already present within the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 230.

<sup>27</sup> Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 26.

<sup>28</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 217-224.

<sup>29</sup> Aland, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 2, 237.

German Lutheran Church. Spener remained a Lutheran and was committed to the early writings and thought of Martin Luther, as well as that of Johann Arndt.

### **The Advent of Lutheran Pietism**

The official advent of Lutheran Pietism occurred in 1675 with the publication of Philipp Jakob Spener's *Pia Desideria*, in which he set the agenda for the German Lutheran Pietist movement. It was published as an introduction to a new edition of Arndt's Postils on the Gospels. German Pietism sought to accomplish two essential goals. The first was to restore the personal and experiential dimension of faith. The second goal was the reformation of the church – or one might say the goal was to complete the Reformation of the Church, which was started by Martin Luther. The Reformation was never completed, from the perspective of the Pietists, because it fell into rigid and intellectualized Orthodoxy.<sup>30</sup>

Spener and his colleague at Halle, August Hermann Francke, also sought to bring to full fruition the Reformation concept of the priesthood of all believers by restoring the concept of an experiential relationship between the individual and God.<sup>31</sup> For Pietists, this restoration took practical form in the study of the Bible, the preaching of the Scriptures for edification of the believer, fervent prayer, and a life of service to God and neighbor. John Weborg wrote, "By means of group Bible study, free prayer and testimony, Pietism sought to raise the consciousness of Christians that they were priests of God and to exercise their spiritual

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<sup>30</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 187. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 51-53.

<sup>31</sup> John Weborg, "Pietism: 'The Fire of God Which...Flames in the Heart of Germany'," in *Protestant and Spiritual Traditions*, ed. Frank Senn, (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 183.

priesthood in prayer and service to neighbor.”<sup>32</sup> These goals were clearly and practically expressed in Spener’s work, *Pia Desideria*.

Spener divided the *Pia Desideria* into three distinct sections. The first section was a critical commentary on the state of the church. Spener criticized the Lutheran *ex opere operato* view of the sacraments.<sup>33</sup> In other words, he condemned the view that one was saved simply by following the outward modes of religion, while ignoring the inner development of a personal relationship with God. Participating in the sacraments alone did not make one a Christian. Christianity demanded a vital faith and a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Spener wrote concerning what he called the *opus operatum* (outward acts):

We cannot deny – on the contrary, daily experience convinces us – that there are not a few who think that all Christianity requires of them (and that having done this, they have done quite enough in their service of God) is that they be baptized, hear the preaching of God’s Word, confess and receive absolution, and go to the Lord’s Supper, no matter how their hearts are disposed at the time, whether or not there are fruits which follow, provided they at least live in such a way that the civil authorities do not find them liable to punishment.<sup>34</sup>

For Spener, the mark of the Christian was the fruit that the living faith produced.<sup>35</sup> Good works did not produce faith, nor could they earn salvation. He ardently affirmed the Lutheran view of salvation by grace through faith alone. Yet, works were an act of thanksgiving for God’s work of salvation: “We gladly acknowledge that we must be saved only and alone through faith and that our works or godly life contribute neither much nor little to our salvation, for as a fruit

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Philipp Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. and ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 66.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 63.

of our faith our works are connected with the gratitude which we owe to God, who has already given us who believe the gift of righteousness and salvation.”<sup>36</sup> He was critical of any interpretation of the sacraments that ignored the fruits of faith manifested in good works and a godly manner of life.

Spener was not critical only of the conditions within confessional Lutheranism, he also commented on the prevailing conditions within society. He was especially critical of the moral laxity of the political leaders, the territorial princes who were supposed to be the head of the Lutheran church in their territories.<sup>37</sup> He believed that God had invested them with the responsibility of caring for and nurturing God’s children in the churches. Instead of following this way, they engaged in what Spener viewed as immoral behavior. He bemoaned their spiritual state of being:

When we observe the political estate and behold those in it who, according to the divine prophecy (Isa. 49:23) made in the New Testament, should be foster fathers and nursing mothers, how few there are who remember that God gave them their scepters and staffs in order that they use their power to advance the kingdom of God! Instead, most of them, as is customary with great lords, live in those sins and debaucheries which usually go along with court life and are regarded as virtually inseparable from it, while other magistrates are intent on seeking their own advantage. From their manner of life one must conclude with sighs that few of them know what Christianity is, to say nothing of their being Christians and practicing the Christian life.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, he admonished the common people for their debauchery and drunkenness.

In the second section of the work, Spener explained his hope for better times in the Church. Drawing from the writings of Paul, he encouraged the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 43.

church to strive for perfection.<sup>39</sup> Spener pointed to the early Christian church as the model for what the church in his own time should strive to be and suggested that the perfection of the primitive church could be achieved by the contemporary Lutheran church: "What was then possible cannot be absolutely impossible. Histories of the church testify that the early Christian church was in such a blessed state that as a rule Christians could be identified by their godly life, which distinguished them from other people."<sup>40</sup>

Spener was careful to qualify his understanding of the perfection he sought for the church. He was not striving to rid the church of all hypocrites because he knew that there was no field of wheat that did not also have weeds. Thus, his concept of reforming the church differed from that of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, who wanted to form a perfect church consisting of only those who believed and casting out all others by means of church discipline. Instead, Spener believed the church "should be free of manifest offenses, that nobody who is afflicted with such failing should be allowed to remain in the church without fitting reproof and ultimately exclusion, and that the true members of the church should be richly filled with the fruits of their faith."<sup>41</sup> In this way the wheat would cover the weeds and make them inconspicuous, rather than the weeds covering the wheat to make the field unsightly, as he believed was currently the case in the church.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 81.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 81-82.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 82.

After bemoaning the sad condition of the religious and political order of the day and sharing his vision for what the church could be, Spener then spelled out the Pietist agenda by detailing his six pious desires for the church in the third section of *Pia Desideria*. The six proposals were intended as a program to correct the existing conditions of the church.

The first proposal was to extend the use of the Word of God among the people. Spener believed that a greater use of the Bible by individuals would encourage greater fruits of faith.<sup>43</sup> He recommended daily Bible reading in the home, as well as lay reading of the Scriptures in the public service for the purpose of edification and to encourage private reading at home. He also proposed the reintroduction of "the ancient and apostolic kind of church meetings."<sup>44</sup> These conventicles, which later historians saw as a mark of Pietism, would be gatherings of those who sincerely desired to increase their knowledge of the faith and to grow spiritually. The conventicles would be led by the ministers, but the laity were to be given the opportunity to share their understanding of biblical passages being studied.

The second proposal was an increased emphasis on Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Spener believed it was necessary to impress upon the laity that they were called by Christ to study the Scriptures, teach and admonish one another, and live a godly life.<sup>45</sup> In his view, this was an

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 87. See also Philipp Jakob Spener, "The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures," in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 71-75.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 92. See also Philipp Jakob Spener, "The Spiritual Priesthood," in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press), 50-64 in which he elaborates on the



outstanding dimension of Luther's theology. Spener wrote, "Nobody can read Luther's writings with some care without observing how earnestly the sainted man advocated this spiritual priesthood, according to which not only ministers but all Christians are made priests by their Savior, are anointed by the Holy Spirit, and are dedicated to perform spiritual-priestly acts."<sup>46</sup> The priesthood of all believers was inclusive of men and women.<sup>47</sup> The doctrine, as interpreted by Spener, enjoined all Christians to use the gifts given to them by God in the service of the ministry. Unlike many in his time, Spener believed that the laity should be taught theology and biblical languages.<sup>48</sup> The role of the clergy was to empower and train the laity to perform the tasks of ministry. The strengthening of the spiritual priesthood would return the clergy to their proper role as overseers and directors of pastoral care and service.

Spener's third proposal was to impress upon the laity that believing the faith was simply not enough; rather, being a Christian meant living or practicing the faith.<sup>49</sup> In this proposal, Spener emphasized the love of the Christian. The Christian was to grow in the love of God and the love of God was manifested in the love of neighbor.<sup>50</sup> Christian love was to be practiced, first among Christians and then among one's neighbors. The new birth called for regenerate Christians to show love to their neighbors: "The subjective experience of new birth found its

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responsibilities of the laity and clergy in teaching, serving, admonishing each other and, in the case of the clergy, maintaining proper control of the laity.

<sup>46</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 92.

<sup>47</sup> Spener, "The Spiritual Priesthood," 62. John Weborg, "Pietism: A Question of Meaning and Vocation," *Covenant Quarterly* 41:3 (August 1983): 62.

<sup>48</sup> Spener, "The Spiritual Priesthood," 55-61. Weborg, "Pietism: A Question of Meaning and Vocation," 62.

<sup>49</sup> Weborg, "Pietism: A Question of Meaning and Vocation," 95.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 96. See also Spener, "The Spiritual Priesthood," 59-60.

expression in the objective form of their activity. It was the fruit of the Spirit and an expression of the gratitude they owed to God, who had already given them the gift of righteousness and salvation.”<sup>51</sup> Spener’s colleague, Francke, made this the primary theme of his work at Halle as he built the school for poor children that later evolved into a complex operation with an orphanage, vocational training center, a print shop, and a museum of natural history used in the education of the children.<sup>52</sup> The charitable work so carefully organized and carried out at Halle became a model for other evangelical religious groups such as the Methodists and the Baptists as they built homes for children and the aged.<sup>53</sup>

The fourth of Spener’s reform proposals addressed the conduct of the church in doctrinal controversies. Spener warned that the church should be careful about its conduct in polemical debates with unbelievers and the heterodox. His approach revealed the sense of tolerance or irenicism that was characteristic of Pietism. Spener suggested praying for those one believed were heretics that they might be led to the truth.<sup>54</sup> By using harsh polemics, the church did not set a good example of Christian love. Instead, one was to guard against offending one’s opponent, lest one’s behavior turn the heretic completely away from true doctrine. If the opportunity arises, then a presentation of the truth of the gospel is then appropriate. It was important to Spener that all heretics and unbelievers be treated with Christian love. Spener also addressed the question of union with

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<sup>51</sup> James O. Bemesderfer, “Pietism: The Other Side,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 25:2 (1968-69): 34.

<sup>52</sup> Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, 25, 31.

<sup>53</sup> Edward Zachert, “The German Baptist Orphans’ Home, Louisville, KY,” *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 13 (November 1891): 320-22. “German Baptist Home for the Aged in Philadelphia,” *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (September 1898): 335-36.

<sup>54</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 97-99

other confessions. Again displaying his sense of tolerance, Spener asserted that not all theological disputation was necessary or useful. He had observed that many of those vigorously involved in disputations about pure doctrine were hard-hearted and did not have an active and vital Christian faith.<sup>55</sup> No amount of disputation could protect the truth in the church or convert the heretic. He wrote, "The holy love of God is necessary. If only we Evangelicals would make it our serious business to offer God the fruits of his truth in fervent love, conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of our calling, and show this in recognizable and unalloyed love of our neighbors, including those who are heretics by practicing the duties mentioned above!"<sup>56</sup>

Spener's fifth point specifically addressed the faith and training of pastors. He believed it was essential for those filling the office of the clergy to be true Christians.<sup>57</sup> In order to ensure that those who entered the ministry were called and properly suited for the work, they needed proper training. He insisted that study and knowledge were of no use in the ministry without piety and that this should be impressed upon students.<sup>58</sup> They should study Pietist and mystical writings as a part of the curriculum. Further, there should be *collegia* (conventicles) at the major centers of training. In the conventicles the students would be led in study by a mentor, an older brother in the faith who knew the Scriptures well. The conventicle would encourage the inner spiritual

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 100-102.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 104-105. See also Philipp Jakob Spener, "On Hindrances to Theological Studies," in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 65-70.

development of the students. The students were also learn to admonish and encourage one another.

The final recommendation Spener put forward in the *Pia Desideria* was closely related to the previous. He suggested that ministerial training deal with the practical matters that the young men would face in the office of pastor.<sup>59</sup> He especially highlighted the matter of preaching. Students should be taught to preach sermons that would produce faith in the listeners.<sup>60</sup> Sermons were not an opportunity to display one's knowledge or oratorical flourishes, which would only confuse rather than edify the listener. This was part of Spener's protest against the intellectualized and polemical preaching of Orthodoxy, which he believed, ignored the spiritual development of the listeners.

The Pietist concepts of ministerial training were exemplified in the program developed by Spener and Francke at Halle. Although Erfurt, Jena, and other universities were affected by Pietist influences, Halle was the center of the Pietist movement. Halle produced the leading Pietist pastors and theologians of the late seventeenth century, as well as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf and Pottendorf who became the leader of the Moravians. Halle also produced the first Lutheran missionaries to India. Students from Halle filled the pulpits of Lutheran churches in the American colonies, at the request of Halle graduate Henry Melchior Muhlenberg.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 113-15. Spener, "On Hindrances to Theological Studies," 67-68.

<sup>60</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 116-17.

<sup>61</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, "The Influence of Pietism in Colonial American Lutheranism," in F. Ernest Stoeffler, ed. *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 74-122.

The *Pia Desideria* pushed Spener to the forefront of the clergy in the Lutheran Church. He was considered by friends to be a new Luther, one who would complete the reformation that had been stymied by the rigid confessionalism of orthodoxy.<sup>62</sup> It was the hope of the Pietists that they would complete the reformation through the implementation of the ideas already present within Lutheranism and clearly stated by Spener. Instead of formal Christianity, the church would experience a renewal of true Christianity.

### **Significant Theological Concepts of Pietism**

The six points Spener explained in the final section of the *Pia Desideria* reflected the major theological concerns of German Lutheran Pietism. The Pietists were not systematic theologians like their orthodox opponents. Instead, their primary focus was the practice of Christian living, which they often termed the fruits of faith. The Christian faith was meant to bring a complete reformation of the heart, soul, and life of the individual believer. While the Pietists subscribed to the basic doctrines of the Lutheran church, they stressed certain theological concepts that set them apart from orthodoxy. In light of this study, these concepts were the same theological emphases reflected in the Pietism of the German Baptists in North America.

In a manner that was characteristic of Pietism, Spener made a distinction between formal Christianity and true Christianity. True Christianity was the result of the spiritual regeneration of the individual.<sup>63</sup> Thus, *Wiedergeburt* ("new birth") became a primary emphasis of Spener's work. Schmidt, in fact, argued

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<sup>62</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 234.

that it was the primary emphasis of Pietism.<sup>64</sup> Spener, following Lutheran doctrine, stressed the passivity of humans in the process of justification. Humans were justified through the activity of God and not through their works.<sup>65</sup> In other words, they received the righteousness of God and forgiveness for their sins through the work of God's grace freely given. The new birth was birth from above (a reference to John 3). He did not fall into what he regarded as the trap of the Arminian or Pelagian heresy that asserted the cooperation of human beings in the process of salvation.

Spener likened the process leading to salvation to the biological metaphor of conception.<sup>66</sup> Conception was necessary before one could be born. The process of regeneration began with baptism, which was an actual means of the new birth. All of the aspects of the new birth were present in baptism, including the gift of faith, the justification of sins, and the new nature born of the Spirit.<sup>67</sup> Spener believed, however, that most individuals lost the new birth after baptism and needed to regain it in order to receive salvation. Again, his emphasis upon the fruits of faith as evidence of new birth was related to his view of baptism. Those who did not display the new nature given at baptism had lost the regenerating faith.<sup>68</sup> It is important to note that Spener's view of baptism did not take the path of the Anabaptists who saw baptism as the outward sign of rebirth.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 240.

<sup>64</sup> Martin Schmidt, "Pietism" in ed. Julius Bodensieck, *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 3: 1899.

<sup>65</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 240.

<sup>66</sup> Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 196.

<sup>67</sup> Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 196. Spener did not give the same authority to the Lord's Supper. While he saw it as a means of grace and of the renewal of the new birth, it did not impute the new birth to the individual as the sacrament of baptism did.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 117.

The first aspect of the new birth was the work of the Holy Spirit, which ignited a flame of faith in the soul of the individual. Faith came through hearing the Word of God.<sup>69</sup> Like Luther before him, Spener believed that the Word of God opened the hearts of individuals to a living faith. Faith then affected the will, what Spener referred to as the heart, of the individual. Unlike his orthodox counterparts, Spener did not believe that the power to create faith rested in the Scriptures themselves. The heart of the individual was opened to faith through the hearing of the Scriptures because of the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>70</sup> The Spirit must be at work in the believer for the Word to produce faith. Spener's view was in conflict with that of the orthodox Lutherans who believed that the Word itself had the intrinsic power and the authority to create faith in its message. At the same time, however, it was in accord with Luther's writings on Scripture. Spener quoted Luther as he emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing the individual to understand the Word of God:

On the necessity of binding the Holy Spirit to the Word of God (so that that doctrine might not be despised), I wish to now add a few more passages of Luther's: "The Scripture," he says, "is a book which is not given over solely to reading, but also to the proper exegete and revealer, namely the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit does not open the Scripture, the Scripture is not understood even though it is read." Now if the Holy Spirit is to be required in and with the Word, we must in the most humble fashion request this of the heavenly Father. As a result, it is necessary as often as we begin to read to first at all times turn ourselves in prayer, weeping and lifting up of the soul to the Father of light from whom cometh every good and perfect gift from above (James 1:19) and for ourselves to pray for that for which the whole church prays in the litany; "you wish to give your spirit and power to the Word" so that his Spirit might prepare our hearts for the knowledge of truth and open them as they

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<sup>69</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 87. Spener, "The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures," 72-73.

<sup>70</sup> Spener, "The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures," 71-72.

did that of Lydia (Acts 16:14), so that he might open to us the Scripture and the understanding of it (Luke 24:32, 45).<sup>71</sup>

For Spener, without the illumination of the Spirit one could understand the Scriptures only in the manner that one understood any writing.<sup>72</sup> Thus, he placed an emphasis upon the subjective and preexisting work of the Spirit within the believer that could not be found in the theology of orthodoxy.

In developing his concept of the new birth, Spener emphasized the complete depravity of the individual. This depravity made the work of the Holy Spirit a necessary precondition of saving faith.<sup>73</sup> Also echoed in this was Luther's emphasis upon "grace alone." Human beings were completely lost prior to regeneration. They could do nothing to effect this faith within themselves. It is only by God's grace that such faith can be given to the individual. Furthermore, this faith is absolutely necessary for rebirth.

When faith was ignited in the soul of the individual, the newborn person could feel his/her sins forgiven and was adopted as God's child. Thus, the Christian faith was not intellectual in nature, but experiential.<sup>74</sup> The newborn person could feel a sense of complete assurance of the forgiveness of sins. This assurance exists because of the new and personal relationship between the individual and God. Through this relationship, the old sinful or depraved nature is destroyed and a new nature is created in the regenerate Christian.<sup>75</sup> As Stein wrote, "as soon as one believes and has taken hold of Christ, his righteousness is

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 240-41.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 189.



imputed to that individual. To those who believe, the redeemer gives adoption and all of its treasures.”<sup>76</sup>

This step of regeneration was akin to the Lutheran description of justification. Spener often referred to this aspect of the new birth as justification.<sup>77</sup> For most in orthodox Lutheranism, justification was the main theological emphasis. Spener stressed justification because through it, God forgave sins and imputed the righteousness of Christ to the individual. He further asserted that those who are assured that they have been forgiven and adopted as children of God should exhibit faith and obedience to God.<sup>78</sup>

The explanation of justification developed by Spener was well within the theological boundaries of Lutheran Orthodoxy. He viewed it, however, as more than a forensic act. Justification had to be applied to the life of the Christian.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, he pushed beyond justification to stress regeneration and sought the proof of living faith in the fruits of faith.<sup>80</sup> God did not forgive sins and impute Christ’s righteousness into the individual believer for it to be left at that. It was God’s intention to restore in the regenerate Christian the image of God that was present in Adam before the fall.<sup>81</sup> The nature of the individual Christian was being created anew so that he or she would no longer be a slave to sin, but would be free to live in perfect love and obedience to God. Stein explained:

Persons born from above are new creatures in the sense that they are heavenly minded. They no longer live out of themselves like earthly

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 190.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>78</sup> Spener, “The Spiritual Priesthood,” 52-53.

<sup>79</sup> Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 192.

<sup>80</sup> Martin Schmidt, “Pietism”, 1899.

<sup>81</sup> Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 192.

minded people born of Adam. Having been born of Christ, they have received power to lead godly lives. The new nature has permeated all of their being – their understanding, will passions, love, hate, joy, mind, memory, and to some extent even their bodies.<sup>82</sup>

The goal of regeneration, therefore, was the creation of individuals who would imitate the holiness of God by living godly lives.

Pietism, as developed by Spener, shifted theological emphasis from the Lutheran Orthodox legal concept of justification to the biological allusion of regeneration. Spener felt that regeneration was the natural result of justification. He pushed the theological locus of Lutheran Pietism beyond forgiveness of sins, the imputation of righteousness, and the adoption as God's children, to the creation of a new nature in the individual. In doing so, he shifted the goal of theology from protection of true, objective doctrine to the reformation of the individual and the practice of the living faith in daily life. The doctrine permitted Spener to assert the concept of sanctification and to stress holiness of lifestyle.<sup>83</sup> It was an important shift that affected all subsequent evangelical Christianity. Christianity was no longer accepted as a set of doctrines to which one assented, it was a vital, experiential faith that was evidenced in the way the Christian lived. Or, as Weborg argues, "Pietism sought to view piety as the convergence of faith believed (*assensus*) and the 'believing' faith in the life. The convergence of these two factors yields a life that has a congruence of faith and practice."<sup>84</sup>

Other concepts were important in the process of regeneration. The Pietists referred to the idea of conversion or *Busskampf*. Spener, who never described a

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>83</sup> Weborg, "Pietism: 'The Fire of God Which...Flames in the Heart of Germany,'" 199.

<sup>84</sup> Weborg, "Pietism: A Question of Meaning and Vocation," 59.

personal conversion experience, was not as ardent on this point as Francke, his colleague at Halle. Spener believed that God worked according to the needs of the individual. Conversion could happen in stages and without sudden changes. Francke believed that conversion brought a sudden and great change.<sup>85</sup>

Francke experienced a personal moment of indescribable change in 1686. After accepting an invitation to preach, Francke read over the message he was to deliver at Luneburg. In reading the sermon to himself, he was overcome with the conviction that he did not possess the faith that he described in the message. Feeling that he could not preach what he did not know, he entered a great penitential struggle. In misery, he threw himself upon God's mercy. He claimed that God heard him and suddenly lifted the burden from him, taking away all of his doubts, and giving him an assurance of the grace of Jesus Christ.<sup>86</sup> *Busskampf* was the penitential struggle of the individual in whom faith had been kindled. Clearly, the penitential struggle involved repentance. The concept of repentance was not treated lightly. Instead, it was viewed in the New Testament sense as a complete change of heart and life.

Francke emphasized the importance of the *Busskampf* and felt that every minister should have experienced a sudden conversion and assurance of forgiveness.<sup>87</sup> This break-through of grace was a legacy of Pietism. However, Francke never outlined an order of conversion or a method of manipulating

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<sup>85</sup> August Hermann Francke, "Autobiography," in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 99-107. Francke describes his own penitential struggle, conversion, and experience of assurance and joy. August Hermann Francke, "On the Resurrection of Our Lord," in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 129-32. Francke, "A Letter to a Friend," in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 117-18.

<sup>86</sup> Francke, "Autobiography," 105.

conversion.<sup>88</sup> In later Pietism, influenced more in this respect by Francke than Spener, conversion was a one-time experience that involved the offer of God's grace and the decision of the individual to accept it.<sup>89</sup> Conversion and repentance became accepted parts of the total process of regeneration.

The creation of the new nature in the regenerate individual was accompanied by very practical changes in behavior. Pietism has been charged with advocating both rejection of the world and asceticism. Schmidt echoes the accusation of many critics and scholars:

In the baroque period that was so receptive to the beauty of the world, Pietism advocated an ascetic type of world-rejection, an isolation from the affairs of the world. In the age of incipient experimentation in nature and of impartial historical investigation, the pietists retreated into the impregnable citadel of their own inner assurance.<sup>90</sup>

The Pietists believed that the Orthodox emphasis upon justification and subsequent rejection of good works, or the fruits of faith, gave license to immorality and depravity among people in every estate, from the political leadership to the peasant.<sup>91</sup> The Pietist response, based on the concept of regeneration, was a godly lifestyle that included self-denial. Their lifestyle, which shunned theatre going, excessive drinking, dancing, elaborate dress and ornamentation, among other things, was their protest to the social conditions of their time.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, they did not believe that the Christian faith was

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<sup>87</sup> Francke, "A Letter to a Friend," 117-18.

<sup>88</sup> John Weborg, "Pietism: 'The Fire Which...Flames in the Heart of Germany,'" 200.

<sup>89</sup> Schmidt, "Pietism," 1899.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 1900.

<sup>91</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 43, 45, 64.

<sup>92</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 237.

meaningful unless it demanded self-denial.<sup>93</sup> Stoeffler writes, "It was their conviction that Christianity apart from some form of meaningful self-denial becomes either an empty theologism or a hollow formalism or both."<sup>94</sup>

Some of Spener's critics took offense at Spener's emphasis on the reformation of the individual. For example, they argued that his emphasis upon human depravity prior to the moment of conversion did not give credit to the work of the Church as the nurturer of faith in the baptized individual. Thus, the rebirth seemed to be an event that occurred only in the relationship between the individual and God.<sup>95</sup> Pietism was accused of being subjective and mystical because of its desire to strengthen the "inner man". This was condemned in an ecclesiastical system where the strengthening of the congregation or of the Church was the focus. Schmidt writes, "Pietism focused its attention on man, on individual man. While in the N[ew] T[estament] the concept of edification applies to the upbuilding of the congregation, in pietistic thought it became a private matter..."<sup>96</sup> This is not a wholly accurate criticism. The "inner man" was to be nurtured through the ministry of the church. The "inner man" was not self-sufficient, but needed the ministry of the Word, the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, prayer, and worship in order to live and thrive.<sup>97</sup> Further the emphasis on the godliness of the regenerate Christian was not solely directed to the individual. The ultimate purpose of individual godliness was the reformation

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<sup>93</sup> August Hermann Francke, "A Letter to a Friend," 125. Francke wrote, "I consider also the duties of self-denial and putting off of the world and its carnal pleasures, and, in short, from all the present things of sense and time, to be among those more important and necessary subjects which ministers should often preach on, oftener indeed than most of them do."

<sup>94</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 12.

<sup>95</sup> Spener, "The Spiritual Priesthood," 55-56.

<sup>96</sup> Schmidt, "Pietism," 1899.

and renewal of the whole Church.<sup>98</sup> The Pietists wanted to complete Luther's reformation, but attempted to do this by changing the lives of individuals. The regenerate would then act as an agent of change to affect the whole church and ultimately the entire world.

### **Other Streams of Pietism**

The western German territories, the Netherlands, and Switzerland were touched by Reformed Pietism. Reformed Pietism was influenced by Puritan devotional Pietism, especially the work of writers such as William Ames.<sup>99</sup> Both the emphases and effects of Reformed Pietism were similar to those of classical Lutheran Pietism. The importance of love for God and human beings was stressed, as was an ethical lifestyle based on the New Testament model. They also supported the practical training of ministers and stressed effective pastoral work. Church discipline was important in Reformed Pietism. Additionally, stress was laid on devotional practices, such as reading devotional literature, prayer, conventicles, and family worship. Reformed Pietism brought about a genuine reformation of the church in some areas.

A third stream of Pietism deviated from the church-Pietism of the Lutheran and Reformed types. Radical Pietism developed primarily from Lutheran Pietism. Drawing from the mystical traditions present in Pietism, it was more sectarian in character. Spener had guarded against sectarianism in his

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<sup>97</sup> Weborg, "Pietism: A Question of Meaning and Vocation," 61.

<sup>98</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 76, 80. John Weborg, "The Eschatological Ethics of Johann Albrecht Bengel: Personal and Ecclesiastical Piety and the Literature of Edification in the Letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation 2 and 3," (Evansville: Northwestern University, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1983), 9.

concepts of Pietism; however, some movement toward sectarianism seemed inevitable in certain regions. For some, the Pietist movement led by Spener and Francke simply did not go far enough. In 1682, while Spener was the Saxon court preacher in Frankfurt and was the leading figure in the Lutheran church at that time, a radical group broke with Spener and separated from the Frankfurt church. They had received Spener enthusiastically, responded to his preaching, and participated in his conventicles. They began to feel, however, that Spener's efforts to save the whole church were futile. They believed the church was lost and that they should withdraw and organize a congregation of regenerate Christians who could devote themselves wholly to their own spiritual edification.<sup>100</sup> This was Spener's first experience with radical, sectarian piety.

Radical piety worked its way into the Pietist movement. Radical Pietism was diverse; thus, historians have considered separatism to be its common distinguishing characteristic. The Radical Pietists fit more closely the characterization that Albrecht Ritschl gave to all of Pietism in his work *Geschichte des Pietismus*.<sup>101</sup> This was because they tended to be separatists and were interested in and deeply influenced by the mystical and spiritual literature and ideas that existed prior to Spener's Pietist movement. Although the Radical Pietists tended to be individualistic, emphasizing different concepts, David Ensign argues that there was a more significant theological unity that has been missed by

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<sup>99</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 133.

<sup>100</sup> Aland, *A History of Christianity*, 2:246. According to John Weborg, "The Eschatological Ethics of Johann Albrecht Bengel," 9 Spener criticized the separatists because he believed that separation forfeited the good that the group could affect for the whole church. Also, separation opened the opportunity for criticism of Pietism, was contrary to divine patience, and was injurious to the separatists.

<sup>101</sup> Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus* (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1880).

historians. There were those individuals who had radical sympathies while they were still a part of the territorial church. Ensign cited Gottfried Arnold as an example.<sup>102</sup> Ensign believed that the stream of theological ideas that could be traced throughout the movement was Boehmism, i.e. the work of the mystical and spiritual writer Jakob Boehme.<sup>103</sup>

Boehmist concepts were found to some degree in all forms of radical Pietism. For example, Boehme emphasized separatism, calling the church 'Babel.' He conceived God as divine, heavenly wisdom. This wisdom was an inner light that led the individual to God's presence.<sup>104</sup> Thus, he also believed in continual spiritual inspiration of the individual. Salvation was a matter of having the right will rather than the imputation of Christ's righteousness. One had to strive continually for holiness through a life-long process that began with rebirth.<sup>105</sup>

Along with their common leanings toward Boehme's thought, the Radical Pietists shared other common traits to varying degrees. They were sectarian, in that they desired to withdraw from the territorial church to form smaller congregations or sects of true Christians. At the same time, however, they did not

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<sup>102</sup> David Ensign, *Radical German Pietism, 1675-1760* (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1955), 15-16. Gottfried Arnold is an important figure in Church History. He was a Lutheran pastor who came under the influence of Spener's piety. Later, he was attracted to the ideas of the more radical pietist groups. Arnold was also an historian. He published a work that reinterpreted those groups that had been labeled as heretical. His reinterpretation challenged readers to view groups such as the Waldensians and the Anabaptists in a new way. August Rauschenbusch, the first professor of the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester, developed a series of lectures on church history that he delivered in English to the faculty and students of Rochester Divinity School. Among his personal affects is a lecture in English on Gottfried Arnold. The lecture can be found in the August Rauschenbusch Papers, The Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>103</sup> Ensign, *Radical German Pietism*, 16.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 19-20.



necessarily believe that the group they formed was the only true church. They were members of “a pilgrim community, a community which lived and worked in anticipation of the early triumph of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>106</sup> These eschatological communities tended to be more democratic in their organization. While church Pietism attempted to oppose the rigid class structures of its society, the radical Pietists tore down the walls of class. The sects also had stricter church discipline, in order to maintain their character as churches of regenerate Christians. Radical Pietists were the heirs of the left wing of the Reformation, a claim Ritschl tried to make about all of Pietism. This was especially true of those groups, such as the Brethren or “Tunkers,” who adopted baptism by immersion as a sign of regeneration.<sup>107</sup>

## Conclusion

In classical Lutheran Pietism key characteristics emerged that were inherited by later evangelical Pietist groups. Spener’s *Pia Desideria* revealed the Pietist emphasis on the Bible. They were known for their biblicism. The entire reform movement known as Pietism emerged from the Pietists’ understanding of the Bible and their desire for the Bible to be better understood by the laity. Thus, they encouraged the reading of Scripture in public services. More importantly, they organized the laity into conventicles, known as the *collegia pietatis*, for the study of the Bible and the spiritual strengthening of the individual. Moralism,

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<sup>106</sup> Franklin Littell, “Radical Pietism in American History,” in ed. Ernest Stoeffler, *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), 170.

asceticism, and desire for the moral reformation of society were present in Spener's writings. Further, there was the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, which was accompanied by a greater sense of democracy within the structure of the church. Another characteristic of Pietism was its desire to avoid doctrinal disputes. The Pietists attempted to put their ideas in the context of Orthodox Lutheran theological systems and to downplay any doctrinal deviation. In general, Pietism tended to have an irenic or tolerant dimension to it, believing that the true church consisted of regenerate Christians across confessional lines. The Pietist emphasis on the practical education of ministerial students was extremely influential on later generations of Christians. Theologically, the Pietists were characterized by their central theological theme of regeneration, with its accompanying emphases upon conversion, and repentance. Lutheran Pietism, as well as Pietism in general, wanted individual Christians to experience and exhibit a living faith and a close relationship with God. They also believed that through the regeneration of the individual would come the reformation of the church and the restoration of the church as it existed in the New Testament.

Pietism became widespread late in the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century. Some Radical Pietist groups found refuge in Switzerland. The Pietism of Spener and Francke was fully developed with the center at Halle University. The work of Spener, and especially the work of Francke laid the foundation for Württemberg Pietism.<sup>108</sup> Württemberg Pietism gave rise to its own set of Pietist

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<sup>107</sup> For a discussion of the Brethren's appropriation of Radical Pietism and Anabaptist models of the church and Christian living, see Alan Deeter, "Membership in the Body of Christ as Interpreted by Classical Pietism," *Brethren Life and Thought* 9 (Autumn 1964): 30-49.

<sup>108</sup> See Mary Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England*,

leaders, including the father of New Testament hermeneutics, Johann Albrecht Bengel, and Friedrich Christoph Oetinger.

Another individual greatly influenced by the Spener-Francke Pietism was Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf and Pottendorf. Zinzendorf, as he is commonly known, was Spener's godson. He also attended Halle. Zinzendorf allowed his estate at Herrnhut to be used as a refuge for the last survivors of the Bohemian Brethren, a community that had nearly been exterminated during the Counter-Reformation. Their piety had a radical element to it. Zinzendorf himself stepped in to take pastoral care and control of the sect. This group became commonly known as the Moravians. Their piety would greatly influence the Anglican priest, John Wesley, who met with them in Georgia and in London subsequent to leading the British Evangelical Revival in the eighteenth century. Wesley was also greatly influenced by the work at Halle.

The Pietist revivals of the eighteenth century touched already existing groups that were outside of the territorial church structure. The Mennonites, a remnant of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, were affected by the Pietist renewal movement.<sup>109</sup> The movement did not end with Spener's death in the early years of the eighteenth century. Pietist revivals continued through the eighteenth century, resulting in the formation of Separatist congregations in Switzerland.

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Württemberg and Prussia. Richard Gawthorp, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth-Century Prussia*. Carl Hinrichs, *Preussen als historische Problem: Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, ed. Gerhard Oestreich (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964). Carl Hinrichs, *Preussentum und Pietismus: Der Pietismus in Brandenburg-Preussen als religiös-soziale Reformbewegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1971). Koppel S. Pinson's study, *Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1968).

<sup>109</sup> Martin Schrag, "The Impact of Pietism upon the Mennonites in Early American Christianity," in ed. Ernest Stoeffler, *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), 75. Cornelius Krahn, "Pietism," *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, (1959), 4:176.

Pietists continued to hold prominent pastorates. In Westphalia there were pastors in the nineteenth century who continued the long line of fathers and grandfathers before them who had been Pietists.<sup>110</sup> In Württemberg, Pietism continued to dominate the church for several generations.

The effects of the German Pietist movement reached well beyond the borders of the German territories. Pietism reached into Scandinavia and brought a Pietist renewal movement to the Swedish Lutheran Church. The movement led to the creation of the Swedish Evangelical Covenant Church. It also prepared the way for Methodist and Baptist missionaries, who founded churches in Sweden in the nineteenth century.

The effect of continental Pietism was notable in North America. The influence of Halle Pietists on the First Great Awakening has already been mentioned. Pietism shaped the character and development of Evangelical Christianity in North America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The emphases of Pietism, including biblicism, revivalistic preaching, the experiential dimension of Christianity (penitential struggle, conversion, and assurance), and Christian living became the mainstays of American Evangelicalism.

Those of a Pietist persuasion who emigrated to the United States in the late- eighteenth and early-nineteenth century found an environment open to their expression of Pietism. Those who were not Pietists were often deeply moved by the revivalistic preaching of German and English preachers. The Methodists

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<sup>110</sup> August Rauschenbusch, one of the formative leaders of the German Baptists in North America, was a fifth generation Lutheran Pietist pastor in Altena, Germany before emigrating to the United

employed German-speaking preachers, both lay and clergy, to organize Methodist societies among the German immigrants. The Evangelical Association of Jacob Albright was organized in the early-nineteenth century according to Methodist theology and ecclesiology, but was directed to German-speaking immigrants. Similarly, the United Brethren, whose founders Otterbein and Boehme had been a German Reformed pietist pastor and a pietist Mennonite, respectively, were organized to save souls among German speakers. All of these groups had an emphasis upon experiential pietist Christianity in North America.

The influence of Pietism in North American Protestantism was pervasive. The German Baptists in North America, from their inception, were heavily influenced by the theological and moral emphases of continental Pietism. Many of the early German Baptist pastors and congregants were steeped in the various Pietist traditions. Some were Lutheran Pietists, while others were Pietists who belonged to Separatist groups. Among the Separatists were those who accepted the concept of believers' baptism prior to their emigration to America. Others discovered the concept in the less restrictive religious environment in North America.

The movement of those who became German Baptists from their Pietist theological backgrounds to Baptist ecclesiological structure is somewhat difficult to document. The formation of German Baptist churches in North America was not greatly influenced by the Baptist movement in Germany. The Baptist movement in Germany, under the leadership of Johann Gerhard Oncken, and the German Baptist churches in North America were founded at approximately the

same time. Few, however, of the pastors or members of the earliest German Baptist churches in North America were Baptists prior to their emigration.

Indeed, the development of first German Baptist churches in North America was hardly an organized endeavor. Some churches were founded by pastors with Pietist leanings who, in the boundlessness of the North American religious landscape, adopted the concept of believers' baptism and, later, the congregational polity of the Baptists. In some cases, worshiping congregations of Pietist emigrants witnessed the baptism of an adult by immersion, searched the Scriptures to understand the practice, and accepted it as biblical and normative. Through contact with American Baptist churches, these groups also accepted Baptist congregational polity. The members of the earliest German Baptist churches, with their affinity for Pietism, found much that was appealing within Baptist polity and practice. Believers' baptism provided a clear demarcation between the old life and the new life of the Christian. It was an outward sign of the inward and spiritual regeneration that took place at one's conversion. Congregational polity, with its requisite congregational discipline, allowed churches to maintain doctrinal or moral purity by excluding members who dissented from the beliefs of the congregation. The organization of the General Conference of German Baptists in 1851, and its subsequent cooperative relationship with the American Baptist Home Mission Society, allowed the German Pietists who became German Baptists to be partners in national and international mission endeavors.

The next two chapters will explain the relationship between Pietism and the German Baptists in more detail. These chapters will examine the influence of Pietist theology upon the theological concepts of the German Baptists and will explore the relationship between Pietism and the early leadership of the General Conference of German Baptists in North America. The earliest history of the German Baptist churches is really the story of the early leaders who founded them. The movement of the early German Baptist leaders from Lutheran or Separatist Pietist origins to the German Baptists, beginning in the early 1840s, brought Baptist polity and practice to German-speakers in North America. The Pietism of the early leadership shaped the theology and practices of the churches that formed the General Conference of German Baptists in North America.

## Chapter 2

### **A Change of Heart and Life: Pietism and the Early Leadership of the General Conference of German Baptists in North America**

#### **Introduction**

The General Conference of German Baptists began in the late 1830s with handful of dispersed leaders organizing a few believers into small, independent congregations.<sup>1</sup> Some of the first church members and preachers were recent German-speaking immigrants who were converted and baptized in English-speaking churches, but then moved to German-speaking churches and the “German work.” Others were immigrants from German territories and Swiss cantons who were involved in Christian missions among German speakers in North America. Some brought a belief in baptism of adults by immersion from their homeland, while others were converted to the doctrine of believers’ baptism through their independent study of the Bible after their immigration to North America. The primary mission of those who organized the General Conference of German Baptists in North America was to spread the Christian gospel to German-speaking immigrants in North America. As a part of this mission they sought to organize churches of baptized Christians that would serve as places for worship,

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “German Baptists” or “General Conference of German Baptists” should be understood as referring to the churches that now compose the North American Baptist Conference. This author is refraining from referring to them by the name North American Baptists because they did not adopt the label until 1942, twenty-years after the scope of this thesis. The term “German Baptist” is not meant as a general label for any German-speaking group practicing adult baptism. Nor does the term refer to other groups that have sometimes been called German Baptists, such as the Mennonites or the Church of the Brethren (“Tunkers”). These groups will be referred to as Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren, “Tunkers” or Church of the Brethren.



prayer, study, fellowship, accountability, and mutual support for people of similar cultural background.

In the late 1830s and into the 1840s, the German congregations practicing believers' baptism were scattered and, unless the same evangelist organized several congregations, may not have been aware of the existence of other similar congregations. At the same time, however, the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) supported several of the early German Baptist evangelists as home missionaries. The churches may have established contact with each other through this ABHMS connection or through contact with German-speaking colporteurs for interdenominational organizations such as the American Tract Society.

In 1851, pastors and laity from five of these churches met together at the German Baptist Church in Philadelphia for their first conference. Structured more like a Swiss Separatist meeting than an American Baptist association or conference meeting, the small group of Germans met for worship, preaching, prayer, and fellowship. They organized a Conference for the purpose of mutual support, oversight of pastors, discussion of relevant issues, and aid in their common mission to German speakers in the United States and Canada.

Although the congregations had independent beginnings, the membership and leadership shared the theological characteristics of continental Pietists. Pietism in this theological context referred not only to outward behavior, but also connoted emphasis on personal faith experience and the inner spiritual development of the Christian. The early German-speaking Baptists were, in

essence. Pietists who expressed their theological and spiritual beliefs within the Baptist ecclesiastical structure. Evidence of this is found in the lives of their preachers, the people to whom they preached, and the content of what they preached. In other words, the leadership, the constituency, and the theology of the early German Baptists demonstrated the deep and lasting influence of continental Pietism upon the denomination.

At the same time, those of pietist leaning who formed the General Conference of German Baptists, which would later be renamed the North American Baptist Conference, were also Baptist in ecclesiology. They shared similar theological emphases with the English-speaking Baptists in the United States. In fact, a comparison between doctrines generally agreed upon by nineteenth-century German Baptists and those generally held by the English-speaking Baptists would reveal only subtle differences. They shared the same view of the church as the visible body of regenerate and baptized believers who submitted to the discipline of the worshipping community. They agreed that the proper and biblical mode of baptism was immersion of the believer upon profession of faith. The German-speaking and English-speaking churches also shared an emphasis upon the conversion experience of the individual, as well as the concept of spiritual regeneration. Furthermore, they had a shared belief in the importance of ethical Christian behavior.

Despite their similarities, the German Baptists never fully assimilated with the American Baptist Convention that so faithfully supported the home mission efforts to German-speaking immigrants. This can be explained, in part, on the

basis of language and ethnic differences. There were also differences in the theological traditions of the German-speaking Baptists and the American Baptists. The German-speaking Baptists, as this chapter will show, were influenced in their early development by deep currents of continental Pietism. This influence was evident in the communication of their theology. Furthermore, their emphasis upon personal discipline and Christian behavior emerged from the influence of Pietism. The roots of English-speaking Baptists were the Americanized, Anglo-Puritan traditions of the English-speaking Baptists in North America. Although the German-speaking Baptists did not trace the roots of their differences with the English-speaking Baptists to the continental Pietism, their writings and biographical information reveal the important influence of Pietism on the theology and concept of Christian living among German Baptists.

The primary source materials also reveal that the German Baptists perceived themselves and their churches as having greater spiritual depth than the English-speaking Baptists who supported their mission work. In fact, they were critical of what they perceived as the spiritual shallowness of their English-speaking counterparts, and used these criticisms to discourage Germans from joining the American Baptist churches. The perception of the German churches as spiritual centers was juxtaposed against what they perceived to be the lack of piety and discipline in the American Baptist churches. Thus, the Pietist theology and practices of the German Baptists, as well as their perception that they had a deeper sense of spirituality, were among the reasons that they did not fully

assimilate into the larger English-speaking American Baptist denominational structure, choosing instead to create a separate denomination.<sup>2</sup>

The primary purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the flow of Pietism through the early development of the German Baptists by demonstrating its influence upon the early leaders and the membership of the churches. The evidence leads to the conclusion that the theological tradition of continental Pietism, as inherited and interpreted by the German Baptists' leadership, was a formative influence upon the General Conference of German Baptists and a factor in their refusal to be incorporated by the American and Canadian Baptists.

### **Resistance to the Pietist Label**

It is important to mention at the beginning of this chapter that the German Baptists did not refer to themselves as Pietists. Later denominational publications about the early history of the General Conference of German Baptists used the term Pietist to describe the background of different individuals. Also, American Baptist publications, such as *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, included articles, submitted by German Baptist authors, that described the Pietist backgrounds of the Conference's early preachers. In their written materials in the Conference publication *Der Sendbote*, letters, and even lecture notes, they did not

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<sup>2</sup> The role of Pietism in the work of the German Baptists in North America has not been adequately addressed. While denominational historical accounts refer to several of the early leaders using the label of Pietist, the meaning and implications of that term are not explained. There has been no published work on this aspect of German Baptist history. Only one thesis on the subject exists, that being a Th.M. thesis written by Eric Ohlmann at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1966 entitled, "A Historical Study of the Influence of Pietistic Thought on the German Baptist General Conference During Its Formative Years, 1839-1883." In that thesis Ohlmann examined points of influence and similarities between Pietism and German Baptists. His work is very informative. However, several other works on Pietism were published in and around that period and were not included in his research.

make much reference to Pietism in name. This was, in all probability, because of the relationship between Pietism and the state or territorial churches from which they came. Pietism was perceived as being Lutheran or Reformed. In fact, in some German territories, Pietists were part of the religious and civil hierarchy. Thus, Pietism was related to the same churches that harassed and persecuted the Baptists, not only in Germany, but also in North America. The "Old Lutherans" of the Missouri Synod, though not Pietists, were vitriolic in their condemnation of the German Baptists through their denominational paper, *Der Lutheraner*, and in their actions toward Baptists on the frontier. The German Baptists were a consistent subject of derision for their preaching, education, practices, and church organization. Missouri Synod pastors threatened to bar from communion any person from their parishes who attended the revival meetings of the Baptists.

*Der Sendbote* once described an encounter between Baptist preachers and a group of Lutherans that left a negative impression upon the Baptists. Several of those who were in mission to the German speakers in New York were searching for a place to worship. Their search led them to a small group of "Old Lutherans" who were worshipping in an attic with their crucifix and candlesticks. After listening to the sermon and other parts of the service, they were caught in a derisive situation. Someone informed one of the leaders of the foundling church that the men were preachers. The Lutheran leader then inquired as to what kind of preachers they were and who had called them. They assured him that it was of no importance because they were simply looking to worship with other humble

Christians. The situation then grew worse as the Lutheran leader began to ridicule the strangers:

Well, you see, he exclaimed, that's how they all talk in order to wriggle out [of answering the question]; then he praised the effort they had gone through for Oertelt (the one who is a Catholic convert now), and more of such nonsense. Without much further ado we replied: Listen, sir, you seem to appear rather conceited, and began to leave the "church." So, now we are called conceited, we heard him shout as we walked out, and followed by derisive laughter, which was probably prompted by the joy of their victory, we reached the outside. God only knows with what heavy hearts we descended the stairs again knowing that the worst pride can reside even in an attic.<sup>3</sup>

It was encounters such as the one described above, as well as actual incidents of persecution, that moved the German Baptists to disassociate themselves from their Pietist heritage. They saw Pietism as related to the dead state churches of the Old World and the offspring of those churches in North America.

It must also be mentioned that the Anglo-American environment phrased Pietism in new terms. The Anglo-American Baptists perceived the German Baptists as being very pious, both in their theological beliefs and in lifestyle. The English language descriptions of these qualities did not use the vocabulary related to German culture. Instead, they used the words and images familiar to Anglo-American culture. Thus, American Baptists would often describe the German Baptists as Puritans for their advocacy of temperance, Sabbath observance, and other practices regarding lifestyle and behavior.<sup>4</sup> One nineteenth-century American Baptist observer wrote regarding the German and Swedish Baptists: "All who are well acquainted with our foreign-speaking churches will agree that

<sup>3</sup> *Der Sendbote*, November 1855, 2. Another reference to the relationship between the German Baptists and the Lutherans is in *Der Sendbote*, October 15, 1865, 74.

<sup>4</sup> Lemuel C. Barnes, *Missions* (November 13, 1913): 845.

in many aspects of that old-fashioned Puritanism which laid the foundations of American Christianity and American greatness, they far excel the direct descendents of Puritanism in our time.”<sup>5</sup> What the American Baptist commentators viewed as Puritanism were actually expressions of German Pietism. All of the elements that were viewed as Puritan were present within the currents of continental Pietism and were expressed in the lives of the early leadership of the German Baptists prior to extensive contact with Anglo-American culture.

### **Pietism or Puritanism?**

The source of the theological homogeneity of the German Baptists in North America was continental, evangelical Pietism. The early German Baptist leadership brought into the churches and the Conference their backgrounds in Lutheran and nineteenth-century evangelical Pietism. Their theology can be understood in the context of continental Pietism. Additionally, their strict views of proper Christian behavior or Christian piety flowed from the Pietist emphasis

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. The General Conference of Swedish Baptists in North America (now called the General Baptist Conference) provides an interesting point of comparison with the German Baptists. Swedes who were attracted to the Baptist churches in North America were, for the most part, Pietists in their background. Like the German Baptists, the General Conference of Swedish Baptists had a relationship with the American Baptist Home Mission Society as a foreign-language conference; however, the Swedish Baptists did not assimilate fully. Instead, they ended their cooperative agreement with the ABHMS, separated their conference from the auspices of the American Baptists, and formed a separate denominational body under the large Baptist umbrella. For work on the Swedish Baptists see J.O. Backlund, *Swedish Baptists in America: A History*. William Brackney, “To Be Lost in America: The Saga of Swedish Baptists from an American Baptist Perspective,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 6 no. 3 (September 1987): 149-155. Norris Magnuson, “Along Kingdom Highways – American Baptists and Swedish Baptists in a Common Mission: An Introductory Essay,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 6 no. 3 (September 1987): 125-144. Gustavus Schroeder, *History of the Swedish Baptists in Sweden and America* (New York: The Author, 1898). Adolph Olson, *A Centenary History as Related to the Baptist General Conference of America* (Chicago: Baptist Conference Press, 1952). Virgil Olson, “An Interpretation of the

on Christian praxis. Moreover, the Pietism, as well as the piety, of the German-speaking Baptists was well noted by both those inside the churches, as well as by English-speaking Baptists.

When English-speaking observers took note of the behavior of the German Baptists, especially as it was juxtaposed to the English-speaking Baptist churches, they categorized it in terms of the influence of Anglo-American Puritanism. The American Baptists also misinterpreted the theological viewpoint of the German Baptists, perceiving the German-speakers as Puritans. Lemuel C. Barnes of the ABHMS wrote that Puritanism was greater among the foreign-speaking Baptists. He wrote that there was more of "the New England conscience in our foreign-speaking church members than there is on the average in the direct line. In conservatism of the old ideals of religious life, they outweigh us greatly. Though as yet in numbers they may be little more than one to ten, in Puritanism they are more than nearly ten to one."<sup>6</sup> It seems as if contemporaries and later observers of the German Baptists have approached them from an Anglo-American religious perspective. In so doing, they found the ongoing emphasis on strict Christian praxis and drew the conclusion that they were Puritans. This conclusion implied that the German Baptist Conference, which consciously sought to retain its German character while pulling into their churches German-speaking immigrants, was shaped in its theology and practice of Christian living by Anglo-American Puritanism.

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Historical Relationships Between the American Baptist Convention and the Baptist General Conference."

<sup>6</sup> Barnes, 845. Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 222.



In the development of his thesis on the relationship of the ABHMS and the General Conference of German Baptists, Ohlmann picked up on the American Baptist perception of the German Baptists as more Puritan than the direct heirs of Puritanism. He concluded that the theology, or at least that the emphasis on Christian behavior, was the result of the process of Americanization among German Baptist churches. He then argued that it was this Puritanism that became a barrier to German Baptist assimilation. Ohlmann wrote, "In fact, one of the largest barriers to a closer fellowship and assimilation, as we have seen, was a result of what American Baptists themselves regarded as the German Baptists closer adherence to traditional American religious values."<sup>7</sup>

While the argument fits with Ohlmann's conclusions about the relationship between the ABHMS and the General Conference of German Baptists, it is a curious line of thought in an otherwise brilliant thesis paper. It takes into account none of the literature on the effects of continuous immigration on the conservatism of immigrant churches. In fact, it rather suggests that Puritanism, in whatever form it existed in nineteenth- and early-twentieth century America, could shape a denomination that was German in both language and culture. Furthermore, it wholly disregards the evident influence of Continental Pietism in the leadership and theology of the General Conference of German Baptists throughout early development. To say that the German Baptists became Puritans is to imply that they absorbed so much of Anglo-American religious culture that they were shaped in their views of theology and Christian practice by that tradition. Ohlmann argues that, while the style of worship of the German

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<sup>7</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 226.

Baptist churches remained German, “At the same time they had imbibed certain American religious values more fully than their American brethren.”<sup>8</sup>

Ohlmann was correct in arguing that there was a significant obstacle that kept the German Baptists from completely assimilating, both theologically and institutionally, with the English-speaking Baptist conventions. However, this obstacle was not a matter of the German Baptists appropriating traditional American religious values. It was a matter of the German Baptists expressing the emphasis upon the inner spiritual life of the individual and the corresponding emphasis upon the practice of Christian living. Both of these emphases were native to German Pietism.

It is especially difficult to understand such an assertion when the formative leaders of the Conference were Pietists in background and theology and when the central emphases of preaching and theology were those of classical Pietism. It is also difficult to understand an argument for the Americanization of the Conference’s theology when nearly all of the German Baptist churches maintained the use of the German language throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. They maintained German worship styles and hymnody during this period. Additionally, the church membership was fed through the latter part of the century by the massive waves of immigrants who were German in language and culture. While the churches, along with their publications, may have assisted immigrants in adapting to their new environment in North America, they were also sanctuaries for the expression of spirituality and culture.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 221.

Puritanism was English and Anglo-American. It was outside of the cultural context of the German Baptists and the German-speakers they served. Pietism, which had affinities with Puritanism, did fit into the German cultural context. Thus, it was not the Puritanism of the German Baptists that was a barrier to their assimilation. It was their expression of Pietism and their perception of their churches as being more pious than their English-speaking Baptist foils. The Pietist theology of the German Baptists was not only an expression of their spirituality and concern for Christian living. In the way it was used to form a barrier against assimilation, it was a part of or a partner to the barrier formed by the desire of the German Baptists to maintain their German language and culture, both within their churches and within the North American environment.

### **The Early Leadership**

The pastors who organized the first German Baptist churches in North America, the General Conference of German Baptists, the publishing arm of the Conference, and the seminary for training pastors, were a mixed assortment of German Lutheran Pietists, Swiss Separatist Pietists, Württemberg Pietists, and even Dutch Pietists.<sup>9</sup> Pietism in this context did not refer only to outward behavior, but also to an emphasis on the inner spiritual life of the Christian. Thus,

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<sup>9</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 13-36. *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2. *Der Sendbote*, September 27, 1876, 30. "Our Pioneers," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 13 (November 1891): 324-26. "Rev. Konrad Anton Fleischmann," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 13 (September 1891): 326-27. Walter Rauschenbusch, "August Rauschenbusch, D.D." *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (November 1898): 323-24. "The Pioneer Baptist Workers," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (November 1898): 326-29. Lewis Kaiser, "The Founding and Growth of Baptist Missions Among Germans in America," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (November 1898): 300. August Rauschenbusch, *Leben und Wirken*.

the emphasis on a personal, even emotional, and life-changing experience of the Christian faith coupled with an emphasis upon the spiritual development of the individual, transcended confessional boundaries. The early leaders of the German Baptists were men who found in their new land the freedom to express their Pietism as Baptists. Their contact with Pietism was evident particularly in their religious backgrounds and in the ideas they believed were significant. Also their leadership played a role in the continuation of the Pietist heritage in succeeding generations of the General Conference of German Baptists.

### **Konrad Anton Fleischmann**

Among the early German Baptist pastors, there were those who stood out for the indelible impression they left upon the theology and practices of the denomination. The first of these was Konrad Fleischmann, the first editor and publisher of *Der Sendbote*. Born in Bavaria, Fleischmann was converted at nineteen while working in Geneva, Switzerland. His conversion led him to join with an independent evangelical church.<sup>10</sup> The independent evangelical churches in Switzerland, also referred to as Separatist churches, had their origin in nineteenth-century evangelical revivals led by Methodists and other groups that had been influenced by the pietist emphasis on personal religious experience, particularly conversion. Those converted in the revivals often believed that they could not return to the “coldness” of the inclusive state or territorial churches in which they had been baptized and confirmed. Thus, they separated from the state

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<sup>10</sup> Kaiser, “The Founding and Growth of Baptist Missions Among the Germans in America,” 300. Other sources, such as Ramaker, *German Baptists*, refer to Fleischmann as a member of a Swiss

churches to form congregations of converted Christians, much as Pietist Separatists did in the century before them.

Although the Separatist church that Fleischmann joined did not require adult baptism, his study of the Scriptures led him to believe in the validity of believers' baptism, which he then requested and received. He trained for the ministry at a Separatist institute led by Karl von Rodt in Bern and became the pastor of a Separatist church in Emmenthal, in the Canton of Bern, Switzerland.<sup>11</sup> His life took a different turn through his correspondence with George Müller, a well-known nineteenth-century evangelical who founded a home for orphans in Bristol, England.<sup>12</sup> Through his letters and during a visit Fleischmann made to Bristol, Müller encouraged the zealous young Fleischmann to become a missionary to the German-speaking immigrants in America.

Some years later, Fleischmann wrote of the beginning of his work in America. "When the writer of this [article] arrived in America in 1839 and temporarily established residence in New York for a few weeks, the German Baptists were basically unknown. Whether or when such would come about, was not to be foreseen by him."<sup>13</sup> Fleischmann worked for a time independently in New York, and then in Newark, New Jersey. Although he had no success in New York, in Newark he was able to gather a small congregation and baptized three individuals. He soon became at odds with the congregation over the issue of

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Separatist church. *Der Sendbote*, November 27, 1867, 181. *Der Sendbote*, September 27, 1876, 30. "Rev. Konrad Anton Fleischmann," 326.

<sup>11</sup> *Der Sendbote*, September 27, 1872, 300. Albert Ramaker, "Earliest Beginnings of Our History," in Hermann von Berge, ed. *These Glorious Years: The Centenary History of the German Baptists of North America 1843-1943* (Cleveland: Roger Williams Press, n.d.), 28.

<sup>12</sup> "Rev. Konrad Anton Fleischmann," 326.

<sup>13</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2.

infant baptism and resigned from his ministry with them. The three baptized individuals were encouraged to join an English church because there was not a German church.<sup>14</sup>

The young evangelist was then encouraged to take his ministry to Pennsylvania, with its large settlements of Germans, in November 1839. Although Fleischmann was hesitant to accept the financial help of any organization, or to bind himself to an appointment with any type of mission society, he agreed to work under appointment of the Pennsylvania Baptist State Convention on the condition that he could withdraw from their agreement at any time.<sup>15</sup> In the autumn months of 1840 and the winter of 1841, a revival broke out under Fleischmann's leadership in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania. Most of the sources on this event claim that after the revivals Fleischmann baptized two hundred people.<sup>16</sup> His recollections of the event were different. Fleischmann recalled that in early 1841 he baptized sixty-two converts in Lycoming County, and that "brother M., who had come the year before from Switzerland to help him, baptized another one hundred persons later. A small group of about fifteen developed in the meantime in Reading, Pennsylvania, and a similar number was baptized later in Newark."<sup>17</sup> The total number reached approximately two hundred, but not all were in Lycoming County and not all were baptized by Fleischmann, according to his telling of the events.

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<sup>14</sup> Ten years later, these three individuals joined with another group of German Baptists and formed a German church. Kaiser, "The Founding and Growth of Baptist Missions Among the Germans in America," 300.

<sup>15</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 17. Ramaker, "Our Earliest Beginnings," 29.

<sup>16</sup> Brother M. was Friedrich Michaelis (also referred to as Jacob Michaelis). J.C. Grimmell, "Historical Sermon," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 13 (September 1891): 307. *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 1.

Many of the newly baptized in Lycoming County had been converted under the preaching of Friedrich Michaelis, a colporteur whom Fleischmann had encouraged to preach in the Lycoming area. These individuals were not immediately gathered into organized churches; instead, Fleischmann encouraged them to meet regularly for prayer and the Lord's Supper, and to choose a brother from their numbers who could exhort them using the Scriptures. Such a description was not unlike the Methodist Society meetings on the American frontier that met in just such a manner, for prayer and admonition, though not for the Lord's Supper, between visits by the circuit rider. The new converts held conventicle style meetings until they were organized into churches.<sup>18</sup>

Lycoming County was described in 1891 as a "spiritual field ripe for the harvest."<sup>19</sup> The large number of converts suggested that the preaching and pastoral work of Fleischmann and Michaelis found those who were sympathetic to their message. The method used by Fleischmann was effective among the residents of the region. He went from door to door, conversing with the residents in German, sharing a printed tract or even selling a book. If he were able to gather enough people, he held a preaching service.<sup>20</sup> One might argue that it was Fleischmann's personality and preaching that opened the residents of Lycoming County to conversion. At the same time, it is helpful to understand that Pietism

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<sup>17</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Grimmell, "Historical Sermon," 307.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

had already made inroads in the religious traditions of that region of Pennsylvania.<sup>21</sup>

Fleischmann chose to work in the Lycoming County area of Pennsylvania because there was a dense population of German speakers in that region. Pennsylvania had been the destination of German-speaking sectarians searching for land and religious tolerance since the latter part of the seventeenth century. Among the Christian traditions present in that region were Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, United Brethren in Christ, Lutherans, and German Reformed. All of these groups had been touched by the influence of continental Pietism, and some retained the Pietist emphases within their doctrine and practices. It is important to make note of some of these groups and their connections to Pietism because they formed a portion of the early constituency of the German Baptist churches and demonstrated the importance of Pietism in the very formation of the early churches.

### **Fleischmann's Pennsylvania Constituency**

#### **The "Tunkers"**

The first members of the Church of the Brethren arrived in Pennsylvania in 1719 and held their first public worship service together on Christmas day 1723. The Church of the Brethren emerged from the streams of Lutheran and Radical Pietism that affected the German churches in the late seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup> They later chose to express their Pietism within the church structure of

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<sup>21</sup> Ramaker, "Earliest Beginnings," 29. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> The most authoritative works on the history of the Church of the Brethren are: Donald Durnbaugh, ed. and trans., *European Origins of the Brethren* (Elgin, IL: The Brethren Press,



the Anabaptist heritage. Donald Durnbaugh, the leading historian of the Church of the Brethren, has argued, "Pietism is recognized as the matrix of Brethren origins, Anabaptism as a tradition consciously adopted by early Brethren."<sup>23</sup>

The earliest sources on the Brethren indicate that they emerged from a Pietist awakening (revival) in the early eighteenth century. Those who had been touched by a personal spiritual awakening organized into small cells for private meetings. They grew increasingly unhappy with the condition of the German Lutheran territorial churches, but were not inclined to leave as Radical Pietists did.<sup>24</sup> Continuing in their private conventicle meetings brought the wrath of church and secular authorities and they were persecuted.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, their study of the Scriptures led them to the belief that Christians were to follow the commandments of Christ, as found in the New Testament, concerning believers' baptism, church discipline, and the sharing of goods with other Christians.<sup>26</sup>

These groups of Pietists were caught between their new scriptural beliefs and the persecution they faced for their private conventicles. Their convictions and their experience of the faith, however, were too strong for them to turn back.

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1958). Donald Durnbaugh, *Brethren Beginnings: The Origin of the Church of the Brethren in Early 18<sup>th</sup> Century Europe* (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia, 1958; second edition, 1992). Donald Durnbaugh, ed. *The Brethren in Colonial America: A Source Book on the Transplantation and Development of the Church of the Brethren in the Eighteenth Century* (Elgin, IL: The Brethren Press, 1967). Donald Durnbaugh, *Fruit of the Vine: A History of the Church of the Brethren* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1997). Carl F. Bowman, *Brethren Society: The Cultural Transformation of a Peculiar People* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Donald Durnbaugh, "The Brethren in Early American Church Life," in ed. Ernest Stoeffler, *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), 226.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>25</sup> Durnbaugh, *European Origins*, 217-280. Donald Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), 121-22.

Durnbaugh writes of their formative experiences: “The realization of personal sinfulness, the criticism of unregenerate ministers, the unwillingness to commune with a mixed multitude, the rejection of formalized prayer and liturgies, the meetings outside the church structures for small prayer fellowships – these are the hallmarks of the revival spirit.”<sup>27</sup> The persecution that sought to suppress the spirit of Pietism drove the Brethren to seek refuge in Wittgenstein, where the ruling family was sympathetic toward Pietism. The family set aside a portion of land in Schwarzenau, on the Eder River, as a place of refuge for the Brethren.<sup>28</sup>

This type of revival spirit affected many in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>29</sup> The group of Pietists who would become the Church of the Brethren came into contact with another Pietist group in the Palatinate in 1708. In the late summer of that year, the visit of two “strange brethren,” about whom there is only vague reference climaxed in a desire for believers’ baptism by immersion among the Brethren. Thus, they consciously adopted the independent congregational polity and the distinguishing mark, believers’ baptism, of the Anabaptists. This was combined with their emphasis upon personal conviction of sin and spiritual regeneration of the individual. They became known in the German states as the “Tunkers” for their practice of baptism by immersion.<sup>30</sup>

Seeking to be free of any threat of religious persecution, the Brethren emigrated to the colony of Pennsylvania, attracted by its promise of

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<sup>26</sup> Durnbaugh, *European Origins*, 124. Durnbaugh, *Believers' Church*, 120.

<sup>27</sup> Durnbaugh, “The Brethren in Early American Church Life,” 230-31.

<sup>28</sup> Durnbaugh, *European Origins*, 121-24.

<sup>29</sup> Durnbaugh, *Believers' Church*, 123. Donald Durnbaugh, “Radical Pietism as the Foundation of German-American Communitarian Settlements,” in Eberhard Reichman, et. al., eds. *Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America* (Indianapolis: Max Kade German-American Center, Indiana University – Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1995), 31-54.

religious tolerance and freedom. The Church of the Brethren was able to grow in the American colonies because of its sectarian nature. While transplanted state churches had to depend on Europe for pastoral leadership, the Brethren chose pastors from among their congregations. Also, the established European churches, pastors and laity alike, had trouble adapting to the voluntary church concept present in North America, where the laity voluntarily supported the churches with tithes and offerings. This was a not a problem at all for the Brethren, who were already a part of a voluntary church that preached the sharing of goods in Christian aid. In these strengths, as well as their reputation of being "sober, neighborly, and honest," the Brethren attracted new church members.<sup>31</sup>

When Konrad Fleischmann and Friedrich Michaelis, ventured into Lycoming County they proclaimed a message that would have resonated with the Pietist traditions of the Church of the Brethren.<sup>32</sup> Fleischmann spoke about conviction of personal sinfulness, conversion to faith in Christ, regeneration, and Christian living. He also encouraged believers' baptism by immersion. In fact, when the first individuals in Lycoming County were baptized, it was winter. They went to the Quinne-shokeny Creek, cracked pieces of the ice from the creek and placed them so as to create a dam, so that the water would be deep enough for immersion.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Fleischmann did not push the converts into forming denominationally labeled churches; instead, he wanted them to meet for prayer

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<sup>30</sup> Durnbaugh, *European Origins*, 149.

<sup>31</sup> Durnbaugh, "The Brethren in Early American Church Life," 236.

<sup>32</sup> A "Tunker" meeting house already existed in Blooming Grove, one of the areas where Fleischmann and Michaelis experienced success. The one-room meetinghouse was built in 1828. Woyke published a picture of the meetinghouse in his *Heritage and Ministry of the General Conference of German Baptists*, in a pictorial section following p. 54.

<sup>33</sup> Grimmell, "Historical Sermon," 307.

and to choose a leader from among themselves.<sup>34</sup> This was in keeping with the practices of the Brethren. The groups of converts, who were probably awakened Brethren, were later organized into three Baptist churches in Lycoming County that joined the General Conference of German Baptists in the 1850s.<sup>35</sup>

### **Mennonites**

Believers' baptism and the independent congregation of believers were also common to the Mennonites. Like the Church of the Brethren, the Mennonites were refugees from violent, one might even say barbaric, persecution in the German territories during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Some Mennonites remained in the Netherlands, where they had contact with English Separatists, who later formed the modern Baptist movement.<sup>36</sup> Others settled in the Palatinate and left from that region to emigrate to the United States, Russia, as well as other regions of Eastern Europe.<sup>37</sup> The emigration of the Mennonites was the result of a difficult choice. They could follow the biblical command to make disciples of all people and as a result be exterminated by the civil authorities (with the blessing of the religious authorities), or they could view

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<sup>34</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 18.

<sup>35</sup> "Surviving Members of the First German Church," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 13 (November 1891): 299-300. Grimmell, "Historical Sermon," 307. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 18. Kaiser, "The Founding and Growth of Baptist Missions Among the Germans in America," 300.

<sup>36</sup> H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 36-39. William Brackney, *The Baptists* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 4. B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>37</sup> Albert Wardin, "Mennonite Brethren and German Baptists in Russia: Affinities and Dissimilarities," in Paul Toews, ed. *Mennonites and Baptists: A Continuing Conversation* (Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1993), 100. Rippley, "Germans from Russia," 426-27.

themselves as a remnant of true Christianity and live in isolation from the world.<sup>38</sup> They chose to be a remnant.

In essence, they chose to be a migrant people who settled in other lands, farmed, and were tolerated because they were good farmers who could make something of undeveloped land or bring life out of land ravaged by war. Some enclaves emigrated to the United States, Pennsylvania in particular. Others moved into the steppes of Russia to develop the steppes of southern Russia and the Ukraine, the vast agricultural areas of Russia.<sup>39</sup> In every nation that received them, the Mennonites developed communities that were culturally isolated from the rest of the nation. Their dress, food, social customs, and language were all significant in their meaning. Their goal in the creation of a sub-culture was to form and maintain a true Christian church of baptized believers. Marriage was only allowed within the group. Commitment to the church through baptism became a means of keeping the community together, while discipleship was less a matter of personal faith than of keeping the customs of the community.<sup>40</sup>

Although the Mennonites were among the last heirs of the German Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, they were touched by Pietism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Germany and North America. In fact, one Mennonite historian has written, "No other single religious movement has had such an impact on the Mennonites in all countries with the exception of the

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<sup>38</sup> Martin Schrag, "Mennonites in Early American Christianity," 75.

<sup>39</sup> Rippley, "Germans from Russia," 426. Cornelius Krahn, ed. *From the Steppes to the Prairies, 1874-1949* (Newton, KS: Mennonite Publication Office, 1949).

<sup>40</sup> Schrag, "Mennonites in Early American Christianity," 76.

Netherlands as Pietism.”<sup>41</sup> The influence of Pietism was first felt among the Mennonites in the Palatinate. They were touched by Württemberg Pietism, which tended to be less emotional and more duty oriented in its manifestations.

The influence of Pietism did not end with emigration to North America in the eighteenth century. Pietistic devotional literature was more popular among the Mennonites than Anabaptist writings.<sup>42</sup> The Pietism expressed among the Mennonites did not take on the radical, change of life, emotional conversion. Their piety was more in keeping with their mood of withdrawal in that it was moralistic, unemotional, and quietistic.<sup>43</sup> It was Pietism of an inward and spiritual nature rather than an outward, leavening nature.

### **Mennonites and United Brethren in Christ**

Some communities of Mennonites were also touched by the evangelical piety expressed in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century revivalism. In particular, the United Brethren movement sought to shift the emphasis of religious life away from obedience to the community to a personal experience of faith that culminated in conviction of sins and conversion to a personal experience of faith in Christ. The United Brethren preached in German and reached out to the German-speaking population of the eastern United States.

The United Brethren originated under the leadership of a German Reformed Pietist and pastor, George Otterbein, who began preaching to German

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 74. Krahn, “Pietism,” 176.

<sup>42</sup> Schrag, “Mennonites in Early American Christianity,” 78-79.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

speakers in the American colonies.<sup>44</sup> Otterbein organized converts into classes that met for prayer, study, and mutual admonishment. He had close ties and fellowship with the Methodist circuit riders, although he was not a Methodist. Their emphases were similar in that they had a shared heritage in evangelical pietistic beliefs.<sup>45</sup> The second leader of the United Brethren was Martin Boehm, whose religious ties were to the Mennonites. Boehm had been a pastor among the Mennonites, and then a bishop. After having a conversion experience, he was determined to bring an awakening to the Mennonites in Pennsylvania. Eventually Boehm was excommunicated by the Mennonites and together with Otterbein he formed the Conference or fellowship of German-speaking preachers who became known as the United Brethren.<sup>46</sup>

When Fleischmann began preaching in Lycoming County, he would have found a mixture of Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, and United Brethren. The streams of Pietism had touched all of these groups. Additionally, there were Lutherans and Reformed, as well as Moravians, all groups that had been bathed in the streams of Pietist thought. Perhaps there were many among those first converts who were unfamiliar with the message of personal experience of faith. It would seem that the great success Fleischmann experienced in that “spiritual field ripe for the harvest” was the result of seeds of Pietism that had been planted in the religious traditions of the region and its people. This did not in any way take

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<sup>44</sup> Steven O'Malley, “The Hermeneutics of the Otterbeins,” *Methodist History* 25 (October 1986): 17-28.

<sup>45</sup> Steven O'Malley, *Early German-American Evangelicalism: Pietist Sources on Discipleship and Sanctification* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 1-106.

<sup>46</sup> The United Brethren in Christ eventually merged with the Evangelical Association, a denomination founded by a German-speaking Methodist circuit rider named Jacob Albright. In

away from the labors or success of Fleischmann. It was precisely the message he brought, concerning personal experience, conviction of sin, conversion, regeneration and baptism that resonated with the people who heard him. Thus, Fleischmann was an important early leader in that he gathered into the early German Baptist churches those who could understand and appreciate the message of conversion and regeneration.

### **Leadership in the General Conference of German Baptists**

Konrad Fleischmann's leadership was significant in other ways as well. He founded one of the first urban congregations among the German Baptists. After completing his work in Lycoming County and leaving the converts in the care of Friedrich Michaelis, Fleischmann began working in Philadelphia. In 1843, he and five baptized converts formed "The German Church of the Lord that Meets on Poplar Street."<sup>47</sup> Fleischmann remained in ministry in the church on Poplar Street until his death in 1867. The church was not the "Mother Church" of the German Baptists, because the Conference began as the voluntary association of independently formed congregations. The church was the site of the first Conference meeting in 1851. It was at that Conference that Fleischmann's most significant role of leadership among the German Baptists would be shaped.

When the first Conference convened in the autumn of 1851, there were three primary issues. The first was the selection of a name for the body, and a

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1968, the Evangelical United Brethren united with the Methodist Church in the United States to form the United Methodist Church.

<sup>47</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 19. Ramaker, "Earliest Beginnings," 30 interestingly in this article, published around 1943, Ramaker reported that the church Fleischmann founded in Philadelphia



corresponding decision about the use of the word “Baptist” in the names of local churches. A second issue was an offer from Rochester Theological Seminary to form a German department to train young men for work in the German churches. The third item of business was the need for a publication that would have articles addressing the needs and concerns of the new Conference and its churches.<sup>48</sup> The delegates decided that such a publication was needed, and hoped it would receive a wide subscription to cover the publication costs. The Conference did not want the paper to have a polemical or doctrinal content. Instead, it was to cover news relevant to the churches and the lives of its members, as well as news from the churches, from the foreign mission field, and from the Baptists in Germany.<sup>49</sup>

Konrad Fleischmann was the first editor of *Der Sendbote des Evangelium* (The Messenger of the Gospel). As both the editor and publisher of the Conference publication, Fleischmann determined its format and content for more than a decade. *Der Sendbote* became an invaluable tool for communicating not only the news of the churches, but also the basic theological beliefs of the General Conference of German Baptists to its constituents.

In the first years, *Der Sendbote* was a monthly publication consisting of four pages. Each issue began with a poem or hymn-text that pointed to the inner, mystical nature of the believer’s relationship with Christ. The texts referred to the

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was originally called, “The Church of the Lord Meeting on Poplar Street.” The word “German” is conspicuously missing.

<sup>48</sup> F. W. C. Meyer, “Memories of Our Printed Page,” in Hermann von Berge, ed. *These Glorious Years: Centenary History of the German Baptists in North America 1843-1943* (Cleveland: Roger Williams Press, n.d.), 101. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 55-56.

<sup>49</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 6.

blood Christ shed on the cross, the joy found in Christ, or the riches of faith.<sup>50</sup> At times they referred to the Christian as a sailor or a pilgrim journeying through this life in the faith of reaching eternal joy. Many issues also contained sermons or other articles expounding upon the Bible as God's word, the reality of sin, the concept of regeneration, the need for repentance, or the importance of Christian living. Articles appeared addressing relevant social issues, including temperance, abortion, and slavery. Fleischmann often added his own editorials. On some occasions, the editorials were written in response to a criticism printed in the German publication of the Missouri Synod Lutherans, *Der Lutheraner*, or in *Reformierte Kirchenzeitung* of the German Reformed Church.<sup>51</sup> The paper also had letters from pastors, prayer requests, obituaries, in addition to reports about new mission endeavors and the success of the Baptists in Germany. The theology of the leading members of the Conference was revealed in the pages of *Der Sendbote*, even if they did not always sign their articles. Furthermore, Fleischmann's own piety was revealed in what he selected for publication in the paper.

Fleischmann and *Der Sendbote* became the voice of the General Conference of German Baptists. The role of *Der Sendbote* was temporarily threatened in 1859, and Fleischmann responded with concern. As the Conference grew with new churches in the westward expansion of the nation, there were calls for the General Conference (*Bundeskonferenz*) to be held in a western city. Thus,

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<sup>50</sup> P. W. Bickel, "Des jungen Voten Heimgang," *Der Sendbote*, February 1856, 1. Pilgerin, "Meine Sonne," *Der Sendbote*, June 5 1867, 1. J. M. "Liebe," *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2. Kupfer-Haller, "Das Lammesblut," *Der Sendbote*, May 1855, 1. "Die Planze von Gott gepflanzt," *Der Sendbote*, November 1858, 17.

in 1858 the Conference was held in Cincinnati; the attendance, however, was low. The pastors of west Ohio, feeling isolated in distance from the eastern center of the Conference leadership, believed it was necessary to divide the larger Conference body into Eastern and Western conferences. The Western Conference was organized in 1859.<sup>52</sup> At the first meeting of the Western Conference, the delegates decided to start a second German Baptist publication, *Die Biene auf dem Missionsfeld*.<sup>53</sup>

The plans for the new publication were taken as an affront by Fleischmann. He had worked to edit and publish *Der Sendbote* without pay for six years. During that time, there were many months when the publication costs came out of his pocket because of the lack of subscriptions or the nonpayment of subscription fees. Fleischmann argued that the Conference simply could not support two similar publications. Leading the effort to begin *Die Biene* was Philip Bickel, a younger pastor in Cincinnati. Bickel argued that the publications would not be the same in that *Die Biene* would address only missions.<sup>54</sup>

At the center of the conflict was a struggle for power between the older pastors in the East and the younger pastors founding churches in the West. In an editorial in *Der Sendbote*, Fleischmann responded to a letter from Bickel, which reproached him for not printing summaries of the deliberations of the Western

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<sup>51</sup> *Der Sendbote*, October 1865, 74.

<sup>52</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 56. Kaiser, "The Founding and Growth of Baptist Missions Among the Germans in America," 301.

<sup>53</sup> G. A. Schulte, "Publication Work Among the German Baptists," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 13 (November 1891): 318-19. Meyer, "Memories of Our Printed Page," 106-107.

<sup>54</sup> *Der Sendbote*, December 1859, 70.

Conference. Fleischmann gave several reasons for the omission, and among these he wrote:

Another reason why we did not mention these deliberations was that some of the decisions did not seem as acceptable to us as the brothers who were there might have wished. Therefore, we thought it best to keep quiet for the moment and wait for further developments. However, since we cannot now in all honesty remain silent, let us, in the spirit of love, speak a free and honest word with our brothers in the West. The content of what is being said is the sole responsibility of the editor, although he is aware that he is also speaking the minds of the older and more experienced brothers in the East and also of several in the West.<sup>55</sup>

In the article, Fleischmann addressed his objections to a series of decisions made by the Western Conference, which he did not believe were prudent or necessary at this juncture. One of the decisions was the formation of the Western Conference itself. Another objection addressed the Western Conference's decision to form a new mission committee, which Fleischmann believed was unnecessary since the American Baptist Home Mission Society had agreed to support the German church workers in new fields of mission. He believed it was too early to begin a mission committee to be supported by churches "when hardly anyone of them is able to support their own preacher, and some contribute nothing at all to his support."<sup>56</sup>

At the heart of Fleischmann's objections to the decisions of the Western Conference was the creation of a new publication:

The most difficult thing for us to understand is that the new committee is already in need of a newspaper and created a newspaper committee for this purpose. What for? Does one already have such high hopes of success that the reports need their own voice? Or is the *Sendböte* no longer worthy of the reports of our brothers? Until now we have always been happy to receive reports as long as they were of some general interest

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

and suitable for printing; on several occasions we have been lamenting the fact that our brothers did not send enough reports. At the Conference proceedings such reports were solicited, but the excuse was made that there was not much to report, an impression that is confirmed upon reading the excerpts from the congregational letters of this Western Conference. So what is the purpose of a new publication? For the mission among pagans or of the mission in Germany? Until now the *Sendbote* has supplied much good news, as is evident from letters by our grateful readers in our possession; and there will be more of this in the future.<sup>57</sup>

Fleischmann then expressed that he was not concerned that *Der Sendbote* would be pushed aside for *Die Biene*. He did raise the concern that if *Die Biene* did not find a sufficient number of subscribers to support its publication, then it might enter into competition with *Der Sendbote*.<sup>58</sup>

While on the surface, the conflict concerning the new publication was one of finances and reasonable support, there was much more to the friction. It was in a sense, a contest for power or authority between an older generation of pastors in the East (and a few in the West) and younger pastors who were establishing pioneer churches in the West. The older group believed that the younger pastors were not honoring their opinions and advice. It was also a conflict between two leaders with strong, authoritarian personalities and similar interests.

Both Fleischmann and Bickel had interests in writing and publishing. Bickel wrote and published the weekly Sunday school publication for the Conference, *Der Saemann* (The Sower). Perhaps Bickel wanted more influence or perhaps he objected to the style and content of *Der Sendbote*. In later years, he confessed that his original insistence that *Die Biene* was not meant to replace *Der Sendbote* was not entirely true. Bickel was unhappy with *Der Sendbote* because

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

he felt it was “too pietistic, that its roots were too much in Germany and Switzerland, and that it was too old-fashioned.”<sup>59</sup>

It was Fleischmann’s “pietistic” publication that prevailed. After only two years of publication, *Die Biene* merged with *Der Sendbote*. In 1866 the General Conference, meeting in Wilmot, Ontario, took the first steps toward forming the German Baptist Publication Society. The society would be located in Cincinnati, Ohio. The Conference elected Philip Bickel the editor and manager.<sup>60</sup> The format of the paper changed very little, as it still contained hymn-texts, sermons, articles on beliefs, and admonitions on social issues. As the primary published voice of the German Baptists, *Der Sendbote* had an important function in expressing the fundamental beliefs of the German Baptists. Fleischmann carved out this role for the publication. He established the format and the content during its first decade of publication, a format that would continue to be used even as the paper moved from being published monthly to twice monthly to weekly. Fleischmann’s Pietism, as it was expressed through his writings and his selection of the paper’s content, was then sent into the homes and the lives of the majority of German Baptist church members. There are no means to quantify the impact *Der Sendbote* had on the members of the Conference during the years Fleischmann was editor. It can only be reiterated that the format and content of the paper, though greatly expanded in later years, did not change dramatically even in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 106.

<sup>60</sup> Schulte, “Publication Work Among the German Baptists,” 319.

The theological viewpoint of Konrad Fleischmann permeated the early reading materials of the German Baptists in North America. In addition to his work with *Der Sendbote*, Fleischmann was a prolific translator and publisher of devotional works and hymns. He translated Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* into German. The volume was published in 1864 by Oncken in Hamburg, Germany.<sup>61</sup> Fleischmann was likely the author, as well as publisher of "Die Wallfahrt nach Zionsthal," a devotional work that was similar to Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Promise*.<sup>62</sup>

### **Pioneer Pastors with Pietist Roots**

Fleischmann was not the only significant Pietist among the early leaders of the Conference. As denominational historian Albert J. Ramaker wrote in 1922, "a considerable number of our early pioneers had come out of German Pietist and Separatist surroundings."<sup>63</sup>

### **Heinrich Schneider**

Heinrich Schneider, the first pastor of the earliest German Baptist churches in Ontario, was a Lutheran Pietist. He was a spiritual son of one of the great leaders of the General Conference of German Baptists, August Rauschenbusch. Schneider was converted as a young man under Rauschenbusch's Lutheran ministry in Altena, Westphalia.<sup>64</sup> After his emigration to the United States, Rauschenbusch recruited him to work for the American Tract

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<sup>61</sup> Meyer, "Memories of Our Printed Page," 102.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 104.

Society as a colporteur in Canada. Schneider agreed and began to experience some success there. He requested that Rauschenbusch journey to Ontario to baptize his infant child. By this time, Rauschenbusch had become a Baptist. He came to Ontario in 1851, discussed his understanding with Schneider, and his visit culminated in the baptism of Heinrich Schneider and his wife.<sup>65</sup> After this a revival broke out and twenty others were baptized and organized into a church at Bridgeport. The church was later divided into three churches --- Wilmot, Berlin, and Woolwich --- with Schneider serving as the traveling preacher for all three.

### **Wilhelm Edward Grimm**

Another early pastor, Wilhelm Edward Grimm, was a Swiss Separatist.<sup>66</sup> Although born in Memel in Germany, he was converted by the Separatists and received baptism by affusion. In 1841 he returned to Memel and organized a Separatist church. A short time later he came into contact with Baptist movement in Germany, led by Johann Gerhard Oncken. He and the members of his church were immersed by Oncken and became Baptists, suffering great persecution for their beliefs. After being imprisoned numerous times, Grimm and his congregation emigrated to Milwaukee. They could not find enough work for the entire congregation to remain together. Instead, two churches were organized out of the immigrant congregation. One church was in Milwaukee, while the second smaller church was established in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Grimm continued as pastor of both churches for a time. Later he organized three more Baptist

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 35. "The Pioneer Baptist Workers," 328.

<sup>65</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 35.



churches in Wisconsin. He also served as the pastor of German Baptist congregations in other regions. Grimm was one of the few early pastors of the Conference whose Pietism led him to the Baptists prior to his emigration. He remained in the Conference as a pastor for decades. He was often an agitator in that he did not believe that pastors should receive salaries from their churches and he opposed seminary training for pastors.<sup>67</sup>

### **Christopher Schoemaker**

A third early pastor led his entire congregation to become Baptist in North America. The first German Baptist congregation in St. Louis was founded in 1848 as a Dutch-German congregation. The congregation had been organized previously under the leadership of Christopher Schoemaker, a Dutch Pietist.<sup>68</sup> The group that formed the core of the congregation was Dutch Pietist and had chosen Schoemaker from among their number to lead them to St. Louis in 1847. The history of the group seems to indicate that they were a conventicle of Pietists who decided to emigrate together. Ramaker writes of their origins, "They were a devout, God-fearing people, largely of Pietistic extraction. It had been their custom in Holland to meet together for prayer in private homes, and they continued this in their new American home, selecting Schoemaker as their leader."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 26-28. "Pioneer Baptist Workers," 328. Grimmell, "Historical Sermon," 308.

<sup>67</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 55-56. *Der Sendbote*, August 7, 1895. The literature does not indicate why he was opposed to education or salaries for preachers.

<sup>68</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 29-31. "Pioneer Baptist Workers," 328. Grimmell, "Historical Sermon," 308. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 54.

<sup>69</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 29.

The group received permission to meet in the Sunday school room of a large, English-speaking Baptist church in St. Louis. In 1848, some members of the Dutch congregation witnessed members of a black church baptizing converts in the Mississippi River. After carefully studying the Scriptures, Schoemaker and the members of the congregation concluded that baptism by immersion upon profession of faith was the scriptural model and mandate. They received baptism by an English-speaking Baptist pastor. The congregation then joined with a German-speaking Baptist group, one that was unaffiliated with any church because of the language barrier.

In the beginning, the St. Louis church had a preacher for the Dutch and a preacher for the Germans. As the years passed, the Dutch element of the congregation moved on and it became only a German-speaking Baptist church. Schoemaker, the Dutch Pietist, spent the remainder of his career preaching among both Germans and Dutch immigrants. At the age of eighty, in 1898, he was still preaching to a Dutch congregation in Muscatine, Iowa.<sup>70</sup>

### **Johann Eschmann**

Johann Eschmann, like Konrad Fleischmann, came to the Baptists in North America from a Swiss Separatist background.<sup>71</sup> Eschmann had been the pastor of an immersionist congregation in Zurich that had no affiliation with the Baptists. Eschmann began a mission to German speakers after emigrating to New York City in 1845. With the help of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, he organized a congregation of sixteen members into the First German Baptist

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<sup>70</sup> "The Pioneer Baptist Workers," 328.

Church in New York City. During twenty years of ministry in this urban church, Eschmann made an important impact upon the Conference. New York was like a way station for many immigrants who eventually moved westward. Those who converted under Eschmann's ministry in New York City before moving westward were among those who helped found new churches on the pioneer trail.

Eschmann filled a number of important leadership positions in the Conference, including being the moderator at the first General Conference in 1851.<sup>72</sup> Just as important for the leadership of the Conference was that under his pastoral leadership several young men from the congregation in New York entered the pastoral ministry. Two of the men, J. C. Haselhuhn and J. S. Gubelman were extremely important leaders in the Conference.<sup>73</sup> Haselhuhn was a successful pastor in Wilmington, Delaware; Newark; St. Louis; and Chicago. He was also a secretary with the American Baptist Home Mission Society for the Western Conference. In 1878 he was elected to succeed Philip Bickel as the editor of the periodicals published by the German Baptist Publications Society. He also wrote, translated, and published tracts, pamphlets, and books.<sup>74</sup> Haselhuhn was a valued member of both the mission committee and the committee that oversaw the work at the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester. J. C. Gubelman, along with Haselhuhn, received theological training in the German Department of Rochester Theological Seminary. In 1882 Gubelman was

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<sup>71</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 20-21.

<sup>72</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>74</sup> "J. C. Haselhuhn," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (September 1898): 326.

appointed as the Professor of Systematic Theology at the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester.

The first two decades of Eschmann's ministry increased the strength of the German Baptists New York City, a critical center for the reception of immigrants. As important as his ministry was to the founding of the Conference, it took a disastrous turn. The sources suggest that Eschmann's brand of Pietism had a radical cast to it that surfaced when his life entered a period of crisis. After the death of his wife, Magdalena, in 1864, the church began experiencing a great deal of conflict because of rumors that Eschmann was having sexual affairs with female church members. In 1865, the General Conference noted Eschmann's absence because of illness. Additionally, a letter from the New York church to the Conference again noted division and strife in congregational life. A year later, at the meeting of the Eastern Conference, the church's letter explained that pastor Eschmann had been excluded from the church because of the gravity of his behavior. Further, he was prohibited by the Eastern Conference from ever preaching again in a Conference church.<sup>75</sup>

In 1870, the church still had not healed from the division caused by Eschmann's sexual impropriety. A council of pastors was called to counsel with the church and to try to restore peace before the church completely disintegrated. One of the individuals involved in the council was August Rauschenbusch, professor at the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester. In his report to the Conference in 1870, Rauschenbusch essentially attributed Eschmann's errors in

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<sup>75</sup> Apparently Eschmann had been engaging in sexual behavior with women who were not his wife. Eastern Conference Minutes, 1866, 17.

behavior to errors in his theology.<sup>76</sup> What was most interesting about the heterodoxy detailed by Rauschenbusch was that it had traces of the influence of Radical Pietism.

While Pietism generally remained quite orthodox in its views of humanity and human sinfulness, and while classical Pietism emphasized both spiritual growth and moral behavior, there were elements of Radical sectarian Pietism that developed in German territories and took refuge in Switzerland. In some sectarian communities, unorthodox teachings about marriage and sexuality emerged. On the one hand, a radical group might shun all sexual contact, while on the other hand, radical ideas could give way to libertinism. Rauschenbusch as much as indicated that Eschmann had been influenced by the latter.

Rauschenbusch noted that Eschmann's early teacher among the Separatists in Switzerland was a man named Froehlich. Froehlich taught that in baptism one died to sin completely.<sup>77</sup> Thus, one who had received believers' baptism could no longer sin. Additionally, Rauschenbusch believed that Eschmann had always been too interested in heterodox doctrines of humanity, original sin, and the origin of marriage. He recalled that Eschmann believed marriage was considered a lower state for humanity.<sup>78</sup> The influence of Froehlich combined with his interest in heterodoxy led Eschmann to believe that he could no longer sin. He was unable, however, to convince his congregation of the same. According to Rauschenbusch's report, Eschmann joined the Swedenborgs.

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<sup>76</sup> *Der Sendbote*, August 24, 1870, 120

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 35.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

Again, Eschmann's ideas, as expressed in Rauschenbusch's report, emerged from the fringes of radical sectarian Pietism and bore little to no resemblance to the more mainstream piety of other leaders in the German Baptists. Fortunately, Eschmann's radical views of sin and sexuality did not have a lasting influence beyond the fact that his behavior caused the church to split, creating a Second German Baptist Church in New York City. Instead, he left the Conference with a legacy of leadership from the young men converted during the better years of his ministry.

### **August Rauschenbusch: The Teacher of the Conference**

Perhaps the most influential of the early pastors in the General Conference of German Baptists was August Rauschenbusch. His influence was comprehensive in that it touched nearly every aspect of the development of the Conference. Rauschenbusch also had a long-lasting impact upon the Conference and its pastors as the founding professor of the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester. Thus, his life and work deserve significant attention.

### **Early Life**

August Rauschenbusch was born in 1816 in Altena, Westphalia, a region that had been affected by Lutheran Pietism beginning in the late seventeenth century. Rauschenbusch's ancestors were Pietists and Lutheran pastors. In fact, Rauschenbusch was a fifth-generation Pietist Lutheran pastor. While this was his family legacy, he did not arrive at it easily. His bright mind led him along different paths before he experienced a Pietist conversion.

Of all the early German Baptist pastors, August Rauschenbusch was perhaps the best educated. His father taught him Latin at age six, French at age seven, and Greek at age eight.<sup>79</sup> He attended the gymnasium at Elberfeld, graduated at seventeen years of age, and in the meantime received catechetical instruction and confirmation. In 1834 he left home on foot to attend university in Berlin. When he moved from the rather sheltered security of his home to student life in Berlin, his life entered a new period of struggle.

In Berlin Rauschenbusch was caught up in the intellectual and political movements of the early nineteenth century.<sup>80</sup> Germany was not yet a nation-state, but there was political agitation for the unification of the German territories, a movement that culminated in the Revolution of 1848. In this phase of his life, Rauschenbusch became a Rationalist. As a result of the influence of Rationalism, he rejected the authority of the Bible. At Berlin Rauschenbusch attended the lectures of a professor he referred to only as Vatke, a Rationalist who sought to prove that the Pentateuch was not authored by Moses, but was the carefully edited product of different oral traditions.<sup>81</sup> Vatke's ideas appealed to him and he accepted them over the teachings of the Lutheran Orthodox scholar Hengstenberg, who argued for the traditional view of Moses's authorship of the first five books of the Bible.<sup>82</sup> Rauschenbusch also admitted that during this period he rejected basic Christian doctrines. For example, he wrote in his journal on January 2, 1835: "Edelhagen, with whom I had a long argument on sin and redemption, is

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<sup>79</sup> Rauschenbusch, "August Rauschenbusch, D.D." 323.

<sup>80</sup> *Leben und Wirken*, 63-67.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 62-63.

leaving just now. I have departed more and more from this core of Christian teaching; it is strange and incomprehensible to me. I do not feel any sin in me – I am horrified to say so, but nevertheless this is what I am thinking. It did not used to be that way.”<sup>83</sup>

At age nineteen Rauschenbusch began to experience a great struggle between his rationalism and a desire for a childlike faith. He described the struggle as beginning after a conversation with Frida von Quadt, a young woman of high standing whom he was tutoring. She was troubled by what he told her of Rationalism, and especially by the flippant way he described his own doubts regarding the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament. He wrote in his journal on March 4, 1835: “My rationalist opinions are more and more shaken. There are moments when I angrily reject every doubt; once again I want to accept the teaching of reconciliation in love within me.”<sup>84</sup> The next day he purchased a copy of *De Imitatione Christi* (The Imitation of Christ) by Thomas à Kempis. Apparently deeply affected by his conversation with Frida von Quadt, he wrote in a journal entry dated March 7, 1835:

When last Tuesday I spoke frivolously and with unbelief of the Old Testament and of the sad difference of opinions this created, and when Frida seemed so quietly sad and secretly hurt by this, I was gripped by remorse because of my own words, and the devout innocent – and sometimes blind – faith of the girl seemed more enviable to me than my unbelief. I don’t know how it happened, but my remorse increased and I realized my ignorance in matters of theology. I entreated God to grant me knowledge of the truth and more bitter pain on account of my sins. I realized that Rationalism or the mere knowledge of God and immortality and the observance of a few superficial obligations is not much better than complete unbelief. I realized that the deep longing of man is one that is torn in itself and without peace and joy; that our whole being is longing

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 70.



for a redeemer from this condition to whom we must give ourselves full of trust and with all our heart. "Do not put yourselves on the same level with this world." These earnest words became clear and full of life to me. I felt the need for a complete change of my entire self. Do help me, dear Lord, through your dear Son!<sup>85</sup>

Despite the solemn words of yearning for a reformation of his life, August Rauschenbusch's struggle between earnest faith and rationalism continued through the summer and into the late autumn. He chose for reading material Philipp Spener's *Leben von Hofsbach*, and noted: "from it I got to know the Pietists as the first pioneers of freedom of the spirit, as the first fighters against the old prejudices of the seventeenth century."<sup>86</sup> He also mentioned reading Guido Gorres's book on Joan of Arc, *Leben der Jungfrau von Orléan*, and Rousseau's work, *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*; he lamented that Rousseau's great mind should be so misdirected in its views.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, after months of intellectual and emotional struggle, Rauschenbusch's spiritual awakening came on January 7, 1836. He came to a full awareness of his sinfulness. Seeing himself as teetering on the edge of an abyss, he reached out in desperation for the hand of Christ.<sup>88</sup> His experience was emotionally and spiritually overwhelming and became an important event that would shape the remainder of his life. It also shaped his personality. He became a very sober individual who shunned the theatre, dancing, fashion, and all but the most moderate use of alcohol. He viewed himself as a great sinner, rescued by Christ. Thus, it was his obligation to keep this knowledge of sin ever before him

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 70-71.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

and to live in debt to Christ. On January 23, 1836, he wrote of his continuing sense of the importance of the conversion event:

If only I had followed him sooner! One pleasant anticipation of salvation was following after another; every day gave me new light. Now my mood is that of a sinner doing penance, who is burdened by such heavy debt that he would continue begging for forgiveness for eighty years on end. May God preserve me in this mood forever; this alone can keep my frivolity from taking another fall. Thus I remain the greatest debtor of the Lord forever, and may an incessant, earnest striving for his grace never give way to an easy-going, merry nature. May the awareness of sin remain in me like a big thorn in the flesh so that one may say about me too: whenever I am weak, I am strong.<sup>89</sup>

The inner spiritual conflict that climaxed with Rauschenbusch's conversion to a new faith and a new way of life exemplified what the Pietists referred to as *Buskampf*, the penitential struggle that leads to a break-through of grace, a spiritual awakening, and the regeneration of the sinner. The struggle left August Rauschenbusch physically and emotionally weak. With his parents' permission, he returned home to Altena in the spring of 1836 and remained there until he had fully recovered his health.<sup>90</sup> He left in October 1837, but did not return to Berlin. Instead, he decided to complete his university education at Bonn, where he lived in a village that had a botanical garden. During his recovery period he discovered a love for gardening.<sup>91</sup> In Bonn he attended lectures on botany. He later communicated this information to his students at the seminary, often taking them for nature walks and lecturing to them on plant-life.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 78-79.

<sup>90</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 43.

<sup>91</sup> Rauschenbusch, "August Rauschenbusch, D.D." 323.

### **The Altena Pastorate**

Following the completion of his studies at Bonn in the summer of 1839, August Rauschenbusch, now sober and strict in his piety, returned to Altena to study for his theological exams, which were part of the requirements for ordination. A short time later his father suffered a debilitating stroke.<sup>92</sup> The son stepped in to teach his father's catechism and confirmation classes. On April 19, 1840, his father suffered a fatal stroke. This did not deter August from his goal of completing his theological exams, which he passed on April 29, 1840.<sup>93</sup> He continued on in Altena and preached in his father's church.

Ten months after his father's death, August Rauschenbusch received a call to be the pastor of the church in Altena. The call raised controversy in the parish. Rauschenbusch was a very sober young man who objected to any form of amusement and the use of alcohol. Some members of the parish objected to him because they believed he was too pietistic and would thus ally himself with the pietistic elements within the congregation.<sup>94</sup> When Rauschenbusch entered the parish, those concerns materialized fully. He preached conversion and organized a conventicle, a staple of Pietism. Conventicles were small groups of individuals who met at least weekly to study the Bible and pray together. The conventicle that Rauschenbusch began soon grew to seven different conventicles.<sup>95</sup> His ministry extended to the Temperance society, for which he wrote tracts.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 43.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. Rauschenbusch, "August Rauschenbusch, D.D." 323.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Rauschenbusch, "August Rauschenbusch, D.D." 323.

All of these activities caused conflict within the parish. In fact, his ministry in Altena was controversial beginning with his first sermon as the church's pastor, a sermon in which he named the sins of specific congregation members.<sup>97</sup> His superintendent reprimanded him for that sermon.<sup>98</sup> Likewise, the civil leaders in Altena were concerned about his conventicle meetings and asked him to discontinue some of them.<sup>99</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch described his father's ministry at Altena: "His pastorate was a strenuous one. He was a 'pietist'; he preached repentance and conversion; he protested against loose amusements, and was foremost in the movement against distilled liquor; he held conventicles. It was a powerful ministry, but it aroused violent opposition. Some were passionately attached to him, but others came near mobbing and stoning him."<sup>100</sup> Rauschenbusch found the conflict disheartening. He wanted more from the church than he could find in the structure of the state church. Within the territorial church system he felt trapped. There was no constructive means to deal with his reservations about giving the sacraments to church members who did not demonstrate the fruits of faith in their lives. Like many Pietists, he believed that the church was too inclusive and he longed for fellowship among converted Christians.

### **Rauschenbusch Sojourns in America**

Still a young man, Rauschenbusch also longed for adventure. He applied to be a missionary through the Langenberg Society. The society, organized in

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<sup>97</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 43.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

1837 to handle the foreign work of the Rhenish Foreign Mission Institute, was born from Württemberg Pietism and was committed to Pietism, biblicism, and the “inter-confessional union tradition of the Evangelical United Church.”<sup>101</sup> In his work among German speakers in North America, Rauschenbusch was expected to remain committed to the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession. His adventure and ministry in North America began in September 1846 with his arrival in New York City. From New York he made his way west to Chicago and then to St. Louis. According to Walter Rauschenbusch’s editorial note in *Leben und Wirken*, “The Langenberger Gesellschaft, which had sent him, had not given him detailed instructions, but rather had left it up to him and the guidance of God to find a field of work.”<sup>102</sup> On October 29, 1846, he had a fateful meeting with Charles Peabody, president of the American Tract Society. Rauschenbusch decided to fulfill his commission as a missionary of the Langenberg Society by becoming an American Tract Society colporteur. Walter Rauschenbusch recorded in *Leben und Wirken*, “It was his hope to gain access to and support among the people through the books and writings and, instead of being tied to one area, to be able to get around in the entire state and to proclaim the Word to many. Therefore he bought himself a good horse for \$34 and a poor quality coat for \$4, filled his saddle bags with books and rode off into the New World in the name of God.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Rauschenbusch, “August Rauschenbusch, D.D.” 323.

<sup>101</sup> Carl Schneider, “The Americanization of Karl August Rauschenbusch,” *Church History* (March 1955): 6. The Evangelical United Church was the union in Prussia of the Lutheran (Evangelical) and Reformed churches.

<sup>102</sup> *Leben und Wirken*, 132.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

His regular reports to the Langenberg Society were published as pamphlets, while other letters home were published in the local Altena newspaper.<sup>104</sup>

The boundlessness of the North American environment was a new experience for Rauschenbusch. He struggled to come to grips with denominationalism and sectarianism as he saw it developing on the frontier where he preached. Rauschenbusch wrote a book for the Langenberg Society in 1846 entitled, *Die Nachts des Westens*. The purpose of the work was to draw attention to the need for more missionaries among the German-speakers in America.<sup>105</sup> In *Die Nachts des Westens*, he was critical of the Methodists for their sectarian attitude.<sup>106</sup> Yet, a year later, with considerable adjustment to the new environment, he began publicly retracting his condemnations of other denominations, particularly the Methodists.<sup>107</sup> The Langenberg Society did not understand his changing attitude. Rauschenbusch, frustrated by their inability to understand the ways of the New World, moved away from the work of the Langenberg Society and continued his work with the interdenominational American Tract Society and American Home Missionary Society.<sup>108</sup>

The American Home Missionary Society was interested in supporting the work of German churches in North America, but they were displeased and even suspicious of those churches that required only baptism and confirmation as rites

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<sup>104</sup> August Rauschenbusch's published letters from this period can be found in the collection of August Rauschenbusch papers, which are available on microfilm. The microfilm was available to the writer of this thesis in the collection at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>105</sup> *Leben und Wirken*, 133.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 134.

of passage to church membership. They asked Rauschenbusch to assist them in developing a policy to govern their support of German church work.<sup>109</sup> His policy asked churches to give proof that conversion was a requirement of church membership.<sup>110</sup> The policy demonstrated Rauschenbusch's own sentiments and his desire for a church with a regenerate membership. As importantly, his development of the policy led to a close collaboration with the American Tract Society that elevated Rauschenbusch to being the leading figure in the German church work in the nineteenth century. It was also from his position with the American Tract Society that he was later able to recruit bright and able pastors for the German Baptist churches.

### **Rauschenbusch: Secretary of the German Work**

In his work with the Tract Society, Rauschenbusch became a colporteur.<sup>111</sup> The colporteurs traveled, carrying with them tracts and books for sale. Where they could find willing people and a place to meet, they would hold a prayer meeting or Bible study. The German colporteurs conducted this work among German speakers. Never a man of robust health, the rigors of traveling soon became too taxing on Rauschenbusch's health. He resigned after only three months and began preaching in the German settlements of Missouri during the

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<sup>108</sup> Schneider, "The Americanization Karl August Rauschenbusch," 10. *Leben und Wirken*, 130-144, gives a first-hand account of August Rauschenbusch's work "*Im Dienste der Traktat-Gesellschaft*."

<sup>109</sup> Schneider, "The Americanization of Karl August Rauschenbusch," 10-11.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>111</sup> *Leben und Wirken*, 130-144.

summer of 1847.<sup>112</sup> In the autumn of 1847 the Tract Society requested that he settle in New York City as the assistant secretary for the German work.<sup>113</sup>

Not only was the position kinder to his health, it was also better suited to his gifts. He was given the responsibility of editing the Society's German monthly paper, *Der Botschafter*. In a handwritten report about the work of German Colporteurs, Rauschenbusch claimed that the paper had a circulation of 25,000.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, he saw it as "the most efficient weapon" against the "infidelity" of the political refugees (known as Forty-Eighters) who had been flooding North America since the failed 1848 Revolution in the German territories. Rauschenbusch wrote of this new group:

The thousands of political refugees emigrated from Germany within the last five years, many of them men of much mind and knowledge, have brought hither forms of infidelity more wild and pernicious than any that existed before. Though boasting of their love of liberty, they are utterly illiberal and intolerant against Christianity...Nor are they satisfied with simply refusing to buy book and to receive a Tract, but will pour upon the humble Colporteur, however kindly he may approach them, a flood of curses and threatenings.<sup>115</sup>

Rauschenbusch's aim through *Der Botschafter* was to combat the atheism and liberalism of the Forty-Eighters. He was uniquely equipped for this task since he

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 134.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 134-35. August Rauschenbusch was recommended for this position by the leading German-American Methodist preacher, Wilhelm Nast, who has been called the Patriarch of German Methodism. Nast was a Pietist from Württemberg, who emigrated to the United States and was converted by the Methodists. Unfortunately, *Leben und Wirken* gives no further details as to their contact with these two leading figures of German-American evangelical Protestantism. Walter Rauschenbusch does write, however, that health was only one of the reasons that his father resigned as a colporteur. Another reason for his resignation was that "he could no longer remain passive toward the Methodists as was required by his position as a colporteur of the Tract Society." There is no further information to indicate whether he reaction to the Methodists had grown increasingly negative or if he had begun to view them very favorably.

<sup>114</sup> Handwritten report of August Rauschenbusch, in English, on the work of the German Colporteurs, dated July 29, 1853, from the August Rauschenbusch papers, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee. The original text is in English.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.



had at one time flirted with Rationalism and the political interests of the revolutionaries.

Another of Rauschenbusch's significant duties was to review the publications of the Society and revise them as needed. He discovered in his experience as a colporteur that most of the German tracts were poorly written or outdated. They did not meet the needs of the Germans. Many were translations of materials from English to German that lacked "a feel for the German mind and spirit."<sup>116</sup> He revised what he could and wrote many new ones. He also selected the books to be sold among the Germans. When he left his position with the Tract Society in 1853, he had developed a series of seventy German works and approximately 170 tracts; the complete list of volumes and tracts was more expansive.<sup>117</sup> Among the volumes published by the Tract Society were writings by Luther on the Bible and the Lord's Prayer, Johann Arndt's *True Christianity* and *Worth of the Bible*, and *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. There was a biography of Philipp Jacob Spener, and a pamphlet of Spener's work on *The Spiritual Priesthood*. August Hermann Francke's *Rules for Life* and his *Instructions for Reading Scripture* (in the form of a tract or pamphlet) were available. Also included in the collection of books were numerous devotional

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<sup>116</sup> *Leben und Wirken*, 134, 136.

<sup>117</sup> This information was taken from a typewritten page found in the August Rauschenbusch papers. The page was an announcement, partially in German, but mostly in English, that Rauschenbusch had resigned as the Assistant Secretary of the American Tract Society's German division. The announcement expressed regret at his departure, but lauded his accomplishments and contributions to the Society's work. At the bottom of the page are three handwritten lines in German followed by three handwritten lines in English. The German lines are hardly legible. However, the English sentences read, "Emma read this to Father on the day of his death. It gave him great satisfaction. These are among his last words." [in reference to the preceding lines in German]. August Rauschenbusch papers, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

works by Puritan writers such as Bunyan and Baxter, most notably Baxter's *A Call to the Unconverted*. In addition to the devotional volumes there was instructional literature on temperance, the consequences of atheism, and the need for Sabbath keeping. Rauschenbusch obviously tended to select German volumes for publication that provided for inner devotional and spiritual development and that gave direction for proper Christian living.

Similar themes characterized the list of tracts. Recurring themes were those of conversion, repentance, Christian piety, Bible reading, assurance of forgiveness, and Sabbath keeping. Rauschenbusch produced tracts that condemned gambling, intemperance, and unconverted preachers. Some tracts were clearly directed to the conversion of Roman Catholics, e.g. "Why does your Priest forbid you to read the Bible?" Others were intended for the atheistic immigrants who were entering the country after the failed Revolution of 1848; those tracts had titles such as: "A Word About the Bible to the Educated and to the Unbeliever" and "'I Am a Freethinker.'" The list of two hundred and thirty-four tracts was full of pietistic themes.<sup>118</sup> The tracts were themselves evidence of the Pietism of the individual who was charged with their production.

Through the selection, writing, and publication of these tracts, the piety of August Rauschenbusch was communicated throughout the whole Protestant mission to German speakers in North America, without regard to denominational boundaries. Walter Rauschenbusch wrote in *Leben und Wirken* about the influence of his father: "Thus he represented German Christianity in this wealthy

and powerful society and acted as a link between the spiritual life of the old fatherland and the emigrated sons of Germany.”<sup>119</sup> These achievements were remarkable and elevated him to be a leading figure in the interdenominational mission to German immigrants.

The other major responsibility Rauschenbusch had in the Tract Society was the recruitment, training, and supervision of the German colporteurs.<sup>120</sup> It is interesting to note that the biographical sketches of many of the pioneer German Baptist pastors include the detail that they were colporteurs with the American Tract Society. Heinrich Schneider, a young man who had been converted and confirmed by Rauschenbusch in Altena, was recruited to become a colporteur after his immigration to North America. His role in the establishment of the first German Baptist congregations in Ontario has already been mentioned. Although both Schneider and Rauschenbusch were employed by the interdenominational Tract Society, the new converts in Ontario were organized into a Baptist church

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<sup>118</sup> The list of German publications from The American Tract Society was included in the August Rauschenbusch papers following the previously mentioned announcement of his departure from the Society.

<sup>119</sup> *Leben und Wirken*, 137. Walter Rauschenbusch in *Leben und Wirken*, 141-42, also explained his father's transatlantic influence through the work of the American Tract Society: "It is important that he did not only draw on the Christian life of Germany for the benefit of the Germans in America, but also extended an influence in the opposite direction. The '*Botschafter*' had about 200 subscribers in Germany and exchanged information with many Christian magazines over there. Upon his suggestion the Society exchanged articles with 17 German societies as early as 1849. In 1850, he arranged a sizeable support payment for the Barmen tract society from the funds of the wealthier American Society. When he came to Germany in 1853 he found that the Tract Society was well known there on account of the appealing appearance and lofty language in the tracts as well as its impartiality, its wealth and its far-reaching activities. Many an article of the '*Botschafter*' was copied and printed in German; in addition, several books for the Tract Society were added to German Christian literature. As late as 1898 he discovered among the tracts published in Neu-Ruppin quite a number that he had written, translated or edited. This did certainly contribute to disseminating correct information on the religious life in America and attracted good men to come [and work] here."

<sup>120</sup> Rauschenbusch, "August Rauschenbusch, D.D." 323.

that met at Bridgeport. English Baptists in the region ordained Heinrich Schneider to be the church's pastor.

The German Baptist church in Concordia, Missouri, was organized in 1851 by a German colporteur under Rauschenbusch's supervision. Prior to the development of the seminary for training ministers, colportage was a means of recruiting and training young men for the work among German speakers. Even after Rauschenbusch's resignation from the Tract Society, some connection between the colporteurs and the organization of new churches continued. One example of this connection was an announcement that appeared in the March 4, 1855 issue of *Der Sendbote*, "A German Colporteur by the name of Jacob Miller has plans to gather a number of baptized German brethren in Cannelton, a new city on the Ohio River in the state of Indiana, where important factories and coal mines are located, in order to begin a congregation and mission field."<sup>121</sup> Although the subject has not been previously addressed in materials on the General Conference of German Baptists, it could be suggested that August Rauschenbusch's work with the American Tract Society provided him with knowledge regarding a pool of trained pastors, as well as the locations of churches that were sympathetic to Baptist beliefs.<sup>122</sup> This knowledge and experience would have been an addition to any aid the Conference churches were given in contacting each other through the American Baptist Home Mission Society. Rauschenbusch arrived a day late to the first Conference meeting in Philadelphia, fresh from the work of organizing the new church in Ontario. He journeyed to the

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<sup>121</sup> *Der Sendbote*, March 4, 1855, 4.

<sup>122</sup> *Leben und Wirken*, 138.

Conference as the representative from that new church. It seems that Rauschenbusch may have made a significant contribution in the early recruitment of pastors and churches into the Conference. His impact was also felt in other denominations. Noted as having an eye for good men, many of the colporteurs recruited, hired, and supervised by Rauschenbusch became respected preachers in their respective denominations.<sup>123</sup>

### **Rauschenbusch and the German Baptist Seminary**

After his resignation from the American Tract Society, Rauschenbusch was poised to make his greatest and most lasting impact upon the General Conference of German Baptists. At the first Conference in 1851, one of the items of business addressed the need for training young men as pastors. The assembly was informed that the board of Rochester Theological Seminary, which was affiliated with the American Baptists, had offered to allow young men to receive training at the seminary.<sup>124</sup> The curriculum included courses in liberal arts, theology, and German. Most of the courses were taught in English. Three students entered the German Department of Rochester Theological Seminary in 1852 and were shortly followed by two more.<sup>125</sup> Although the young men appreciated the opportunity for training, the program was difficult because there was no German theological instructor. Most of the young men who entered the department in this period were unable to finish the course.<sup>126</sup> Others who adapted

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Gubelmann, "The German Department of Rochester Theological Seminary," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (September 1898): 308.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 308-309.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 309.

to the English instruction found that they missed a thorough instruction in German that would assist them in future work in the German churches. As one of the first students, J. S. Gubelmann, noted in later reflection, "Perhaps it may not have been apparent to the Board at once that the preparation of a German Baptist ministry required a special course with full instruction through the medium of the German language; but this need very soon manifested itself."<sup>127</sup>

In 1858 the Conference and Rochester Theological Seminary called August Rauschenbusch to lead the German Department. Gubelmann wrote of Rauschenbusch's work at the seminary: "God gave this man to the churches at the right time. Under his faithful labors for many years a constantly increasing number went forth from this institution to proclaim the Gospel to their countrymen."<sup>128</sup> For the first fourteen years of the department's existence, Rauschenbusch was the sole instructor. He developed the curriculum, which included instruction in subjects from spelling to theology, botany to the Bible. The students were introduced to life through their visits to institutions and prisons. In a period when the Conference was growing and more young men were attending the seminary for training, Rauschenbusch became their teacher and father. His son, Walter, wrote that the students in the department "feared him at school, but they followed him with affectionate reverence after they entered the ministry. He was an original, rugged character, a man to tell anecdotes about, but never a man to despise. He left his mark on many men."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Rauschenbusch, "August Rauschenbusch, D. D." 324. Walter Rauschenbusch's reflections on his father's influence can also be found in the preface to August Rauschenbusch's *Leben und*

During his thirty-two year career, August Rauschenbusch was the teacher of the Conference.<sup>130</sup> Such a role did not always come easily. Any student who entered the Department was supposed to come with the recommendation of a local church; yet, students showed up without such recommendations. Some who entered left without completing the course. Some who completed the training did not enter the ministry. During the first eight years of the program's existence, Rauschenbusch was left to shoulder all of the instructional, administrative, and financial duties. In order to address these concerns, the General Conference established two committees in 1865 to work with Professor Rauschenbusch. The first committee screened applicants for admission, while the second committee examined graduates entering the ministry.<sup>131</sup>

The seminary continued to grow during its first decade-and-a-half largely because of Rauschenbusch's efforts. In regular articles in *Der Sendbote*, he expounded on the need for training young men to be pastors and encouraged churches to send committed men to the seminary.<sup>132</sup> His articles included pleas for support of the training program. Most of the students who came had little financial means and were dependent upon the churches to support them. Rauschenbusch's own salary was often in question. As Walter Rauschenbusch wrote, "His salary was small, and often had to collect that and the support of the

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*Wirken*, iii-v. Walter Rauschenbusch edited his father's autobiography and had it published posthumously. His editorial comments on his father's life are scattered throughout the book.

<sup>130</sup> For August Rauschenbusch's own account of his work at the Seminary in Rochester see *Leben und Wirken*, 185-204.

<sup>131</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 104.

<sup>132</sup> For two examples of his promotion of the seminary see *Der Sendbote*, Nov. 29, 1858, 22 and *Der Sendbote*, June 26, 1867, 102.

students.”<sup>133</sup> The elder Rauschenbusch continued in his work at the seminary until his retirement in 1890. His tenure at the school spanned thirty-two years during which time he transmitted his knowledge and sober piety to the young men who would become the pastors and leaders of the Conference. His influence, therefore, was immeasurable.

In 1891 there were two hundred churches in the General Conference of German Baptists with a total membership of 16,000.<sup>134</sup> During his years at the seminary, Rauschenbusch taught 179 men who became pastors. Nearly every German Baptist church in the Conference at some time had a student of August Rauschenbusch as its pastor. His teaching career affected both the spirituality and the ecclesiology of the German Baptists. On the one hand, Rauschenbusch was a committed Pietist. Converted before his emigration to the United States, he communicated his sober lifestyle and deep sense of personal piety to his students. On the other hand, he was a committed Baptist. He became convinced of immersion through his own reading and study of Scripture. He embraced the Baptist concept of a congregational church of baptized and regenerate believers, the authority of the Scriptures, and closed communion, which was a common practice among Baptists in the nineteenth century.<sup>135</sup> He was a stronger advocate of Baptist church order than his contemporary Konrad Fleischmann.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Rauschenbusch, “August Rauschenbusch, D. D.” 324.

<sup>134</sup> H. Morehouse, “German Baptists in America,” *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 13 (November 1891): 302. On p. 303 of the same article, Morehouse, the secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, commented, “I know this [membership figure] does not fairly represent what has been accomplished, because the first and second generations of your people often, if not generally, become identified with American churches.”

<sup>135</sup> *Leben und Wirken*, 145-151.

<sup>136</sup> Fleischmann questioned the need for close communion. In his early years as a German Baptist pastor, he did not favor closed communion. Also, Fleischmann was hesitant to use the word



Rauschenbusch was regarded as a communicator of Baptist principles in his role at the German Baptist Seminary. The young men Rauschenbusch taught came from varied backgrounds. Some were converts from Roman Catholicism; others had Lutheran or Reformed backgrounds, while still others had roots in European Mennonite, Pietist, or Separatist traditions.<sup>137</sup> Those who joined the German Baptist churches were of a similar mix of backgrounds. David Priestly noted that the mixed background of converts in the Baptist churches could have led to “continuous modifications of church order, doctrine, and life style in which the distinctively Baptist understanding of Christian faith and practice would become muted or various splinter groups might develop.”<sup>138</sup> The constant through the years of mass German emigration to the United States and in the formative period of the General Conference of German Baptists was August Rauschenbusch. Priestly, in fact, argued that Rauschenbusch saved the German-speaking Baptist churches from theological division and confusion and “promoted a genuinely Baptist faith and order” among the leadership of the churches.<sup>139</sup>

Rauschenbusch’s distinction among Baptists was borne out by the confidence placed in him by his American Baptist colleagues at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School. One of the first individuals in the United States to investigate the history of the Radical Reformation, Rauschenbusch’s knowledge of Baptist origins was highly respected. In 1865 his American Baptist colleagues

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Baptist when his congregation in Philadelphia was formed. Instead of calling themselves a Baptist church, they were “The community of baptized Christians who meet on Poplar Street.” Fleischmann and Rauschenbusch had an open disagreement on the matter of close communion until Fleischmann was finally won over to the practice.

<sup>137</sup> Priestly, “Doctrinal Statements of German Baptists in North America,” 64.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

asked him to deliver a series of lectures in English on the history of Baptists.<sup>140</sup> He gave this series of lectures several times through the years until his retirement in 1890.

August Rauschenbusch, who began his ministerial career as a Lutheran Pietist, integrated his personal and theological Pietism with his beliefs in Baptist principles and order. He then communicated both the theological traditions of Continental Pietism and the order of Baptist ecclesiology to his students at Rochester. Furthermore, his influence at the seminary continued even after his retirement. The second pastor who was called to assist him in the work of the seminary was Hermann Schaeffer. Schaeffer attended the seminary from 1861 to 1867, was the pastor of the First German Baptist Church in New York City for five years, and then took up his position at the seminary in 1872.<sup>141</sup> Albert J. Ramaker, another former student at the seminary, joined the faculty in 1890 as principle of the Academy for secondary education and later as a professor of Church History.<sup>142</sup> In fact, with the exception of J. S. Gubelmann, who joined the seminary in 1882 as a professor of theology, the second generation (and even some of the third generation) of faculty members at the seminary had been students of August Rauschenbusch. In agreement with Walter Rauschenbusch's

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<sup>140</sup> *Der Sendbote*, May 8, 1867, 74. Handwritten copies of the actual lectures, written and delivered in English, are included in the August Rauschenbusch papers.

<sup>141</sup> The Academy for secondary education was another educational endeavor of the German Baptists and shared the same facilities with the seminary. The goal of the Academy was to provide a proper secondary education for German Baptist youth and to give further academic preparation to young men who later entered the seminary. A.J. Ramaker, "Professor Hermann Schaeffer," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* (September 1898): 324-25. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 84-85. Gubelmann, "The German Department of Rochester Theological Seminary," (September 1898): 310

estimation that his father was the teacher of the whole denomination, Woyke wrote, "A whole generation of pastors, his former students, continued his ministry. Beyond that, all of those who were to teach the theological course at the seminary during the following forty-two years had been under his influence either as students, colleagues, or both."<sup>143</sup> Thus, the knowledge and piety that he communicated and that shaped the lives of his students, continued to be communicated to generations of young men who attended the seminary and then went to serve the Conference's churches.

### Conclusion

The common thread woven through the early leadership of the German Baptists was the influence of continental Pietism. Fleischmann, Eschmann, Schoemaker, Schneider, Rauschenbusch, and others had experienced conversion and preached the message of regeneration. Through their work they shaped the theology of the General Conference of German Baptists and gave that theology a distinctively Pietist character. The pioneer preachers communicated the Pietism to the developing German Baptist churches. It was present in their somber worship and their emphasis upon prayer, the authority of Scripture, and personal morality. The Pietism of Konrad Fleischmann was formative in the literature of the General Conference of German Baptists. A publisher and translator of hymns and devotional materials, he was also the founder of *Der Sendbote*. Fleischmann gave

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<sup>142</sup> Gubelmann, "The German Department of Rochester Theological Seminary," (November 1891): 317; Gubelmann, "The German Department of Rochester Theological Seminary (September 1898): 310.

<sup>143</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch's editorial comment in *Leben und Wirken*, 235. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 53.

the primary publication of the German Baptists its shape and content. Through that newspaper the concepts of conversion, regeneration, fruitful living, and missionary zeal entered the majority of German Baptist homes. Through the work of August Rauschenbusch, Pietism was communicated in the form of tracts and books throughout the Protestant missions among German Americans and among Protestants in Germany. The invaluable service he rendered to the American Tract Society strongly affected the quality and content of literature distributed by German Protestants in the United States. For thirty-two years he had an immeasurable impact upon the General Conference of German Baptists as the teacher of the Conference. His Pietist theology shaped the education of several generations of German Baptist pastors in the United States. The lives and influence of the early German Baptist pastors were evidence that the General Conference of German Baptists was a Pietist group that found expression for that Pietism in Baptist ecclesiology.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Regenerate Life: Pietism and the Theological Emphases of the General Conference of German Baptists**

#### **Introduction**

There is little question that the early leadership of the General Conference of German Baptists was influenced by and expressed Pietism in their lives and work. Pietist theological emphases were also evident in the published materials of the General Conference of German Baptists. The piety of the German Baptists was evident to their English-speaking colleagues, who often mistook their behavior for Puritanism. The English-speaking Baptists admired the German Baptists for their orthodoxy and high moral standards. Paradoxically, the very qualities admired by the English-speaking Baptists were the same qualities that created a barrier between the two language groups. This chapter offers evidence of the perception held by many German Baptist leaders that they were more spiritual, pious, and devoted in their faith than the American Baptists. At the same time, this chapter will place the Pietist theological emphases of the German Baptists within their proper historical context. The evidence leads to the conclusion that the theological tradition of continental Pietism, as inherited and interpreted by the German Baptists, was a factor in their refusal to assimilate institutionally into the American Baptists.

#### **German Baptist Lack of Emphasis upon Systematic Theology**

When the first General Conference of German Baptists was held in 1851, a conscious choice was made not to develop a statement of doctrine or a

confession of faith.<sup>1</sup> The delegates to the Conference were concerned that insisting on compliance with doctrine would not inspire unity but diversity. Similarly, in their discussion concerning the organization of a publication committee the delegates determined that the publication should not publish dogmatic materials or anything of a polemical nature. Instead, it was to publish reports from the churches, reports about mission activities, and articles concerning the struggle of the German Baptists in Germany.<sup>2</sup>

The focus of the Conference, its churches, and leaders was upon their distinctive mission. They wanted to preach the gospel and organize churches of believers among German speakers in the United States, as well as nurture the faith of the church members. This gives some explanation to the lack of substantial and systematic theological works from the German Baptists.

Although a few of the pastors were well educated, scholarly men, the focus of their energies was upon the work of the churches. They trained young men to be skilled pastors, not to be theologians who would spend the greater part of their lives in the work of theological reflection and composition (Walter Rauschenbusch may be the exception). This was noted by the editor of *Der Sendbote* in 1865 in response to ridicule from the Missouri Synod and the German Reformed Church about the education of German Baptist pastors: "We have

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Schade, "Milestones Across the Centuries," in *These Glorious Years* (Cleveland: Roger Williams Press, n.d.), 48. They did, however, agree to accept as normative a German translation of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith. Priestly, "Doctrinal Statements of German Baptists in North America," 58-61. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 54. *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2 "It is by no means necessary that all congregations adopt one and the same creed as a norm; on the contrary, this is against their freedom and independence and cannot but hinder the independent movement and development of the existent inner light [*Erleuchtung*] and power of life [*Lebenskraft*] from above."

<sup>2</sup> Schade, "Milestones," 48.

received letters from all of our colleagues and readily admit that some do not write well; but God did not call them to be writers, but preachers and has confirmed them in this calling by leading many souls from darkness to his wonderful light through them.”<sup>3</sup> There was even some resistance to educating pastors at all, as some feared it would ruin them or that, after receiving an education, the young men would accept calls to English churches.<sup>4</sup> There was a tendency, which the German Baptists shared with classical Pietism, to believe that pastors should be trained in practical ways to be good pastors. Few were well trained enough to become academics or theologians. Those who were well educated were recruited to teach at the seminary in Rochester where training pastors, not constructing theological works, was the priority.

Additionally, Baptist churches tended to be non-creedal churches. While some churches chose to compose and ascribe to a confession of faith, such confessions were not required.<sup>5</sup> Baptist churches were independent bodies, organized according to democratic principles, which gave each member of the congregation a vote in the affairs of the church. The nonconfessional and democratic character of the Baptists was a factor in the lack of self-reflective theological works, not only among German Baptists, but also among Baptists in general.

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<sup>3</sup> *Der Sendbote*, Oct. 15, 1865, 74.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Grimm, one of the pioneer pastors, who formed the first German Baptist churches in Wisconsin was particularly vocal in his opposition to the training of pastors. See *Der Sendbote*, August 7, 1895. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 55-56.

<sup>5</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2. *Der Sendbote*, February 1855, 2-3 records the “Creed of the congregation of baptized Christians in Mayville, Wisc. Accepted on March 12, 1854.”

Thus, there are no books or works of systematic theology that one can examine to determine the theological beliefs or emphases of the German Baptists. Instead, one must turn to the articles in the denominational publication, *Der Sendbote*, and from these discern the primary theological beliefs of the first generations of the German Baptists in North America. Additionally, the autobiography of August Rauschenbusch provides insight into the theological presuppositions of one of the denomination's most scholarly leaders. The articles in *Der Sendbote* and the reflections of August Rauschenbusch reveal the influence of German Pietism in the central theological beliefs of the early German Baptists.

A comment by Albert Ramaker in his history of the denomination provides the starting point for the study of the relationship between Pietism and the theology of the German Baptists. Ramaker noted that one of the fundamental characteristics of the German Baptist movement in North America was that personal religious experience was given primary importance. The early pastors were men of deep religious conviction who stressed a personal experience of the faith. Furthermore, their central message was the need for regeneration or new birth. Ramaker writes, "A change of life was to them the essence of New Testament Christianity. This emphasis has never become lost or displaced in our churches, and it has been a leading factor in the testimony of our people."<sup>6</sup> The central messages of personal experience and regeneration can be understood as reflecting German Pietism if they are taken apart and examined piece by piece.

The necessity for regeneration refers, first of all, to a biblical understanding of new birth. Also, it implies a certain understanding about the life



of the individual and the condition of humanity as a whole. It begs the questions of sin and the human condition. Coupled with the emphasis upon personal appropriation of the faith, the concept of regeneration leads to questions about the German Baptists' view of repentance, conversion, and the evidence of Christian living.

### **The German Baptists and Biblicism**

Since the German Baptists drew their central theological emphasis on new birth from their understanding of the Bible, their concept and appropriation of the Bible should be noted. The early generations of German Baptists were biblicists, in that they accepted the literal truth and authority of the Scriptures and based their basic beliefs on the biblical texts. They believed in the divine inspiration of the Old and New Testament, and viewed the Bible as the "sole and perfect guide of life and faith."<sup>7</sup> The Bible was not only inspired, it was infallible. Even August Rauschenbusch, who had struggled so desperately in his youth with the claims of Rationalism regarding the authorship and inspiration of the Bible, accepted its complete authority.<sup>8</sup> The German Baptists in North America based their concepts of church organization, church discipline, and the practice of believers' baptism upon literal interpretations of the practices of the early church

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<sup>6</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 44.

<sup>7</sup> *Der Sendbote*, February 1855, 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Leben und Wirken*, 62-66.

as described in the New Testament. The Bible was the foundation for the church and for the German Baptists' understanding of the church.<sup>9</sup>

### **Preaching the Bible**

The Bible, as the Word of God, was also a means of grace.<sup>10</sup> Holding tightly to a central theme of Luther's Protestant Reformation, the German Baptists argued the efficacy of preaching. Although other sectarian and dissenting groups gave the preaching of the Bible a central role, the German Baptists asserted that it was the primary means to salvation.<sup>11</sup> Again, they based this belief on their understanding of the New Testament texts, as expressed by one author, "Man is saved solely through a living faith in Jesus Christ that brings a new birth – and this faith comes from hearing the good news. Romans 10:14. Ephesians 1:13. Galatians 5:6."<sup>12</sup> Through the hearing of the Word of God, faith was stirred in the individual and the process of salvation begun.

If the preaching of the Word was considered a means of grace, a door to salvation, then the congregations, understandably, expected their pastors to be men who knew the Scriptures. The preaching style among the German Baptists in the nineteenth century was not that of reading from a written text. The congregations expected an extemporaneous style that was an expounding upon Scriptural texts. Thus, August Rauschenbusch could write, "If someone wants to be a preacher, he must be familiar with the Holy Scriptures not only as of

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<sup>9</sup> *Der Sendbote*, February 1855, 2. *Der Sendbote*, November 1855, 2. *Der Sendbote*, March 1856, 1. *Der Sendbote*, June 1856, 2. *Der Sendbote*, October 1858, 14.

<sup>10</sup> The Bible as a means of grace was a concept the German Baptists shared with the Methodists.

<sup>11</sup> Ohlmann, "Historical Study of the Influence of Pietistic Thought," 33.

<sup>12</sup> *Der Sendbote*, October 1858, 14.

yesterday, but for years already, or, best of all, from childhood on the like of Timothy (2 Tim 3:15)."<sup>13</sup> When Rauschenbusch developed the curriculum at the seminary, he made knowledge of the Scriptures a central point. He did not only have the students study the Bible, he led them in being able to formulate and communicate their understanding of Scripture:

We spend an hour reading and explaining the Bible and another with church history, this is done in such a way that I mostly lecture, but sometimes I take a conversational approach asking the brothers to formulate their thoughts about this or that passage in the Bible. It is my greatest concern and most serious endeavor to introduce the brothers to the understanding of the word of God.<sup>14</sup>

The Bible had a central role in the education of the German Baptist pastors.

### **The Bible as the Guide to Daily Christian Living**

The Bible also had a role in the daily lives of individuals and families. Personal reading and study of the Scriptures was a means of grace, as well. Luther's German translation of the Bible was the mainstay of the German Baptist household. It was used for private reading and family worship, a tradition in Pietist homes. Also, in keeping with the understanding that the Bible was a means of a grace, reading the Bible and a growth in the understanding of its words was part of the process of sanctification. Every Christian had the ability to interpret the Scriptures, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The individual believer experienced spiritual growth through the reading and study of the

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<sup>13</sup> *Der Sendbote*, December 1858, 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Scriptures.<sup>15</sup> The Bible was central to the daily personal experience of Christian life.

### **Sin and the Human Condition**

Drawing from the Pietist theological heritage and its understanding of the Bible, the early leaders of the German Baptists made the doctrine of regeneration central to their preaching and their understanding of the Christian life. Regeneration was the central theological emphasis of classical German Pietism. In classical German Pietism, regeneration was understood as the complete reform of heart and life through the work of faith.

Pietists believed that regeneration, through the work of God, was necessary because individuals were corrupted by sin and depraved in their natural state. The fall of Adam from a state of perfection, in which he possessed the image of God, into temptation and sin had placed this burden or mark of sin upon all of humanity. As a result, the power and influence of sin made it impossible for human beings to choose to do good, let alone earn their salvation through good works.<sup>16</sup> The German Baptists shared this view of the corrupt, sinful nature of humanity. One of the early German Baptist churches in Wisconsin adopted a confession of faith in 1854 and subsequently requested its publication in *Der Sendbote*. The third point of the confession addressed the subject of human sin:

We believe that the first man was created in the image of God, was holy and good, and possessed the ability to glorify his God and to live in blessed unity with Him. But he allowed Satan to tempt him to sin, lost the divine likeness and gained spiritual and physical death. [We believe that]

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<sup>15</sup> *Der Sendbote*, January 1859, 28. *Der Sendbote*, March 28, 1866, 52. Ohlmann, "Historical Study of the Influence of Pietistic Thought," 33.

<sup>16</sup> *Der Sendbote*, February 1855, 2.

Since all mankind stems from this one man who was corrupted by sin, all mankind takes part in the same nature: conceived and born in sin, children of wrath, incapable of doing good, but capable and inclined toward all that is evil.<sup>17</sup>

The German Baptists also referred to humans as being “dead” in sin.<sup>18</sup> One had to be resurrected from the state of death in sin to new life through faith in Jesus Christ.

The individual could not overcome sin. It could only be eradicated through God’s initiative. Spener held that salvation from sin was preconditioned by the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual. The members of the German Baptists affirmed this belief: “Who would be saved if our salvation depended on our piety, strength and faithfulness? No one ever. But the Lord is faithful in discipline.”<sup>19</sup> In the tradition of Pietism articles in *Der Sendbote* asserted that the human being was so corrupted by sin that the sin was unacknowledged and the sinner continued to be unrepentant. One sermon on the sin of David, published in *Der Sendbote*, stated, “He [the unrepentant] does not recognize his sin and does not, therefore, worry about forgiveness of it, and least of all he desires to be cleansed and free from all his sins. If he admits his sin and his sinful nature in general when he cannot evade the issue, he does so with a heart that is neither humble nor repentant.”<sup>20</sup>

Since the depraved nature of humanity precluded the ability to be saved through any human works, and precluded the human ability to recognize the need to be saved, then salvation could come only at God’s initiative. In classical

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> *Der Sendbote*, January 9, 1867, 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 11, 1866, 106.

Pietism, regeneration was described as beginning with the stirring of faith in the heart (will) of the individual. Faith was a gift received through God's intervention, "Through the sincere, heartfelt faith in the merciful plan of God to save the sinner, the first seed of the new life in God is revealed."<sup>21</sup>

### **Repentance and Conversion**

In the view of most German Baptists, the complete awakening of the individual to saving faith in Christ did not come without struggle. After the first seed of faith was planted, the individual then entered a spiritual struggle as he or she was filled with an awareness of his/her own sinfulness. The conversion of August Rauschenbusch was an excellent model of the penitential struggle, or *Busskampf*.<sup>22</sup> Rauschenbusch realized his sinfulness, felt deep remorse for the presence of sin in his life, and desired to have it taken away. There was also an accompanying realization that he could not take the sin away; thus there was a dependence upon God alone for cleansing. The penitential struggle, which could be a drawn out experience as it was in the case of August Rauschenbusch, or an experience of shorter duration, usually reached a climax with the realization that one was at the edge of a precipice with no other help than Christ.

At this point, the individual, filled with remorse, would reach out for Christ alone.<sup>23</sup> The experience resulted in the individual's unqualified repentance for past sin. It also resulted in the conversion of the person. Conversion involved a complete submission of the individual to the will of Christ. One author

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *Der Sendbote*, December 1858, 22.

<sup>22</sup> *Leben und Wirken*, 62-80.

compared the inner spiritual strife to the struggle between Jacob and God in Genesis: "Any child of God has had experience with such a struggle in the time of his conversion, the time when he struggled from darkness to light and from slavery to the glorious freedom of the children of God. Blessed is he who experienced this, who struggled with God in faith and prayer under the burden of his sins, like Jacob, and was overcome."<sup>24</sup> The German Baptist concept of conversion was in keeping with that of German Pietism. It connoted a complete change of the individual's heart (will) and life. The *Busskampf*, a carry-over from German Pietism, seemed to be expected as a part of the conversion experience.

The importance placed on conversion was evident in the sketches of the pioneer pastors provided to *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* in 1891 and in 1898. In a series of thumbnail sketches, the highlights of the lives of important pastors in the first generation of the Conference were given. Every sketch noted when and where that particular pastor experienced conversion.<sup>25</sup> The centrality of conversion was also evident in articles published in *Der Sendbote*. Accounts of revivals included the number of individuals who were converted, along with accounts of some of the conversions.

After a revival broke out in Woolwich, Ontario, under Heinrich Schneider's leadership, he wrote to *Der Sendbote*:

A woman was the first to experience an awakening. She had already accepted many firm beliefs in Germany and had attended private meetings of the believers in Württemberg as well as listened to the sermons of

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<sup>23</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 11, 1866, 106.

<sup>24</sup> *Der Sendbote*, June 1867, 89.

<sup>25</sup> This also points to the importance placed upon converted or regenerate pastoral leadership. See *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 13 (November 1891) and 20 (September 1898). Both issues were dedicated solely to the General Conference of German Baptists.

several believing preachers. However, now that she had found her faith in Christ and had to publicly profess this before the congregation, she had to say that she had never experienced the peace of God.<sup>26</sup>

In the case of a later conversion he wrote: "Another woman who had been attending our meetings for two years, came to the water with a bitter heart and said, 'They are throwing yet another Swabian into the water.' But she as well as the sister's husband were so moved by the truth during the baptismal speech that both burst into tears and became convinced of their sinful nature."<sup>27</sup> One should note that in Schneider's first description of a conversion, he mentioned the woman giving an account of her conversion to the congregation. It was evidence of the importance of conversion to the German Baptists that they required individuals who were seeking church membership to recount their penitential struggle and conversion to the congregation before being admitted into membership through congregational vote. The conversion experiences recounted to the congregations seemed to follow the pattern previously indicated. Of particular importance to the listeners was the depth and duration of the *Busskampf*.

The emphasis upon conversion was not unique to the German Baptists. The pervasive influence of Pietism left its mark on American Evangelical Protestantism. In the nineteenth century, the importance of conversion was common to Methodists, Baptists, some elements among the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, as well as among the churches that originated on American soil, such as the Disciples of Christ. Camp meetings and revivals were a means

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<sup>26</sup> *Der Sendbote*, December 1855, 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



used to reach large numbers of people with the aim of awakening many to their need for conversion.<sup>28</sup> Methodist circuit riders and Baptist farm preachers perfected methods of manipulating conversions in revival meetings. The methods were then systematized and carefully described in the work of Charles Grandison Finney, a popular nineteenth-century revival preacher and first president of Oberlin College.<sup>29</sup> Finney claimed ownership of these methods, which included the right atmosphere, preaching style, and the use of items such as a mourner's bench. He named them the "New Measures." Finney did not believe that God sent a revival, with its consequent conversions, at a time chosen by God. In other words, a revival was not a miracle. Instead, Finney believed that the preacher could create the revival through the use of human means.<sup>30</sup> The atmosphere, the method of sermon delivery, and other elements in the service were meant to heighten the emotions of the individual until he or she reached such a state of agitation that he/she sought relief. The experience of relief from the tension created in the service, complete with an emotional outpouring at the altar was considered a conversion. There were probably many valid conversion experiences in these meetings. There were, however, others that were machinated as nothing more than emotional experiences caused by the atmosphere set by the preacher.

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<sup>28</sup> An excellent interpretation of the role of the Camp Meetings in North American Evangelicalism is Dickson D. Bruce, *And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp Meeting Religion, 1800-1845*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974).

<sup>29</sup> Charles Grandison Finney, "What a Revival of Religion Is," in William McLoughlin, ed. *The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900: An Anthology* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1976), 87-100. Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney: Revivalist and Reformer* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990). James E. Johnson, "Charles G. Finney and a Theology of Revivalism," *Church History* 38 (Summer 1969): 338-58.

<sup>30</sup> Finney, "What a Revival of Religion Is," 92-96.

The German Baptists, with their Pietist emphasis upon conversion as a complete change of the will and life, expressed concern about false conversion. In direct contrast to the attitude of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revivalists, the German Baptists affirmed that conversions were a miracle of God's grace. An article in *Der Sendbote* addressed the concerns of Conference pastors about conversions: "Whenever a person who was dead on account of his sins comes back to life through grace, that is just as wonderful as if someone who is physically dead is brought back to life. Although the work of conversion happens quietly and unseen, as Mark 4:26, 27 suggests, it is nevertheless a miracle, just as much as the sudden, instantaneous conversion."<sup>31</sup>

While the same article encouraged pastors to pray for awakenings in their congregations, it also admonished them not to develop unrealistic expectations. The pastors were reminded that the Lord called them to go about their work faithfully without the expectation of a miraculous revival. Neither were they to feel jealousy or inadequacy when they heard or read about revivals in other places. While they may have found such reports discouraging in light of their own ministry, they were still to remain patient and faithful. Most importantly, they were discouraged from using any means to manipulate a revival. The author wrote: "The temptation is near to turn to experiments in order to create artificial excitement in order to force an awakening, bringing an alien fire into the sanctuary of the Lord." Later in the article he asserted: "It is unrealistic to think that one can force an awakening."<sup>32</sup> Conversions and awakenings that were

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<sup>31</sup> *Der Sendbote*, January 1, 1865, 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

manipulated or forced into being were false and would not bear fruit in the life of the congregation.

The goals of conversion among the German Baptists were the creation of a regenerate individual who would bear the fruit of faith and the development of healthy congregations consisting of regenerate individuals. Conversion needed to be real, and the inner, hidden spiritual life of the individual had to continue to be nurtured to encourage further spiritual growth.

### **Understanding of Regeneration as New Heart and Life**

In the experience of conversion, individuals yielded their will in submission and obedience to God's will. In so doing, their sins were justified. The emphasis upon justification in the published literature of the German Baptists was similar to that of German Lutheran Pietism. Justification, or forgiveness, of sins was extremely important. It was the apex of the entire conversion experience. Justification was a sudden experience that only needed to occur one time in the individual's life. In some cases, the individual then received the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. The assurance often took the form of a great sense of peace or a sense of confidence that one had been accepted as a child of God. "In the bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Tit. 2:5, the inner assurance and the increase in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ will follow in order to completely fill the new baptized person with bliss."<sup>33</sup>

Like the German Pietists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the German Baptists seemed to replace the legal image of justification with the

biological metaphor of new birth or regeneration.<sup>34</sup> Justification was of great importance; it was, however, only part of the new birth of the Christian.<sup>35</sup> Regeneration, not justification alone, was the focal theme of the preaching and teaching of the German Baptists. Regeneration implied a radical departure from the individual's old nature, prior to conversion. It was compared with resurrection from the dead to highlight the extreme difference between the unregenerate nature of the unbeliever and the regenerate condition of the believer.

One writer stated:

We are not in need of moral improvement, of a little dusting off and polishing up, a little makeup and gloss, a new coat of paint and a new outside, but rather, something totally new must come about, a new nature, a new heart, new principles, new feelings; that is the only thing that will be of benefit, nothing else will do.... A man has need of something to be planted in him which was not there before. He had need of a change as great as the raising from the dead. He must become a new creature; he must be born anew, born from above, born from God.<sup>36</sup>

The complete change wrought by regeneration included a total and lasting reformation of the will and the nature of the individual. Baptism of the believer

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<sup>33</sup> *Der Sendbote*, December 1858, 22. *Der Sendbote*, February 1855, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener*, 196.

<sup>35</sup> In his Th.M thesis "A Historical Study of the Influence of Pietistic Thought on the German Baptist General Conference," Eric Ohlmann develops the line of argument that the German Baptists gave emphasis to justification in their writings on new birth. He cites their tendency to address themes of Christ's crucifixion, free grace through faith, redemption through Christ, reconciliation with God, and freedom from the bondage of sin. Ohlmann writes on pp. 48-49, "In this regard, they possibly reflected the influence of Württemberg Pietism (which had the most lasting influence) for it too shifted the central emphasis of early Pietism from regeneration to justification." It seems curious that in writings on new birth, which is itself another term for regeneration, that German Baptist writers gave emphasis to justification. The writer of this thesis agrees with the early denominational historian, Albert J. Ramaker, that the central image and theme of the German Baptist was regeneration. Justification was an aspect of regeneration, but the new birth itself was the focus. Also, it seems to this writer that there is as much, if not more, emphasis upon new birth and the subsequent fruits of faith in the writings of the German Baptists. This would indicate a stronger emphasis upon regeneration than upon justification.

<sup>36</sup> *Der Sendbote*, January 9, 1867, 5.

was a demarcation between the old life of the sinner and the new life in Christ.<sup>37</sup> It was intended to be a clear boundary between the behavior of the unbeliever and the believer.

The emphasis upon regeneration did not end with conversion, justification, or even with baptism. The proof of one's regenerate nature was demonstrated in the fruits of a living faith. Numerous contributions to *Der Sendbote* addressed the issue of the evidence of faith: "If you are alive, show it through your daily life. Let your works as well as your words tell what God has done for your soul. The life you speak of is nothing if it cannot be seen. Show it to me so that I can believe in its existence."<sup>38</sup> The emphasis upon the daily outward demonstration of the inward and spiritual grace received from God through faith was evident.

The beliefs expressed with regard to the works proceeding from faith were reminiscent of German Pietism. Like Spener, the German Baptists asserted that no individual could be saved through good works. Salvation and the new birth came through grace alone at God's initiative.<sup>39</sup> Good works should naturally follow as evidence of salvation. For Spener, the works of the faith included a sober and moral lifestyle, one that rejected worldliness and patiently bore the cross of Christ. The fruits of the faith also included love toward one's neighbor. The ideas of Spener, though not labeled as such, were conscientiously upheld by the German Baptists. They asserted that it was the nature of faith to produce works, "wherever there is faith, a believer cannot help proving it through good works, professing and teaching the gospel before all people and risking his life.

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<sup>37</sup> Ramaker, *The German Baptists*, 44.

<sup>38</sup> *Der Sendbote*, January 9, 1867, 5.

All that a believer teaches and does, he does for the good of his neighbor in order to help him.”<sup>40</sup> The content of the German Baptist view of good works closely matched the view expressed by Spener, Francke, and the later generation of German Pietists.<sup>41</sup> Both the German Baptists in North America and the German Pietists taught that works were the tangible demonstration of one’s hidden spiritual regeneration. These works were to take the form of care for one’s neighbor. They were also to take the form of a sober, even ascetic lifestyle that rejected all worldliness that did not give honor to Christ.

### **Sanctification and Christian Living**

Pietism as a spiritual movement that crossed confessional lines was often viewed as promoting asceticism and otherworldliness. Rejection of the immorality of human life was expressed in Pietism. German Pietism, in its infancy, expressed its opposition to the immorality of the German territorial rulers, and of society as a whole in the period after the Thirty Years’ War.<sup>42</sup> The resistance of Pietism to what it perceived as worldliness was an expression of its Christian ethics. The behavior of the Christian was to glorify and imitate Christ. It was an expectation in German Pietism that the regenerate would seek to live faithful lives that involved rejection of worldly temptations. Spener himself shunned dancing and the theatre. In Prussia, Württemberg Pietism blended with the austere militarism of the culture so that it was difficult to separate civil and

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<sup>39</sup> *Der Sendbote*, November 1855, 3. *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Stoeffler, *German Pietism in the Eighteenth Century*, 15-22. Sattler, *God’s Glory, Neighbor’s Good*. Stein, *Philip Jakob Spener*.

<sup>42</sup> Philip Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 43-62.

religious duty.<sup>43</sup> The influence of both classical Pietism and Württemberg Pietism was evident in the expectations placed upon the behavior of German Baptists. The emphasis placed on the rejection of worldliness was both theological and practical in their literature.

Proper Christian behavior was the manifestation of inner spiritual development. This development began with conversion, which was the defining experience of new birth. The German Baptists did not cease to be concerned about the regeneration of the individual once that person experienced conversion. The conversion itself was a climatic and life-changing event; however, the change of life was to be demonstrated in the way the individual lived after the experience.

While some in the denomination thought regeneration to be a one-time event, others seemed to view it a part of a longer process that completely reformed the life of the individual through grace. A few referred to the longer process of spiritual development as sanctification. The term sanctification connoted a lifelong process of spiritual growth through which the believer was cleansed of all desire or temptation to sin through the continual work of God's grace. The congregation in Mayville professed a belief in sanctification in their church confession:

The goal toward which a Christian strives is sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. Justification through faith is the act of one moment; the sinner is completely justified as soon as he believes. Sanctification, however, begins with justification and continues through life; it means defeating the sinful desires in the heart through the influence and power of the Holy Spirit in order to offer the soul and body as a living sacrifice that is pleasing to God.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England, Württemberg and Prussia*.

<sup>44</sup> *Der Sendbote*, February 1855, 2

Whether regeneration was understood as a sudden event or a continuing process, there was a common emphasis on the continuing spiritual development of the individual believer and the sharing in certain means of grace. Among the means of grace was the “Word of God; a frequent remembrance of the baptismal covenant; the communion of saints and respectful participation in the celebration of the Lord’s supper; and primarily prayer.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Prayer as a Means of Grace**

The reading and study of the Bible were encouraged. Since the Bible was a means of grace, then the grace of God would work through the devotional reading and study of the Bible to further a believer’s spiritual development. Prayer was also an essential part of spiritual growth. In fact, the German Baptists were known for their emphasis upon prayer. Prayer was at the center of the individual’s spiritual growth. The strength of one’s prayers indicated the closeness of one to the Savior. It was through prayer that one communed with God and received grace. One article in *Der Sendbote* referred to prayer as one of the marks of an apostolic church. In the article, both personal and communal prayers were addressed. On the subject of personal prayer the author wrote, “The person who prays reaches into the heaven of heavens, even into the heart of God and takes from the treasure of grace whatever he needs.”<sup>46</sup> Prayer was to be a daily communion with God, modeled on the example of Christ who “spent nights and nights in prayer; entreating and sighing in prayer day and night was His food;

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> *Der Sendbote*, March 1856, 1



prayer was one of the outstanding traits of His divine character; and He repeatedly and powerfully exhorts us to pray combining this exhortation with the most solemn and greatest promises.”<sup>47</sup> The reborn believer would be a person of prayer, just as Christ exemplified the need and efficacy of prayer. All of the powers that bound the lives of individuals could not stand against ardent and persistent prayer.

Just as prayer was central to individual spiritual growth, it was also central to the life and activity of the congregations. Prayer meetings were a regular event, sometimes lasting for three or four hours. The prayers were not carefully prepared, but were extemporaneous in style and offered by laity.<sup>48</sup> The German Baptists believed that such prayers were a gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus, extemporaneous prayers were the impressions of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of the one praying. This practice of extemporaneous prayer was another reason that individuals were encouraged to have strong personal prayer lives. Both men and women were called upon to pray publicly in congregational prayer meetings. The substance of the prayer given revealed the depth of the individual’s prayer life, as one article asserted, “From fast, mindless chatter of trite phrases one can quickly tell in a prayer session whether the person praying is close to His Savior or not.”<sup>49</sup> The individual who did not pray would not be alive in the Spirit. Likewise, the congregation that did not engage in regular, even daily communal prayer would not be alive in the Holy Spirit. Instead, it was a dead congregation that did not express love or hope. The spiritually vital congregation was to remain faithful in

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

its communal prayers, even as the apostolic church was faithful in prayer. Those churches that desired to be awakened and healthy in spirit and to receive growth in numbers had to be faithful in prayer. Only through prayer would the congregation receive the power of the Holy Spirit for a time of revival.

### **Christian Living**

The inner spiritual growth received through the understanding of the Word of God, the attendance at communal worship, the practice of daily prayer, and the regular participation in the sacraments was to be manifested in the outward behavior of the Christian. Time and again the pages of *Der Sendbote* contained articles about Christian praxis, suggesting what was or was not appropriate behavior for a true Christian. These articles addressed topics that were more tangible, more visible than devotional Scripture reading or prayer. They addressed the issues that the German Baptists confronted daily in their cultural and social milieu.

Issues such as temperance, attendance at the theatre, fashionable dress, marriage to unbelievers, and Sabbath keeping were important topics. The German Baptist churches tended to have rigid church discipline that excluded from aspects of church life, or even from church membership, those who were considered too worldly. Therefore, the recommendations about various matters of behavior were not to be taken lightly.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

## Temperance

One important social issue in the nineteenth century was Temperance.<sup>50</sup>

Nearly every North American Evangelical denomination dealt with the issue of alcohol consumption. Temperance rallies were held in towns across the United States. Young people rallied to sign their temperance pledge cards and urged their drinking fathers to turn from the sin of alcohol. In the late nineteenth century, entire towns were established on the foundation of temperance.<sup>51</sup> Members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union became cultural icons with their protests against the evils of liquor that were staged outside and inside saloons. The Temperance Movement was a national reaction to the huge quantities in which alcohol was consumed in the United States after the Civil

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<sup>50</sup> Other sources on Temperance in the United States and Canada are Valeria Gennaro Lerda, "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union Reform Movement in the South in the Late Nineteenth Century," in David Keith Adams and Cornelius Van Minnen, eds. *Religious and Secular Reform in America: Ideas, Beliefs and Social Change* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 159-177. Nancy G. Garner, "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union: A Woman's Branch of American Protestantism," in Douglas Jacobsen and William Vance Trollinger, *Re-forming the Center: American Protestantism 1900 to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 271-83. Jan Noel, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades before Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). Richard F. Hamm, *Shaping the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment: Temperance Reform, Legal Culture, and the Polity, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Sharon Anne Cook, "The Ontario Young Woman's Christian Temperance Union: A Study in Female Evangelicalism," in Elizabeth Muir and Marilyn Whiteley, eds. *Changing Roles of Women within the Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 299-320. Sharon Anne Cook, *Through Sunshine and Shadow: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995). Joel Bernard, "From Fasting to Temperance: The Origins of the American Temperance Movement," in *Drinking* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 337-53. Nancy Hardesty, "The Best Temperance Organization in the Land: Southern Methodists and the WCTU in Georgia," *Methodist History* 28 (April 1990): 187-94.

<sup>51</sup> Several towns in the Southern United States had such beginnings. Harriman, Tennessee was founded on the premise that it would be a "Utopia of Temperance." It was the location of American Temperance University, which later closed and was reestablished in Washington, DC as American University. In Harriman, the deeds to property included a Temperance clause that demanded the forfeiture of property should alcohol ever be found on the premises.

War, and particularly as the country moved from an agrarian to an industrialized economy.<sup>52</sup>

Also related to the roots of the temperance movement was the large influx of European immigrants for whom drinking was a part of the cultural and social mores. The Germans were particularly noted for their relationship to alcohol. German beer gardens and saloons were common in every community with German immigrants. With the growth of German breweries, Germans were perceived as responsible for much of the production of beer. Also, the practice of relaxing on a Sunday with the family at the local beer garden or saloon was a part of German culture. American Evangelicals had great difficulty with this aspect of German social mores.<sup>53</sup> While the negative portrayal of German immigrants as great lovers of beer had some basis in fact, it was also mixed with anti-immigration sentiments that swept the nation in the post-Civil War period.

The German Baptists were sensitive to the national image of Germans as beer lovers and drunkards. The German Baptists responded by promoting temperance within their ranks.<sup>54</sup> Ohlmann concluded that the promotion of temperance was a sign of the Americanization of the German Baptists. He argued that the temperance movement in the denomination was a sign that it had fully

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<sup>52</sup> The Temperance movement was also related to the early stages of what is now called the Women's Movement. Temperance tended to be a middle class movement that attracted women from mainstream Protestant churches. One of the issues that aroused their attention and ire was the connection between domestic violence and alcohol consumption. Many women joined the Temperance movement in order to protect women and families from abuse. One study on this is Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth Century America* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1981).

<sup>53</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1883, 13-15. ABHMS Annual Report, 1887, 14. Marty, *Righteous Empire*, 126. Higham, *Strangers*, 25

<sup>54</sup> *Der Sendbote*, September 18, 1867, 14.

embraced the values of American Puritanism.<sup>55</sup> It seemed that Ohlmann understood the preexistent sentiments against drunkenness present within the Pietism of many of the Conference's leaders as reflections of Anglo-American Puritan influence. While the German Baptists may have been influenced on this point by their American cultural environment, the concept of temperance was not foreign to the German Pietist traditions in their background. Spener railed against drunkenness among all classes of society in the late seventeenth century. It became a part of classical Pietism to promote temperance and to reject drunkenness as ungodly. August Rauschenbusch, for one, was involved with the Temperance society in Altena before he emigrated to the United States.<sup>56</sup>

The Conference's agreement with the temperance idea was quite clearly stated in their writings. Many articles in *Der Sendbote* admonished the church members to embrace Temperance. One article in particular clearly treated the topic of drinking beer and explained why Christians should not drink beer.<sup>57</sup> The author of the article addressed the reasons often given for drinking beer. The two most common arguments in favor of beer consumption were that beer was healthy and nutritious. In a reasonable manner the article demonstrated why these reasons were false, using evidence from physicians and chemists. The central argument of the article was that Christians should not drink beer because it could lead others astray.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 225.

<sup>56</sup> *Leben und Wirken*. Rauschenbusch, "August Rauschenbusch, D.D." 323.

<sup>57</sup> *Der Sendbote*, September 18, 1867, 14.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

The witness of the Christian was supposed to help lead others away from the ungodly sin of drunkenness. This witness would be compromised if the Christian did not abstain from all drinking. The article read:

Is it, then, a sin to drink a glass of beer? I do not think it is of and in itself; but even less so is it a good deed. Your own beer consumption slows your tongue, it keeps your mouth shut so that you cannot witness against this evil; it paralyzes your witness, for those who drink beer to excess will point to your drinking as they are doing it; this creates a cushion for them to rest their head on."<sup>59</sup>

The line of reasoning in support of temperance was two-fold. First of all, drinking beer was not a good deed. In other words, it did not show the fruits of faith. Secondly, the Christian's consumption of beer did not show love for neighbor. In this case, one's neighbor was the person who drank to excess. Instead of showing a loving witness that would discourage excessive drinking, the Christian who drank beer helped lead the neighbor astray. This is just the kind of reasoning that Spener and Francke used in explaining how the behavior of the regenerate Christian was a witness of love toward one's neighbor.<sup>60</sup> In 1877 the General Conference accepted a resolution that rejected the habitual use of alcohol and called upon the German Baptists to stay away from saloons and beer gardens. Such places were considered ungodly and inappropriate environments for a Christian.<sup>61</sup>

The German Baptist promotion of temperance was a counter-cultural stand in German-American immigrant communities. They did not agree with American counterparts who wanted a ban on alcohol. While the German Baptists obviously

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 58-59, 96-97. Francke's *Scriptural Rules of Life*, in Gary Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good*, 199-237. Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, 21.

believed strongly that Christians should not imbibe, they did not support prohibition.<sup>62</sup> They believed that the movement for prohibition violated the freedom of the individual. Also, they firmly believed that churches should be able to use wine for the sacrament of Communion if that was their tradition.<sup>63</sup> Prohibition would violate the boundary between the laws of the state and the religious practices of the church.

### **The Rejection of Worldly Amusements and Fashion**

The condemnation of drinking on the part of Christians was matched in vehemence by the condemnation of theatre-going, and other similar amusements. In the late nineteenth century and up until the outbreak of World War I, *Der Sendbote* regularly featured articles that condemned attendance at the theatre.<sup>64</sup> It was considered ungodly to attend such public displays. A common trait of Pietism was an objection to the trifling of one's time. Instead, all of the believer's time should be spent in glorifying God and enriching one's spiritual development. Theatre going was a trifling of time.

Furthermore, theatre in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century tended to consist of traveling burlesque or vaudeville shows that contained sexual innuendo, dancing, and comedy. This was not suitable or godly entertainment for sober, pietistic people. Rather, it was seen as delving in worldliness on the part of German Baptist Church leadership. Along with theatre entertainment, other

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<sup>61</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 180.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> *Der Sendbote*, March 3, 1897, 4. *Der Sendbote*, September 28, 1898, 618. *Der Sendbote*, November 2, 1898, 697. *Der Sendbote*, March 21, 1900, 184. *Der Sendbote*, September 17, 1902,

amusements like card playing, dancing, and gambling were also considered too worldly to be acceptable for Christians. Participation in these amusements could lead to one's exclusion from the church fellowship. As one historian noted:

The German Baptist movement began among the adults. Many of these men and women had come out of a card-playing, beer-drinking, dancing, theatre-going, frolicking background. They knew what these things had done to them. They wanted to spare their children that kind of a life. Some of the young people found these Puritanical restrictions too restraining and fell back into the old life. There were probably more exclusions on account of amusements than any other ground.<sup>65</sup>

Also condemned on the grounds of ungodliness was a desire to be fashionable. The German Baptists adopted a very sober, plain style of living. The nineteenth century saw its share of fashion crazes. The Church members were encouraged to avoid such trivial pursuits. In fact, photographs of German Baptist preachers and their wives, as well as photographs of General Conference delegates, show their style of dress. It tended to be very simple, with men and women wearing darker colors for family photographs. Dresses had a high-neck, not uncommon throughout the nineteenth century, and few if any frills. They usually wore no jewelry and wore their hair in plain upswept styles. The men also wore somber colors, straight-cut jackets, and no ruffles or adornments on their shirts. They did not adopt the extremely plain style of the Mennonites, but one would find little to attract the eye in their mode of dress. This was exactly the point. The Christian life required humility. The desire to be fashionable demonstrated a lack of humility. The Christian was supposed to live in imitation

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594. *Der Sendbote*, February 10, 1904, 89. *Der Sendbote*, November 8, 1905, 713. *Der Sendbote*, April 3, 1907, 9. *Der Sendbote*, November 24, 1909, 8.

<sup>65</sup> Krueger, *In God's Hands*, 40.



of Christ and to point to Christ in all one did. A desire for fashion and adornment led away from the singular goal of a godly lifestyle.

### **Sabbath Observance**

While there were other issues that the German Baptist churches addressed in their writings, Sabbath observance was among the most important.<sup>66</sup> Again, this was an emphasis that was common to evangelical piety, beginning with Spener and continuing in English and German-speaking denominations. It was another issue on which the German Baptists were seen as being Puritanical. The roots of Pietism, however, were certainly as strong as the influence of Anglo-American Puritanism on this matter. For example, the church in Mayville included Sabbath observance as a part of its church confession.<sup>67</sup> According to the Scriptures, the Sabbath was the Lord's day and it was to be kept holy. It was a day for worship, attention to the Scriptures, and refreshment for body and soul.<sup>68</sup>

The Sabbatarianism of the German Baptists was certainly more pleasing to their American Baptist colleagues than it was to the German-American community. This reflection of Spener's calling for a holy Sabbath was another counter-cultural movement on the part of the German Baptists. The continental Sabbath, as the German treatment of Sunday was sometimes called, entailed nature walks, recreation with the family, and drinking. This use of the Sabbath

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<sup>66</sup> Alan Raucher, "Sunday Business and the Decline of Sunday Closing Laws: A Historical Overview," *Journal of Church and State* 36 (Winter 1994): 13-33. Alex Macon McCrossen, "Sabbatarianism: The Intersection of Church and State in the Orchestration of Everyday Life in Nineteenth-Century America," in David Keith Adams and Cornelius Van Minnen, eds. *Religious and Secular Reform in America: Ideas, Beliefs, and Social Change* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 133-58.

<sup>67</sup> *Der Sendbote*, February 1855, 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

agitated evangelical American Christians, who called for stricter Sunday blue laws. The blue laws closed businesses and prohibited the sale of alcohol on Sunday. On the other hand, German Americans agitated for the relaxation of the blue laws, especially in urban centers with large German communities.<sup>69</sup> The German Baptists supported the restrictions and continued to assert that the Sabbath should be kept holy.

### **Church Discipline: Maintaining the Purity of the Congregation**

The importance of outward behavior as a manifestation of inner spiritual development was demonstrated in the practice of church discipline. It has already been mentioned that many church members were excluded for participation in amusements. It was a common practice throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century to exclude church members for behavior that was considered ungodly by the congregation.<sup>70</sup> German Baptists considered the church to be a fellowship of regenerate believers, whose conversion and baptism were marks of their departure from their old life of sin.<sup>71</sup> In order to maintain the purity of the community of worshipping believers, they practiced discipline in order to admonish those who went astray.<sup>72</sup> Usually members were first excluded from some aspect of church fellowship, such as the kiss of peace or the Lord's supper. Only when they persisted in the offensive behavior without remorse were

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<sup>69</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 88.

<sup>70</sup> *Der Sendbote*, February 1855, 2. *Der Sendbote*, January 1864, 26. *Der Sendbote*, January 9, 1867, 5. *Der Sendbote*, February 19, 1868, 26.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

they excluded from church membership.<sup>73</sup> Sometimes exclusions were the results of doctrinal disputes within a congregation or the result of arguments over open or closed communion. Discipline was also used to preserve doctrinal unity within a congregation.

### **Believer's Baptism as an Expression of Pietism**

German Baptists were Pietists whose inward spiritual concerns found outward ecclesiastical expression in Baptist polity. Some of the early German Baptist leaders were attracted to this form of the church because of its characteristic emphasis on believers' baptism.<sup>74</sup> In their Pietism, they believed that the congregation of which they were a part was only one part of the greater body of Christ; thus, it was not only the concept of a regenerate church membership that drew them to the Baptists.<sup>75</sup> The practice of believers' baptism drew their interest as it resonated with their emphasis upon being born anew. Believers' baptism marked a moment when the sinful individual died with Christ and the regenerate Christian, raised from the water, shared in Christ's resurrection.

August Rauschenbusch's transition to the Baptists reflected the attraction of believers' baptism as a symbol of new life. Rauschenbusch wrote to the Langenberg Society in 1849 to explain his movement into the Baptist fold. He began by asserting that he did not join the Baptists because of the hope of profit,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Rauschenbusch, *Leben und Wirken*, 146-150. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 28-30.

<sup>75</sup> *Der Sendbote*, February 1855, 2. *Der Sendbote*, November 1855, 2-3. *Der Sendbote*, October 1858, 14.

the hate or love of any particular persons, nor because he thought it was the only way to worship with living Christians.<sup>76</sup> He also stated that his decision was not a result of the influence of a Baptist environment, nor did he think that the Baptists had a better form of church organization (he gave this honor to the Presbyterians), nor did he seek peace with God among the Baptists.<sup>77</sup> He stated that his decision was the result of his understanding that his infant baptism was not a true baptism. True baptism followed the biblical order based on Christ's own words that one was to believe and be baptized.<sup>78</sup> Thus, for Rauschenbusch and other German Baptist pastors and church members, baptism became an outward expression of their inward spiritual regeneration.

### **Vital Christian Experience vs. Dead Faith**

The theology and polity of the German Baptists also reflected the opposite element that is common to Pietism. Ernest Stoeffler has explained that Pietism, like any "ism," has a tendency to set itself in opposition to something else.<sup>79</sup> The Pietism of the German Baptists stood in opposition to the "dead faith" of the Old World's state churches. It also set itself in opposition to what the

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<sup>76</sup> The letter to the Langenberg Society in 1850 can be found in the collection of August Rauschenbusch papers, The Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives. Also, he addresses his reasons in his *Leben und Wirken*, 130ff. Two other sources use the text of this letter. Schneider, "The Americanization of Karl August Rauschenbusch," 11-12 and Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 45.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 22.

German Baptists perceived as a lack of piety in the English-speaking Baptist churches.<sup>80</sup>

The mission of the German Baptists was clearly to preach the gospel message to the masses of German-speaking immigrants who were entering North America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Woyke has noted, they were convinced that the immigrants needed to hear the gospel.<sup>81</sup> Although large numbers of the immigrants were baptized and later confirmed in the state or territorial churches, the German Baptists believed that they were not Christians. They did not have a personal and life changing experience of the faith. Also, from the German Baptist point of view, they did not practice their Christianity in their daily lives. Like their spiritual father Spener, the German Baptists set themselves in opposition to what they believed was the dead faith and practices of the European State churches.<sup>82</sup> German Baptist writers gave particular attention to the practice of infant baptism and confirmation as rites of passage to church membership. These were condemned as *opus operatum* that did not convey and true and living experience of the faith. Fleischmann stated this argument in another of his running quarrels with Prof. C. F. Walther of the Missouri Synod (Lutheran). Fleischmann wrote in *Der Sendbote*:

By pastor and godparents we were punctually submitted to that custom of which it is commonly said, 'We take away a heathen and bring back a Christian!' Not to mention the sumptuous baptismal meal. Later on, the schoolteacher beat the catechism with its introductory main questions into

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<sup>80</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, p. 2. *Der Sendbote*, November 2, 1898, 697. *Der Sendbote*, February 8, 1911, 7. *Der Sendbote*, May 31, 1916, 6. Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans," 12.

<sup>81</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 86. ABHMS Annual Report, 1865, 31. ABHMS Annual Report, 1880, 34. ABHMS Annual Report, 1882, 34.

<sup>82</sup> *Der Sendbote*, Nov. 1855, 2.

us: 'What is your faith?' Answer: I am a Christian. Why are you a Christian? Because I believe in Jesus Christ and am baptized in His name'. . . . As soon as we could regard ourselves adult Christians, we thought we needed to do just what they did: all we thought of was to go to the pubs in fancy clothes, to learn dancing etc. Does *Der Lutheraner* really believe that the *opus operatum* of infant sprinkling changed us into reborn Christians and saved us from all heathen ways?<sup>83</sup>

In the view of Fleischmann and other German Baptists, Christians could not be made by the means used in the state churches. In fact, the methods of infant baptism and confirmation only gave one a false sense of security and not a true Christian faith. This criticism of the "dead faith" of the state churches was reminiscent of Spener's own opposition to Lutheran Orthodoxy. The German Baptists demonstrated the opposite element of Pietism in their determination to convert the German-speaking immigrants from a "dead faith" to a living faith, from a faith that rejected works to a faith from which good works emerged.

### **Pietism as a Barrier to Assimilation**

The German Baptists' relationship to the American Baptist Home Mission Society was based on their common goal of evangelizing the German-speaking immigrants. German Baptists, however, perceived certain differences with American Baptists in terms of the interpretation of their theology and the practice of Christian living. This is an area of their history that is difficult to navigate because of the close cooperation that existed between the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) and the German Baptists for nearly the first century of the Baptist work among German speakers in North America. Many German

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

Baptist pastors were given salary support as missionaries of the ABHMS.<sup>84</sup> The majority of the German Baptist churches in the nineteenth century were built with help from the ABHMS. A cooperative agreement existed informally and then formally between the ABHMS and the General Conference of German Baptists from the organization of the first Conference in 1851 until the dissolution of the agreement in 1920. The cooperative agreement, which began formally in 1871, allowed the German Baptist Conference to expand its mission, support its pastors, and build its churches.

The close cooperation between the ABHMS and the German Baptist churches has been noted in all of the German Baptist denominational histories. It has been acknowledged as crucial to the development of the German Baptist churches. Ramaker, whose history of the German Baptists in North America was published around the same time that the cooperative agreement was dissolved, took pains to extol the closeness of the two groups.<sup>85</sup> Frank Woyke wrote extensively about the issue of language between the General Conference of German Baptists and the American Baptist Convention; however, he did not give attention to the critical views of the English-speaking Baptists that were often expressed by German Baptist writers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was only Eric Ohlmann who devoted some attention to this matter in his doctoral thesis on the relationship between the ABHMS and the German Baptists.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1876, 21. ABHMS Annual Report, 1880, 33. ABHMS Annual Report, 1883, 13. ABHMS Annual Report, 1888, 62. Grimmell, "Historical Sermon," 309. Morehouse, "German Baptists in America," 304. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 32.

<sup>85</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 120-21.

<sup>86</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans."

This area of German Baptist history is also difficult to navigate because the German-speaking Baptists were completely Baptist in their polity and practices. They followed the example of the American Baptists in structuring their churches according to the congregational model, using a German translation of the American Baptist manual for churches. Both English-speaking and German-speaking Baptists affirmed the importance of believers' baptism and close communion. They also shared similar theological emphases on regeneration, the church as a community of believers, the authority of Scripture, and Christian living.<sup>87</sup> At least, this would seem to be the case if one compared the beliefs and practices of the two language groups at the surface level. The German-speaking Baptists, however, did not emerge in North America with their theological roots in the Anglo-American Puritan tradition. Their theological roots were those of continental Pietism, which also emphasized the authority of Scripture, the regeneration of the individual through faith, and the practical aspects of Christian living.

### **German Baptist Critiques of the English-Speaking Baptists**

Given the close cooperation between the General Conference of German Baptists and the American Baptists in the nineteenth century, it was quite remarkable that the German-speaking Baptists did not follow the institutional assimilation pattern of most German-speaking churches in other denominations. By the middle to end of the nineteenth century, use of German in worship services had ceased in most denominations with large segments of German members.

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<sup>87</sup> Brackney, *The Baptists*, xviii-xix.



With the outbreak of hostilities in World War I, the German Methodist Conference in North America, with a membership of approximately 65,000, was all but forced to assimilate into the English-speaking conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The General Conference of German Baptists, however, resisted complete assimilation into the larger body of English-speaking Baptists in the United States and Canada. They did this, in part, on theological grounds. The German Baptists, like the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, worried about the influence of the American environment on their churches and church members. In particular, they were concerned about the influence of their partners in mission, the American Baptists, on the German-speaking Baptists.<sup>88</sup> The German Baptist churches encouraged their members to stay within the German fold rather than wandering into the English-speaking Baptist churches. This was not only because they did not want to lose members or because they were concerned for perpetuating ethnic identity; they objected to what they perceived as the laxity of the American Baptist churches in the areas of discipline and Christian living.<sup>89</sup>

It was from their theological viewpoint as Pietists, and their concern to preserve the spiritual purity of their churches and church members, that they openly expressed criticisms of the English-speaking Baptists. These criticisms began early in the development of the General Conference of German Baptists. In fact, critical remarks about the English-speaking Baptists were published within the first decade of the Conference's existence. One finds in the criticisms the

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<sup>88</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2. *Der Sendbote*, September 16, 1866, 14. *Der Sendbote*, September 18, 1867, 141. *Der Sendbote*, February 16, 1868, 30. *Der Sendbote*, November 2, 1898, 697. *Der Sendbote*, February 8, 1911, 7. *Der Sendbote*, May 31, 1916, 6.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

perception on the part of the German Baptists that they were more pious than were their English-speaking counterparts. While on the one hand they were dependent upon the English-speaking churches for financial support and for guidance in church polity, on the other hand there was a sense of distance in spiritual and practical matters. The German Baptist authors perceived their churches and church members as demanding greater spiritual development than the English churches. One also finds them expressing the belief that their churches had greater spiritual depth than that found in the English-speaking churches. In an editorial in one of the early editions of *Der Sendbote*, Fleischmann wrote:

We want to devote a few words to our relationship with the English congregations in this country. It goes without saying that we owe them the same respect and love which we owe to our German congregations, as stated earlier. Their foundation is the same as ours, and as a group they possess a rich, rich treasure of knowledge and experience; it would be nothing but shameful pride if we were to despise this treasure instead of using it. However, a closer relationship is hindered by differences in language as well as national character. It must give us pause that members who leave us in order to join English congregations often have a very poor spiritual life [to begin with]. We venture to say with certainty that these members were already in a spiritually weakened condition prior to their change, and this did not improve but rather worsened in the new union.<sup>90</sup>

The implication in this editorial was clearly that only those who lacked spiritual development would leave a German Baptist church to unite with an English church. What is more, the writer believed that they would not benefit spiritually from the move. In fact, their spiritual development would deteriorate further. This was a subtle commentary on the lack of piety and spiritual nurture in the English-speaking churches.

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<sup>90</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2.

The complaint about the lack of devotion in the English churches continued in following decades. The German Baptists lamented the lack of concern with spiritual development in the English churches. The German Baptists perceived themselves as far excelling the English-speaking Baptists on this point. This prevented them from wanting to have a great deal of contact with the English churches. In fact, there was the sense that the German-speaking Baptists needed to be insulated from the negative spiritual influence of the English churches. Again, Fleischmann expressed this in *Der Sendbote*: "Even in view of all the merits which our American Baptists generally possess, we cannot quietly overlook the obvious shortcomings that have spread among their old and very numerous congregations. Among them we do not find as profound an inner, hidden life in Christ as is desirable in our young congregations."<sup>91</sup>

Another damaging complaint against the English-speaking Baptists was that they were growing too worldly and relaxing too much in the practice of church discipline. The German Baptist churches were very demanding in their requirements for membership. New members of German Baptist churches had to give an account of their conversion and struggle in becoming a Christian. They perceived themselves as being stricter on this point than American Baptists. In fact, Fleischmann complained:

The fact that so many English Baptist congregations nowadays take the admission of new members so lightly proves nothing but their departure from their original point of view, a fact which is deeply lamented by experienced teachers and members; and there is a trend towards return to a firmer discipline and control noticeable among many. But we, as young and emerging congregations on the German mission field, shall with

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

God's help protect ourselves from any kind of degeneration from the beginning."<sup>92</sup>

German Baptists were strongly opposed to secret societies, e.g. the Freemasons. They observed that the American Baptists were growing lax on this point in the mid-nineteenth century. Membership in a secret society would have brought the discipline of the congregation to bear upon the individual. Marriage to unbelievers was another point of contention for the German Baptists.<sup>93</sup> They believed that this was another area where the English-speaking Baptists were being too permissive on this point with their church members.

German Baptists also had quarrels with the English-speaking Baptists regarding slavery. The General Conference of German Baptists was adamantly opposed to slavery.<sup>94</sup> In fact, one legend about August Rauschenbusch's baptism in the Mississippi River was that he did not want to be baptized on the Missouri side of the Mississippi River because he did not want his baptism to take place in a slave state. While the American Baptists split into Northern and Southern Conventions, partially due to the issue of slavery, the German Baptists were disturbed that any of the English-speaking brethren would support the peculiar institution.

Essentially, the German-speaking Baptists perceived the English-speaking Baptists as giving in too much to the prevailing culture and not taking a firm stand against worldly behavior. In a developing denomination, which shared a common culture and a common emphasis on spiritual development, what they perceived as

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> *Der Sendbote*, February 16, 1868, 30.

<sup>94</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 89-90.

the growing worldliness of the American Baptists gave them pause. The German Baptist Conference and its churches accepted the financial support from the ABHMS, but the churches and church members were advised to draw back from joining the American Baptist churches.<sup>95</sup> Again, Fleischmann gave voice to this sentiment:

What would become of our young members if we were to allow worldly spirit and pride, terrible vanity and all related evils to spread among them as they have already been spreading [among the American congregations] for a long time; if we were to cease our efforts, as they did, to work against fraternizing with worldly – particularly secret – societies and marriage to unbelievers! Besides slavery – which is approved by all southern Christians including the Baptists – is viewed with disgust by us Germans. Therefore, we consider it better to take a decided stand against such matters rather than absorbing some of this so to speak, just because we do find much that is good among our American brothers. We are doing the right thing by separating the pure from the impure rather matter-of-factly.”<sup>96</sup>

Fleischmann’s criticisms were written in 1858, still in the early years of the General Conference of German Baptists. One might think that such sentiments were only present in the early building years of the German Baptist churches. This was not the case at all. The criticisms of the English-speaking Baptists continued throughout the nineteenth century into the first decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, their content continued to be relatively the same. Articles published in *Der Sendbote* lashed the English-speaking Baptists over issues such as theatre attendance, dancing, and fashion.<sup>97</sup> They felt that the English-speaking Baptists were too lenient on these issues related to amusements and godly living. Essentially, they continued to criticize the English-speaking

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<sup>95</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

Baptists for being too worldly, lax in discipline, and lacking in spiritual depth. The German-speaking Baptists, on the other hand, perceived themselves as being very strict in their piety. They far exceeded the English Baptist churches in godly living and the rejection of worldliness. Walter Rauschenbusch gave voice to the dichotomy that the German Baptists perceived between their churches and those of the English-speaking Baptists:

We should not like to pass sweeping judgments, but we think there is a sharper separation from the world with them [German Baptists] than with the American churches of similar environment. The German Baptists who dance, or attend theatres, are isolated cases. Candidates for baptism are examined more carefully and church discipline is more frequent.<sup>98</sup>

### **The Effects of Continuing Immigration**

The theological conservatism of the General Conference of German Baptists may have been reinforced by at least a couple of historical factors, namely immigration and economics. The influx of German immigrants into the United States was tremendous during the 1880s and 1890s as millions of German speakers entered North America.<sup>99</sup> These immigrants were a boon to every German-speaking denomination in the United States as they provided a ripe mission field. The influx of German-speaking immigrants helped the German-speaking Baptists justify the need to continue their mission work and to continue using the German language. At a time when more established immigrant churches, such as the Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and United Brethren, were

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<sup>97</sup> Conference Minutes, 1852, 11. *Der Sendbote*, September 19, 1866, 14. *Der Sendbote*, September 18, 1867, 141.

<sup>98</sup> Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans?" 12.

<sup>99</sup> 5.5 million Germans immigrated to the United States between 1816 and 1914. Günter Moltmann, "The Pattern of German Immigration to the United States in the Nineteenth Century,"

moving toward greater use of English, the German-speaking Baptists were continuing to use German to develop more young churches among the immigrants.

While only a fraction of the millions of German-speaking immigrants were already Baptist upon their arrival, those who were became a part of the churches in their adopted country. Those arriving with Baptist beliefs were a part of the movement started by Johann Gerhard Oncken among German speakers in Europe. The German-speaking Baptists in Europe ascribed to the Hamburg Confession of Faith, a creedal statement that revealed the theological roots of continental and evangelical piety in the European Baptist movement.<sup>100</sup> They shared the Pietist tradition with the German Baptists in North America and injected a fresh stream of this tradition into the churches.

The German Baptists in North America were also served by the immigration of German speakers from Eastern Europe, particularly Russia. Many of the German-speaking immigrants to Russia in the eighteenth century were Mennonites who were seeking arid farmland and escape from persecution. They were promised freedom of religious expression, freedom from government interference, and freedom from military service. When these privileges were lifted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many chose to emigrate to North America. Among the emigrants were Mennonite Brethren, also called Stundists. The Mennonite Brethren were formed when Pietist renewal movements

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in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds. *America and the Germans: An Assessment of the Three-Hundred-Year History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 14.

affected the older Mennonite settlements.<sup>101</sup> The Mennonite Brethren worked closely with the German Baptists in Germany. In fact, one of the Mennonite Brethren founders, Abraham Unger, was ordained in 1869 when Johann Oncken visited Russia.<sup>102</sup> The Mennonite Brethren often used German Baptist materials from the publication house in Hamburg for their devotional and Bible study.<sup>103</sup> The theological views of the Mennonite Brethren fit well with the German Baptists, especially their views concerning regeneration. Some Mennonite Brethren churches chose to adopt the Hamburg Confession as their statement of faith.<sup>104</sup>

Also among the immigrants from Russia were German-speaking Baptists. German Baptist churches in Russia began in the late 1860s when some Mennonite Brethren churches chose to be called German Baptist churches. Additionally, German Baptist missionaries worked to form Baptist churches in other regions, independent of the work with the Mennonite Brethren. The General Conference of German Baptists in North America gained new members and new churches

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<sup>100</sup> For a discussion of the significance of the Hamburg Confession of Faith (1847) in context with other German Baptist creedal statements, see Priestly, "Doctrinal Statements of German Baptists in America," 51-71.

<sup>101</sup> The Mennonites had established two colonies in Russia. The first was established in 1789 at Chortitza and the second at Molotschna in 1803. The latter colony had a congregation in Gnadenfeld that was a center of pietism and that took interest in mission. Renewal movements began independently around Molotschna with Eduard Wust, a separatist Lutheran pastor, and Abraham Unger. Wust's renewal efforts emphasized the necessity of spiritual rebirth and led to a number of Mennonites leaving their churches to form a separate communion. They felt that this was a necessary move because the Mennonite churches were in a state of spiritual decline and "they needed to establish a church that would baptize only the regenerate, allow only members living godly lives admittance to the Lord's Supper, and exercise strict church discipline." Unger's movement was independent of these events. However, at approximately the same time in the region around Chortitza, he began a conventicle that met for Bible study and for the reading of devotional literature. From these renewal efforts the Mennonite Brethren Church emerged between 1860 and 1863.

<sup>102</sup> Wardin, "Mennonite Brethren and German Baptists in Russia," 104.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 100.



from the immigration of German-speaking Baptists and Mennonite Brethren from Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### **Economic Dimensions**

There was also an economic dimension to the conservatism of the German Baptists. The German immigrants who were attracted to the German Baptist churches were not typically those who were well-educated or financially affluent. Instead, they tended to be farmers or craftsmen with only a basic education. The German Baptist churches were not greatly affected by trends in German philosophical Rationalism. Neither did the academic theories connected to higher biblical criticism make deep inroads into the churches or church leadership.

Although it is only speculation, it seems that the ongoing mission emphasis of the German Baptist churches, as well as their basic economic status and average level of education, tended to keep the Conference and its churches theologically conservative. Additionally, those of German origin often moved westward to establish farms or businesses in the prairie provinces or midwestern states. In fact, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the center of the Conference shifted from the east to the midwest. There was a greater concentration of churches and church membership in the rural plain states and in the prairie provinces than in the settled urban centers of the East Coast. This was due in part to mission work among the westward-bound immigrant population. It was also because of the westward movement of those who already had a relationship with the German-speaking Baptists. Those who were members of the

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 107. Some churches adopted the Hamburg Confession, but added two distinctly

German Baptist churches in the east tended to start new churches when they migrated west.<sup>105</sup> The rural existence of the churches and church members may have played a role in the continuing theological conservatism of the Conference.<sup>106</sup> The churches preserved the emphasis on inward spiritual development and expressions of personal piety, as well as a suspicion of what they believed was worldliness among the English-speaking churches.

### **The Relationship of the German Baptists and the (American) Northern Baptist Convention**

As the German Baptists entered the twentieth century, they faced new challenges in their relationship with the English-speaking Baptist churches. German Baptist leaders estimated that by the late 1890s the German churches had lost more than 25,000 members to the English-speaking churches.<sup>107</sup> The sociological reasons for this movement from immigrant churches to the parent denomination will be addressed in a later chapter. The fact is noted here because the drain of church members and pastors from the German Baptist churches to the American Baptists raised concerns for the German Baptists. As German immigration began to taper off prior to WWI, there was agitation among the younger generations in the churches, particularly those who had been born and raised in North America, to have more services, activities for young people, and

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Mennonite articles on nonresistance and the swearing of oaths.

<sup>105</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 41.

<sup>106</sup> Christian Dippel, "German Baptist Churches as Feeder Churches to English Speaking Churches," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (September 1898): 315-18. Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity," 605.

<sup>107</sup> Dippel, "German Baptist Churches as Feeder Churches to English Speaking Churches," 315-18. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 50.

even publications in English.<sup>108</sup> The German Baptists faced the serious concern that the younger generations, upon which the future of the denomination depended, would be lost in exodus to the English-speaking churches.

In the midst of this period when there was a sense of threat to the German Baptist churches, a new and vehement criticism was added to the list against the English brethren. They were accused of holding beliefs that were unbiblical. The young people of the German Baptist churches were warned to stay away from the English-speaking churches because they were polluted with secularization and unbiblical tendencies.<sup>109</sup> The German Baptists even used the English churches as a foil in explaining why some of the German Baptist church members went astray. They accused the English churches of having a negative influence upon the young people.<sup>110</sup> When German Baptist members fell short in their spiritual development, or were distracted by amusements, or became caught up in being fashionable, blame was placed upon the influence of the English-speaking Baptists because they were tolerant of such immodesty and worldliness.

The accusations of unbiblical views made against the English-speaking Baptists were published as internal tension began to increase among American Baptists. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the American Baptists, who were formally organized into the Northern Baptist Convention in 1907, were embroiled in arguments regarding mission and theology. The issue of missions affected the relationship between the General Conference of German Baptists and

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<sup>108</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 235, 281.

<sup>109</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 224.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. *Der Sendbote*, November 2, 1898, 697. *Der Sendbote*, February 8, 1911, 7. *Der Sendbote*, May 31, 1916, 6.

the American Baptist Home Mission Society. The American Baptist support of the German-speaking churches had been called into question in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Ohlmann demonstrated that a primary intent of the ABHMS in their support of missions among immigrants was to Americanize the "foreign stock."<sup>111</sup> In the latter part of the nineteenth century, some among the English-speaking Baptists began to apply more pressure upon the German-speaking Baptists to Americanize. Their definition of Americanization seemed to be the discontinuance of the use of German in the churches and the dissolution of the General Conference of German Baptists. This was unacceptable to the leadership of the German-speaking Baptist churches. They were not willing to forego the German work, nor were they willing to allow their leadership to be diminished within the larger American Baptist Convention. The decline in funds from the ABHMS forced the German Baptists to take greater financial and administrative responsibility for their work.<sup>112</sup> This proved to be of benefit to them in the coming years.

The German Baptists were given further opportunity to focus on their distinct work among German speakers and to distance themselves from the American Baptist Convention in the first two decades of the twentieth century. During that period the American Baptists became embroiled in an internal theological controversy that would distract it from placing further pressure on the German speakers. The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy gave credence to

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<sup>111</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 49, 162.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 199-201.

the German Baptist claims that the English-speaking churches held unbiblical views.

### **German Baptists and American Baptist Fundamentalism**

The concept of the Bible held by the German Baptists was important in the early decades of the twentieth century when they experienced increasing pressure to assimilate with the English-speaking Baptists in the United States and Canada. Their essentially homogenous concept of the authority of Scripture was one factor that may have kept them from becoming embroiled in the controversies of the American Baptists. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the American Baptists found themselves rent apart in doctrinal controversies that challenged the authority of the Bible. These debates were often referred to as the Fundamentalist – Modernist controversies. As scholarly methods of biblical criticism made their way from German universities into American seminaries, and as Darwin's theory of evolution increased in popularity, the Baptists became embroiled in debates over the origins of humanity, the divinity of Jesus, and the validity of such doctrines as original sin, the resurrection of the body, the virgin birth, and the inerrancy of Scripture. The Modernists favored the use of biblical criticism. They tended to move away from the concept of Jesus as a divine Savior; instead, Jesus was portrayed as a great moral teacher. Modernism had its vocal proponents in the Baptist fold, among them Shailer Matthews of the University of Chicago. On the other hand, many of those who held to the authority of the Scripture and to the orthodox understanding of basic Christian

doctrines fell into the Fundamentalist camp.<sup>113</sup> The Fundamentalists were traditionalists who received their name from *The Fundamentals*, a twelve-volume series of works on the primary doctrines of Christianity published between 1910-1915. The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy was divisive in the American Baptist Convention and within the Baptist Associations of Ontario.<sup>114</sup>

Rather than jumping into the fray, the German Baptists withdrew further into their own group. There was general agreement on the authority of the Bible, which had sympathy with the position of Fundamentalism. Since the biblicism of the pastors and churches in the Conference was generally the same, there was no need to become involved in the strife. Instead, they continued with their work and questioned the spiritual and biblical character of their English-speaking brethren. There were some questions raised about the seminary in Rochester and the education the pastors were receiving there. These questions seemed to demonstrate the concern that some in the Western part of the Conference had about the seminary's relationship with and proximity to Rochester Theological

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<sup>113</sup>George Marsden's works *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) and *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) provide the most detailed interpretation of Fundamentalism and the impact of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversies in mainline American denominations. Marsden, however, addresses Fundamentalism primarily from the perspective of the Reformed tradition. No attention is given to the impact of immigrant groups upon the theological movement in North America. One should also see Martin Marty, *Modern American Religion: The Irony of It All, 1893-1919*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986), as well as Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

<sup>114</sup> See the discussion of the impact of anti-modernism campaigns in the Northern (American) Baptist Convention in George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 159-161. For the impact of Fundamentalism on the Canadian Baptists, one needs to look to the work of T. T. Shields as interpreted by George Rawlyk in *Champions of the Truth: Fundamentalism, Modernism, and the Maritime Baptists* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990). Mention is also made of Shield's work with the Canadian Baptist Bible Union in Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 179-80.

Seminary, an American Baptist institution.<sup>115</sup> The questions may have been expressions of concern that newer methods of biblical interpretation were part of the curriculum at Rochester Theological Seminary and that some influence might spread to the German Baptist Seminary. It was the parent institution of the German Baptist Seminary. There was close physical proximity between the two schools and likely some interaction between students. Thus, the reputation of the seminary did suffer among the rural based, midwestern church membership. There were even calls in 1921 for the seminary to move to a central location in the Midwest. The faculty of the seminary also offered themselves to the Conference for theological examination in order to squelch rumors of unbiblical teachings and attitudes. They presented their theological views to a committee in the spring of 1921. The committee was entirely satisfied with the orthodoxy of the faculty and the subsequent General Conference expressed their confidence in and appreciation for the seasoned faculty of their seminary.<sup>116</sup> These first rumblings were a foreshadowing of the seminary's eventual move to South Dakota in 1948.

As the divisions within the American Baptist Convention grew to the point of threatening to split the denomination, the German Baptists continued their work and held to their biblicism. David Priestly wrote of the German Baptist reaction to the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy within the American Baptist Convention: "During the years 1920 to 1950 when modernist-

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<sup>115</sup> This information is the result of a personal interview with Prof. George Lang, former professor of missions at the North American Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls and currently the director of the archives. Dr. Lang's father, George Lang, Sr., was the president of the seminary when it moved from Rochester to Sioux Falls after WWII. The interview took place on December 2, 1999.

<sup>116</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 332.

fundamentalist controversies split the American Baptists and two regional units of Canadian Baptists, the ethnic churches found it convenient to foster the institutions and ministries which bound them ethnically rather than to become partisans in political battles where their few numbers would have been ineffective."<sup>117</sup> The churches that were part of the General Conference of German Baptists were more homogenous in their theology and in their expectations regarding the practice of Christianity than those that belonged to the Northern Baptist Convention. This homogeneity benefited the German Baptists during the disruptive period following the First World War.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the General Conference of German Baptists developed into a strong union of German-speaking churches that held strongly to a Pietist theological foundation. This theological heritage included an emphasis upon the practice of the Christian faith as demonstrated in personal and corporate spiritual development, as well as outward Christian behavior.

During its developmental period, the General Conference of German Baptists focused on the needs of its mission and churches. The German Baptists also distanced themselves from what they viewed as the unbiblical beliefs of the American Baptists. As the end of the nineteenth century approached, the General Conference of German Baptists expressed discontent with the funding policies of the ABHMS. The Conference was increasingly placed in a defensive position

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<sup>117</sup> Priestly, "General Conference of German Baptists," 381.



regarding the distinct mission of the German Baptist churches. As they entered the first two decades of the twentieth century, the German Baptists recognized their theological independence from the American Baptists and began to make movements toward institutional independence.

In 1919, just as the American Baptists were preparing to enter the peak years of doctrinal conflict, the German Baptists began raising money to fund missions and their Conference institutions. In 1920, the year when fundamentalists in the Northern Baptist Convention were calling for an examination of their seminaries, the General Conference of German Baptists ended its cooperative agreement with the ABHMS and the Baptist Union of Western Canada. The theological homogeneity of the German Baptists allowed them to focus on their own concerns and needs. This theological homogeneity, rooted in Pietism, would become one factor as they formed a sense of identity as a German-speaking Baptist group in North America.

## **Chapter 4**

### **German Immigration and the German Work: Development of the Ethnic Identity and Mission of the German Baptists**

#### **Introduction**

The theology of the German Baptists was a determinative factor in their development as a denomination. Theology, however, was not the sole element that shielded the German Baptists from complete institutional assimilation. Ethnicity and a strong sense of mission to a particular ethnic group drove the continuing growth of the German Baptists through the heaviest periods of immigration in the nineteenth century. The role of the ethnic mission in the development of the denomination as a separate branch of the larger Baptist family tree will be examined in the following chapter. The present chapter sets the development of the German Baptists in the larger context of the immigration of German-speakers, the development of German-American ethnic identity, and the dynamic role of the ethnic church in defining and maintaining German ethnicity in North America.

#### **Ethnicity and Group Identity**

The history of the German Baptists in North America forms part of the larger picture of the role ethnicity has played in the development of the religious history of North America. The term “ethnicity” refers to basic group identity. This identity is based on those things that the group holds in common, factors that a group member possesses from birth, such as language, culture, value system, history and origins, nationality, religion, tradition, physical attributes, and family

or group name.<sup>1</sup> Ethnicity is “about our lives as part of deeply-felt traditions, about cultural identity, belonging and understanding, based on these commonalities.”<sup>2</sup> Group identity was an important construction for many immigrants in nineteenth-century North America. Harold Isaac writes, “An individual belongs to his basic group in the deepest and most literal sense that here he is not alone, which is what all but a very few human beings most fear to be. He is not only not alone, but here, as long as he chooses to remain in and of it, he cannot be denied or ejected. It is an identity he might want to abandon, but it is the identity that no one can take away from him.”<sup>3</sup> To outsiders of the group, the identity was perceived as being based on nationality or national language. However, group identity in North America was often more complex. This was, indeed, the case with German-American ethnic group identity.

In modern nations that have been populated by immigrants, ethnic diversity has often been present. The United States and Canada are ethnically diverse nations, although both have foundational myths that give dominance to one or, perhaps, a pair of ethnic groups. National myths disregard the vast ethnic diversity of the nations in North America, even in their early development. Colonial America was heavily populated by German and Dutch immigrants, slaves of African origin, Spanish settlers, and later arrivals from every part of the globe, representing many different religious backgrounds. While the English and

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<sup>1</sup> This list is a combination of the factors identified by authors of two different essays. This first is LaVern Rippey and Eberhard Reichman, “Preface” in Adams, *The German-Americans*, 1. The second essay is Harold R. Isaacs, “Basic Group Identity: The Idols of the Tribe,” in Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, eds. *Ethnicity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 31.

<sup>2</sup> Rippey and Reichman, “Preface” in Adams, *The German-Americans*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Isaacs, “Basic Group Identity,” 35.

French dominated the Canadian population early on, Irish and German settlers emigrated to Canada. Throughout the nineteenth century, immigrants settled the middle and western regions of both nations. Irish, Germans, Dutch, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Norwegians, Swedes, and others obtained land and settled farms in the North American bread basket. German immigrants in the United States constituted the largest immigrant group with the exception of the English. It should not be surprising then that Germans became the target of missionary endeavors in the United States. Neither should it be surprising that German Americans constructed a sense of ethnic identity.

### **German Immigration: The Context of the German Baptist Mission**

The first German Baptist churches in North America began with the work of German-speaking pastors and evangelists among German-speaking immigrants in the nineteenth century. Some of the early pastors and the churches they organized were supported by the American Baptist Home Mission Society or by American Baptist churches. Both the German-speaking pastors and the American Baptists viewed the growing numbers of immigrants to North America as an opportunity for mission and evangelism. Additionally, the English-speaking Baptists seemed to view the mission of evangelizing the German immigrants as a means of making the immigrant a good American citizen.<sup>4</sup>

Germans began emigrating to North America in the eighteenth century. The migrations of Germans to North America were greatest in the nineteenth

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<sup>4</sup> "Report of the Committee on Missions Among Foreign Populations," in *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 115-19. Hermann Schaeffer, "Does the American Baptist Home Mission

century. It has been estimated that 5.5 million Germans journeyed to the United States between 1816 and 1914.<sup>5</sup> Between the years 1850 and 1900 Germans constituted at least a quarter of all foreign born in the United States, and between 1880 and 1920 they had the greatest number of first generation immigrants.<sup>6</sup> Germans emigrated to North America primarily to improve their economic circumstances. They shared this goal with the majority of others from all national backgrounds who made the journey to North America for the sake of economic improvement.<sup>7</sup>

During the nineteenth century the German territories, like other continental European nations, underwent a period of economic transition as they moved toward industrialization. The ability or inability of people to support themselves and their families in agriculture, cottage industry, or mechanized industry was the predominant force behind emigration. Overpopulation, lack of land resources, and the decline of rural cottage industry moved rural residents to look for new opportunities in North America.<sup>8</sup> Günter Moltmann has noted, "The

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Society Americanize Germans?" *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 13 (November 1891): 312-14.

<sup>5</sup> Günter Moltmann, "The Pattern of German Immigration to the United States in the Nineteenth Century," in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds. *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 406.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Easterlin, "Immigration: Social Characteristics," in Stephan Thernstrom, ed. *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1980), 478.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Kamphoefner, "At the Crossroads of Economic Development: Background Factors Affecting Emigration from Nineteenth-Century Germany," in Ira Glazier and Luigi De Rosa, eds. *Migration across Time and Nations* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), 174-201. Kamphoefner argues that the decline of the cottage linen weaving industry (protoindustry) because of the blockade of Germany during the Napoleonic Wars and the development of the mechanized weaving industry left many rural residents without proper means of support. The existence of protoindustry encouraged early marriage and large families, which consequently led to overpopulation in the Northwestern regions of Germany. Kamphoefner argues that two-thirds of the German emigrants to the United States prior to 1860 were rural residents from areas that were dependent on the rural weaving industry.

livelihood that was difficult to find in Germany was easy to come by in North America. The United States was expanding rapidly westward, cheap land was available, and workers were sorely needed.”<sup>9</sup> The movement of masses of emigrants to North America from Germany was part of a larger trend of migration that took place through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the development of factories and the decline of cottage industries, people began migrating within Germany to find jobs. A greater freedom of movement developed within the country and between Germany and other nations. As a result, there was greater organization and transportation of resources, manufactured goods, and people.<sup>10</sup> While the traffic of resources and goods was profitable, so was the transportation of humans. With the creation of the steamship, and the improvement in shipping routes, it became easier and faster to transport people under more comfortable conditions for the passenger.<sup>11</sup> The organization of travel improved with set schedules, travel routes, and travel packages that included railway rates to transport migrants to the shipping ports.<sup>12</sup>

The improvement of transportation also meant that immigrants could be recruited. Missouri and Wisconsin were popular destinations for German immigrants. This was the case, in part, because Germans were actively recruited to settle these territories through published advertisements, flyers, and emigration agents. Conzen explained the vigor with which some states tried to recruit German immigrants:

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<sup>9</sup> Moltmann, “The Pattern of German Immigration,” 18.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 18-19.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 19. Also see Conzen, “Germans,” 410-411.

<sup>12</sup> Moltmann, “The Pattern of German Emigration,” 19.

Emigrant guides publicized areas that their authors considered suitable for settlement (and in which they themselves often had an economic stake). Duden's tract sent large numbers to Missouri in the 1830's, while Wisconsin was favored in the following decade. States vied with one another to advertise their opportunities. Wisconsin established a commission of emigration in 1852, and other states followed suit. Private businesses in various cities supported emigration agents at East Coast ports and in Germany, and western railroads like the Northern Pacific engaged in vigorous promotion to lure settlers to populate their land grants.<sup>13</sup>

The popularity of certain North American destinations promoted chain migration, so-called because of the links that developed between certain regions in Germany and areas of settlement in North America.<sup>14</sup> New immigrants journeyed to areas that had been settled by Germans, often from the same region or even the same villages or towns. The new immigrants expanded the established settlement or filled in open spaces left by those who moved on to new frontiers. Chain migrations have been noted not only in frontier areas, but in urban ethnic neighborhoods, as well.<sup>15</sup> The migration chains helped the new immigrants adjust to North America, while allowing them to retain some of the customs and often the language they brought with them.<sup>16</sup>

There were also organizations that sought to plan group migrations to North America in order to create a model German settlement. One of the clearest examples of this was the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants to

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<sup>13</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 411.

<sup>14</sup> Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity," 610. Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee*, 39-41; Shaw, *The Catholic Parish as a Waystation*, 5. Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 37. Luebke, "Three Centuries of Germans in America," in *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 165. David Ward, "Immigration, Settlement Patterns and Spatial Distribution," in Stephan Thernstrom, *The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, 496, 502, 506.

<sup>15</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 412. Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity," 610. Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 37. Ward, "Immigration," 506.

Texas, organized in 1842.<sup>17</sup> The Society was created by several members of the nobility, along with a banker. According to Moltmann, the primary purposes of the organization were: "the support and protection of thousands of immigrants, the founding of a unified German settlement overseas, the development of shipping trade with North America, the prevention of potential social unrest in Germany, the provision of operating facilities for ambitious German nobility, and the securing of economic gains for the members of the association."<sup>18</sup> The project of the Society to establish a German colony in Texas failed on the whole; however, it did result in the successful settlement of New Braunfels, Texas.<sup>19</sup> Communities like the German colonies that were built in the Texas hill country were unusual. Most nineteenth-century immigrants may have received some help from shipping agents or emigration societies, but most had to make it to and in North America on their own. This is exactly what the immigrants did as they made the journey to North America seeking a better future and a higher standard of living.

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<sup>16</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 412. Luebke, "Three Centuries of Germans in America," 411. Moltmann, "The Pattern of German Emigration," 22-23.

<sup>17</sup> Günter Moltmann, " 'When People Migrate They Carry Their Selves Along' – Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America," in Eberhard Reichmann, et.al., eds. *Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America* (Indianapolis: Max Kade German-American Center, 1995), xxv-xxvi. Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German America*, 137-201. Stefan von Senger und Etterlin, "New Germany in North America: Origins, Processes, and Responses, 1815-1860," in Eberhard Reichman, et. al., eds. *Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America* (Indianapolis: Max Kade German-American Center, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1995), 153-54, 163-64.

<sup>18</sup> Moltmann, " 'When People Migrate They Carry Their Selves Along,' xxv-xxvi.

<sup>19</sup> Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German America*, 137-201 recounts the attempt to create a New Germany in Texas. Similar attempts were made in Missouri and Wisconsin.



## Periods of German Emigration

German emigration to North America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has typically been divided into three periods. The first period extended from the beginning of the century to the end of the Civil War, 1800-1865. During this period the immigrants, called *Einwanderer* in German, were mostly rural residents, small farmers, and artisans who emigrated with the families and who intended to establish rural farms in North America.<sup>20</sup> According to Conzen, between two-thirds and three-fourths of the total number of German emigrants in this first phase were families who were emigrating together.<sup>21</sup>

Also among those who emigrated between 1848 and 1865 were political refugees. The "Forty-Eighters" were those who participated in the failed democratic Revolution of 1848. These individuals tended to be well educated and from urban areas. They settled in the cities of the Northeast and Midwest in the United States. In North America the "Forty-Eighters" established newspapers and secular organizations to express aspects of German cultural life.<sup>22</sup> They were the focus of special concern to the German Baptists, who viewed them as "free-thinkers" and rejecters of the Christian faith.<sup>23</sup> Some of the German tracts

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<sup>20</sup> David Luebke, "German Exodus: Historical Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Immigration," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 20 (1985): 8-9.

<sup>21</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 411. Luebke, "Three Centuries of Germans in America," 166.

<sup>22</sup> Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee*, 174-78. Wolfgang Kollman and Peter Marschalck, "German Emigration to the United States, in eds. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, *Dislocation and Emigration: The Social Background of American Immigration* (Cambridge: Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, 1973), 523. Carl Wittke, *We Who Built America* (Cleveland: Press of Western Reserve University, rev. ed., 1964), 193-95.

<sup>23</sup> ABHMS Annual Report 1865, 32. Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee*, 178-81 discusses the presence of free-thinkers in Milwaukee and the tension that developed between the organization of free-thinkers and the German-speaking churches.

produced by August Rauschenbusch through the American Tract Society were directed to the unbelief of the "free-thinkers."<sup>24</sup>

It was during this first period of immigration that the German Baptists began to organize churches. The first Conference meeting took place in 1851. The German Baptist paper, *Der Sendbote*, began publication two years later. German Baptist students were accepted for pastoral studies at the American Baptist seminary in Rochester. Later, the seminary established a German Department for the German Baptist students that was led by August Rauschenbusch. The German Department became the German Baptist Seminary at Rochester in 1858. The first period of immigration was a period of slow, but steady growth for the General Conference of German Baptists. The center of the Conference membership tended to be in the East during this period; however, the density of membership soon shifted to the Midwest.

The second period of immigration from Germany during the nineteenth century began after the end of the Civil War and continued until 1895. This was the heaviest period of German emigration to North America. The peak year of German emigration was 1882 with over 250,000 German immigrants arriving in

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<sup>24</sup>When August Rauschenbusch was employed by the American Tract Society as the Assistant Secretary for the Germans, he oversaw the production of several tracts that were aimed at the "free-thinkers" including: "A Word about the Bible to the Educated and Unbeliever," "Conversion of an Aged Freethinker," "I am a Freethinker," "The Conversion of an Infidel Doctor," "Infidelity Denounced," and "Whence Did Cain Get a Wife?" These titles were gathered from an American Tract Society list of "Publications in Foreign Languages," in the Rauschenbusch papers. The list followed a report of August Rauschenbusch to the American Tract Society, dated July 29, 1853, in which he complained about the German Rationalists immigrants who were infidels. Rauschenbusch reported, "Infidelity at the present time is an enemy more formidable to the spread of religion among the Germans than popery. The thousands of political refugees emigrated from Germany within the last five years, many of them men of much mind and knowledge, have brought hither forms of infidelity more wild and pernicious than any that existed before. Though boasting of their love of liberty, they are utterly illiberal and intolerant against Christianity." (The original text of the report was in English).

the United States alone.<sup>25</sup> The majority of these immigrants were artisans, farmers, and workers from rural areas.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, there were larger numbers of Catholic immigrants than in earlier waves of immigration. They left Germany because of Chancellor von Bismarck's policy of *Kulturkampf*, which placed religious, political, and social restrictions upon Catholics.<sup>27</sup> Again, it was characteristic of this period for families to emigrate together. Families made up approximately two-thirds of the second phase of emigration.<sup>28</sup> The decline in grain production and rural industry in certain regions of Germany spurred the workers to look for opportunities to become farmers in the rural plains of the United States and Canada.<sup>29</sup>

The growth of German immigration heralded a period of unprecedented growth for the General Conference of German Baptists. The Mission Board was established in 1870 by the Eastern Conference and worked cooperatively with the American Baptist Home Mission Society to build churches, as well as select and support home missionary pastors. In 1865 the Conference consisted of fifty-four German churches, with forty-two missionaries supported by the ABHMS. Unfortunately, no membership figures were given in the annual report. By 1895 the Conference had over 20,000 members gathered into 220 churches.<sup>30</sup> The ABHMS aided in the salary support of 67 missionaries and in the construction of

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<sup>25</sup> Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German America*, 57.

<sup>26</sup> David Luebke, "German Exodus," 5. Kamphoefner, "At the Crossroads of Economic Development," 174-95 and Köllman and Marschalck, "German Emigration," 499-554 explained the economic factors in the German states that motivated the emigration of small rural farmers and artisans.

<sup>27</sup> Daniels, *Coming to America*, 147-48

<sup>28</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 411.

<sup>29</sup> David Luebke, "German Exodus," 9. Kamphoefner, 182, 185-86, 188.

<sup>30</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1895, 93.

nine church buildings.<sup>31</sup> The increase in numbers allowed the German Baptists to become more self-sufficient and self-sustaining. The 1895 report noted that five mission churches became self-supporting during the year. The German Baptists received \$16,574.56 from the ABHMS for their mission work during the year. The report noted, however, that \$10,155.54 of that sum had been paid by the German churches themselves as part of the Cooperative Agreement between the German Baptists and the ABHMS. The German Baptist Mission Secretary, George A. Schulte, worried that the Conference would not be able to sustain its pattern of growth unless the ABHMS devoted more resources for the German work:

In reviewing the history of our missionary operations, we must confess that the past year was, in many respects, a critical one. Although the salaries of the missionaries had been reduced on account of the stringency of the times, yet the original appropriations for the year, made with the expectation that the Board would be able to increase its appropriation for the German work, were in excess of the previous year. Instead of an increase, however, the Board of the Home Mission Society felt compelled to notify us that a reduction would have to be made all along the line, which necessitated on our part a discontinuance of certain lines of work, which had been carried on with every assurance of success for the past two years.<sup>32</sup>

G. A. Schulte's pleas for greater investment in the German work became a familiar refrain in the annual reports of the ABHMS. Significant increases in funding, however, were not forthcoming and the German Baptists believed that the lack of monetary support hampered their work during a period when immigration from Germany began to slow.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. ABHMS Annual Report, 1896, 105. ABHMS Annual Report, 1897, 115.

The last major period of immigration to North America from Germany lasted from 1895 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. While in the first two periods of immigration those arriving tended to come in family units seeking to homestead, the immigrants in the later phase tended to be individuals searching for employment in the newly industrialized economies in North America.<sup>34</sup> At this point, the American frontier was essentially closed and the overcrowding in Germany had been relieved; thus, fewer from the German territories emigrated to North America. Those who emigrated in search of jobs did not necessarily intend to stay in North America, but planned to return to Germany with their accumulated savings.<sup>35</sup>

Yet in this period when immigration began to taper, the work of the German Baptists continued among German-speaking immigrants, many of whom had never lived in a country that had German as the national language. The periods of immigration from Germany do not tell the complete story of those who became part of the German-American ethnic group in North America. While they came in smaller numbers, German-speakers residing in the nations and kingdoms of Eastern Europe emigrated to and settled in the North American breadbasket.<sup>36</sup> They were part of the story of German migration. Following the economic devastation of the Thirty Years' War, many residents of German territories migrated into less densely populated regions of Eastern Europe to find

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<sup>34</sup> David Luebke, "German Exodus," 9. Conzen, "Germans," 411.

<sup>35</sup> Luebke, "Three Centuries of Germans in America, 163.

<sup>36</sup> Kloss, "German-American Language Maintenance Efforts," 225 notes that the "Russian-Germans (Russland-deutsche or Russländer) who began settling in the westernmost frontier areas, from North Dakota to Kansas, in the early 1870's...displayed a feeling of belonging together, regardless of creed, seldom found among other Germans. The outward sign of their 'togetherness'

land. The Mennonites in Southern Germany accepted the invitation of Catherine the Great to settle the Steppes of Russia. They were promised free land, freedom from government intervention, and exemption from military service.<sup>37</sup> They enjoyed this freedom. They developed two communities, maintained the use of German, formed their own schools, and experienced success as farmers. Their way of life continued until the latter part of the nineteenth century when the Czarist government began enacting a plan for the complete Russification of all foreigners living in Russian territory.<sup>38</sup>

The imposition of military service and the demand that the Mennonites and other German-speaking dissenters abandon their schools and language prompted portions of the communities to emigrate en masse to North America where they could reestablish their communities and churches.<sup>39</sup> Also among the German Russians were a number of German-speaking Baptists and *Stundists*, an offshoot of the Mennonites who emphasized Bible study, prayer, and a personal experience of Christianity.<sup>40</sup> The German Russians settled in the plain states and

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was their deliberate tendency to settle entire counties almost to the exclusion of other ethnic elements." See also, Rippley, "Germans from Russia," 425-26.

<sup>37</sup> Rippley, "Germans from Russia," 426. Kerstan, "Historical Factors," 46.

<sup>38</sup> Rippley, "Germans from Russia," 426. Kerstan, "Historical Factors," 47-48.

<sup>39</sup> G. A. Schulte, ABHMS Annual Report, 1893, 68. Schulte reported to the ABHMS in 1893 that the persecutions of Dissenters in Russia would result in the immigration of entire Baptist churches to the United States and Canada. He stated that the persecutions of clergy and laws restricting the rights Dissenters had influenced a German Baptist congregation of 800 members to begin making plans for emigration in the Northwestern region of the United States. He wrote, "Their pastor was banished last summer, and fled to this country, where he has prepared the way for his former brethren and sisters, who expect him to be their spiritual leader in the future." The memoir of Mennonite pastor, Jacob H. Janzen, *Lifting the Veil: Mennonite Life in Russia before the Revolution* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press 1998, with Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, co-publisher) describes the struggles of German Russian Dissenters in Russia. Janzen emigrated to Canada in the post-WWI period and founded a Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ontario.

<sup>40</sup> Rudolf Donat, *Das Wachsende Werk: Ausbreitung der deutschen Baptistengemeinden durch sechzig Jahre (1849 bis 1909)* (Kassel: J.G. Oncken 1960), 167-173. Kerstan, "Historical Factors," 39-45. Wardin, "Mennonite Brethren and German Baptists in Russia," 100-106.

prairie provinces. The German Baptist Conference took great interest in work among this group. G. A. Schulte reported to the ABHMS in 1896:

The most promising field for the German Baptists is at present in the Northwestern States and in the provinces of Canada; be we were unable, for lack of means, to occupy even the most important points. The vast majority of the German immigrants settled in the Dakotas and beyond the border are from the eastern part of Germany and from Russia. Those from the latter country are not Russians proper, as they are sometimes called even by the General Secretaries of the Society, but Germans who have come from provinces in Russia settled by Germans. Very few of them can understand the Russian language, but they all speak German. Quite a number are "Stundists," or have, at least, been under the influence of these good people, and are thus prepared for the reception of the Gospel and Baptist doctrine. One hundred dollars spent among these people at the present time will go further for our Baptist cause than \$1,000 five years hence.<sup>41</sup>

The settlement of German-speakers in the Dakotas and prairie provinces meant a transition for the General Conference of German Baptists. The Conference membership during the first phase of German immigration had been heavily concentrated in the large eastern cities. During the second phase of immigration (and migration), however, the center of the Conference membership shifted to the midwestern and northwestern states, as well as the prairie provinces. Also during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the ABHMS continued to decrease financial support of the German Conference.<sup>42</sup> The dwindling mission support forced the Conference and its churches to become self-sufficient.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1896, 104-105.

<sup>42</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1895, 94. ABHMS Annual Report, 1896, 105. ABHMS Annual Report, 1897, 115.

<sup>43</sup> In his doctoral thesis, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans: A Case Study of Attempted Assimilation," Eric Ohlmann makes the point that the declining mission support of the ABHMS forced the German Baptist churches to take fiscal responsibility for their mission, churches, and institutions. This engendered a sense of self-sufficiency, which resulted in the General Conference of German Baptists refusing institutional assimilation into the American Baptist Convention.

## German Community Development

Considering the large numbers of German speakers who emigrated to North America, it was, perhaps, inevitable that they would form neighborhoods and communities that were predominantly German in language and culture.<sup>44</sup> These “Little Germanies” (*Kleindeutschlands*) existed in urban and rural areas. Cities with a point of entry for immigrants tended to have large German neighborhoods, as did a few cities in the heartland of the United States. Moltmann noted several of the cities that developed large German immigrant areas:

“Little Germanies” prospered at distribution centers of immigration. Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, Galveston/Houston, and San Francisco were the major ports of arrival for ships from Europe. Immigrants had to pass through these ports. For obvious reasons there were always some who remained at the points of entry. There were other distribution centers within the country and with the same effect on immigrants, for example, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, and Memphis – all with “Little Germanies” that emerged and endured.<sup>45</sup>

Along with the cities mentioned by Moltmann should be added Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Louisville, Kentucky. Both were popular destinations for German settlers.

Within the German neighborhoods, the German-speaking immigrants found much to remind them of home. There were German butchers, beer halls, social clubs, and theatres. Of course, there were also German churches where the entire service, including the sermon, was conducted in German. The ethnic neighborhood was a “buffer zone” for the arriving immigrant that helped ease the

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<sup>44</sup> Archdeacon, *Becoming American* and Daniels, *Coming to America* are two popular histories of immigrant experiences in America that deal with the development of immigrant neighborhoods.



transition to life in North America and may have helped accelerate the process of assimilation.<sup>46</sup> The neighborhoods, especially those in urban areas, allowed the immigrants to adapt to life and culture in North America through a steady and gradual process.

At the same time, however, the German neighborhoods may have been the birthplace of the German-American ethnic identity. The persistence of this identity was assisted by the continuation of the ethnic neighborhoods and rural communities, though not entirely dependent upon them.<sup>47</sup> Migration chains aided the persistence of ethnic neighborhoods and communities.<sup>48</sup> Neighborhoods that had an ethnic character tended to attract others of that same ethnic group, while those of similar economic status from another group would be less interested in residing there.<sup>49</sup> As residents migrated to other places or other housing situations, the vacancies were filled by newcomers of the same ethnic group. Conzen gave such an example: "When group members themselves move on to better housing, lower-status, more-recently-arrived groups (in the case of German neighborhoods, often German-speaking Poles or Czechs) become the highest bidders for the

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<sup>45</sup> Moltmann, " 'When People Migrate, They Carry Their Selves Along,' " xxix.

<sup>46</sup> Moltmann, "The Pattern of German Emigration," 23. Conzen, in a discussion of the work of earlier scholars, refers to the ethnic neighborhood as a "zone in transition" in her essay, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity," 603. Abramson, "Assimilation and Pluralism," 156.

<sup>47</sup> Conzen, *Making Their Own America*, 33. Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity," 612-13. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*.

<sup>48</sup> Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity," 610. Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee*, 39-41. Shaw, *The Catholic Parish as a Waystation*, 5. Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 37. Frederick Luebke, "Three Centuries of Germans in America," 165. Ward, "Immigration," 496, 502, 506.

<sup>49</sup> Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity," 610. Conzen, *Making Their Own America*, 33 "Not chain migrations alone, but also migration systems, migrant selectivity, and place characteristics – to be understood particularly in comparison with other places to which the immigrants might have gone – are important elements in the creation of ethnic cultures."

abandoned housing.”<sup>50</sup> The residential clusters perpetuated familiar patterns of life. The neighborhoods reinforced the use of the common language and common cultural traits emerged from the residential and social organizations established by the immigrants.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, institutions that served the needs of the residents were established. Conzen explained that the neighborhoods served a function not only for their residents, but also for those who had moved beyond the neighborhoods by “gathering together in convenient locations the institutions that served an ethnic lifestyle and vigorously symbolized the group’s presence.”<sup>52</sup> They were locations for political mobilization in instances of issues that affected the German-American community like the drive to establish Sunday Blue Laws or the campaign for Prohibition.<sup>53</sup> Both of these were issues that brought the opposition and ire of German Americans, though the German Baptists were much in favor of both temperance and strict Sabbath observance.<sup>54</sup>

Among the institutions that served the German Americans and played a role in the invention of the German-American ethnic identity were the German clubs and organizations. Much of what was viewed as German American in the nineteenth century was defined as such by the German social organizations. Conzen writes that, “club Germans came to define, for themselves and for outsiders, the characteristic ethnic culture.”<sup>55</sup> The clubs were diverse in purpose

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<sup>50</sup> Conzen, “Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity,” 610.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 612;

<sup>52</sup> Conzen, “Germans,” 416.

<sup>53</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 62;

<sup>54</sup> *Der Sendbote*, February 1855, 3. *Der Sendbote*, September 18, 1867, 14. F. W. C. Meyer, “The Characteristics of German Baptists,” *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (September 1898): 320.

<sup>55</sup> Conzen, “Germans,” 416. Luebke, *Bonds*, 42-44.

and provided a wide range of activities.<sup>56</sup> There were singing clubs that perpetuated the German folk music traditions. There were chorales for the preservation of High German music. Some of the first organizations were created for community protection, such as volunteer firefighters and militias. However, even these groups had opportunities for showing off in public ceremonies with music and marching.<sup>57</sup> There were also societies that provided insurance benefits or lent money to build homes or businesses. The Freemasons established German-speaking lodges. The *Turnverein* were organized and introduced gymnastics to the United States.<sup>58</sup> The activities and emphases of the many German clubs defined the character of the German-American ethnic identity.

The German Americans were viewed by outside observers as a group that enjoyed socializing. The Puritan Anglo Protestants in the United States struggled with what they viewed as the German-American intemperance and disregard for the Sabbath.<sup>59</sup> German immigrants expressed an enjoyment of relaxation. The German tavern or beer garden was a social center. It was not uncommon for Germans to enjoy long walks or family picnics on Sundays. However, this at times seemed to contradict the stricter cultural mores of Protestant America. As Conzen noted, "In a country devoted to Sunday blue laws and increasingly legislated temperance and prohibition, common commitment to convivial lifestyle gave further coherence and content to German-American ethnic identity."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Luebke offers an extensive discussion of the "Club Germans" in *Bonds*, 27-56.

<sup>57</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 416.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Marty, *Righteous Empire*, 126. Higham, *Strangers*, 25.

<sup>60</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 416.

## The Role of the Ethnic Church

The German-speaking church was another institution that gave life to German-American ethnic identity. One recognized division between German-speakers in the nineteenth century was the distinction between club Germans and church Germans.<sup>61</sup> The club Germans (*Vereinsdeutschen*) were those whose ties to the German-American identity were made through involvement in urban, German secular organizations.<sup>62</sup> The church Germans were either Catholic or Protestant. Their commitment to German culture was nurtured by their ties to their churches. Catholic parishes often developed community support agencies, like insurance societies, the Knights of Columbus, and other aid societies and social organizations to take the place of the secular German-American clubs.<sup>63</sup> Both Catholic and Protestant churches worked to maintain the use of the German language.

It seemed, in fact, that the religious organizations were better preservers of language and culture among German Americans than secular organizations. Even those German-speaking churches that began on North American soil and were supported by Anglo-American mission societies were shaped by an ethnic focus. The German Baptists and German Methodists were organized by German-speaking pastors and missionary evangelists.<sup>64</sup> These denominations tended to be

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<sup>61</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 42-44. Kloss, "German-American Language Maintenance Efforts," 225.

<sup>62</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 42.

<sup>63</sup> Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, 80-81. Dolan, "Philadelphia and the German Catholic Community," 75-76. Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee*, 161-64.

<sup>64</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 13-36. "Surviving Members of the First German Church," 299-300. Grimmell, "Historical Sermon," 307-10. "Our German Pioneers," 324-27. Kaiser, "The Founding and Growth of Baptist Missions Among the Germans in America," 300-302. Rauschenbusch, "August Rauschenbusch, D.D." 323-24. Ramaker, "Professor Herman M. Schaeffer," 324-25.

evangelical with the conversion of souls as their primary objective. They saw their duty as outreach to the German immigrants, most of whom, they believed, did not know a vital and personal faith.<sup>65</sup> However, the concept of an ethnic mission could not make sense unless an ethnic group existed. The Germans in North America formed a large immigrant group whose ethnic identity was broad and neutral enough to encompass both the church Germans and club Germans.<sup>66</sup>

### Religion and Group Identity

Religion was also a powerful factor in the formation of ethnic identity as immigrants regrouped in North America. As they theologized their experiences of suffering, they saw the hand of God in their lives and affirmed that God was always close.<sup>67</sup> The sense of displacement and suffering also brought a desire for the familiar in a social, cultural, and religious environment that was alien to them. The church became a center for the experience of familiar patterns of worship and ceremony, and for the marking of significant life events. In the North American environment, those who were from Old World Christian traditions, such as Lutherans or Catholics, had to redefine themselves in the American context of denominationalism, sectarianism, and evangelicalism. Religion often became central to self-definition as an ethnic group or as a sub-group.

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"Julius C. Haselhuhn, D.D." 325-26. "The Pioneer Baptist Workers," 326-29. Reinhard Hoefflin, "Rev. Charles Gayer, a Pioneer Missionary to the German Baptists in New York," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (September 1898): 329-330. Douglass, *The Story of German Methodism*. Wittke, *William Nast: Patriarch of German Methodism*.

<sup>65</sup> *Der Sendbote*, November 1855, 2. *Der Sendbote*, October 1862, 15. *Der Sendbote*, August 11, 1880, 253. ABHMS Annual Report, 1865, 31-33. ABHMS Annual Report 1881, 22. ABHMS Annual Report, 1882, 59-60.

<sup>66</sup> Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," 144.

<sup>67</sup> Dolan, "The Immigrants and Their Gods," 69.

Religion, however, often did not always bind together groups that shared similar beliefs but had disparate backgrounds.<sup>68</sup> Those of similar denominational background but different national or linguistic background discovered that there were vast differences in their preferences for leadership, worship styles, and traditions.<sup>69</sup> The Roman Catholic immigrants were exemplary of this difference between linguistic group preferences. In the mid-nineteenth century, the leadership and traditions of Irish Catholics dominated Roman Catholic churches in the northeastern region of the United States. Irish were the majority in the priesthood and hierarchy, particularly in large immigrant centers such as New York City. Thus, the Germans, French, and Italians found themselves foreigners in their own church.<sup>70</sup> While the piety of the language groups may not have varied greatly, their traditions and worship styles did. In New York and other cities, the Germans agitated for their own national parishes. They sought to have German-speaking priests who were familiar with their traditions and preferences and who could care for them in the German language.<sup>71</sup> The involvement in national parishes assisted German speakers in the construction of an ethnic identity. The so-called national parish was not really based on nationality. Dolan writes:

The distinguishing element in the national parish was language rather than nationality, even though the two are often thought to be identical. This was especially true in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the sense of nationality was not very well developed among European immigrants.

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<sup>68</sup> Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, 6-7, 70-73.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 77-80. Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture," 48, 50, Conzen discusses the festivals, religious and secular, that were created by German-Americans in the nineteenth century. Such festivals and forms of celebration assisted with the building of an ethnic identity.

<sup>70</sup> Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, 6.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 70-71.

A German-speaking church might have included natives of Austria, Prussia, and Bavaria.<sup>72</sup>

The common religious community and the common language became factors that helped German speakers of different national backgrounds construct a group identity. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod had less national diversity than the German-speaking Catholics; however, they too made use of faith and language to create a separate group identity. They shared the German Catholic slogan "language saves faith."<sup>73</sup> Through the development of a conservative synod, parochial schools, and their own seminaries, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was able to create a sense of group identity around a common faith and a common language, which was maintained until the strong and widespread anti-German sentiments during the First World War.<sup>74</sup> Mennonites and other sectarian groups, such as the Hutterites, Church of the Brethren, and Amish, also formed an ethnic identity around the distinct doctrines and practices of their religious groups and their common language. The primary difference between such groups and urban German-speaking Catholics was that the sectarian groups tended to live within their own isolated communities, rather than in environments that necessitated contact with those outside of their group.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 70. Luebke, "The Immigrant Condition," 23. Bettina Goldberg, "Cultural Change in Milwaukee's German Evangelical Lutheran Congregations of the Missouri Synod, 1850-1930," in Eberhard Reichmann, et. al. eds. *Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America* (Indianapolis: Max Kade German-American Center, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1995), 116, 119. Conzen, "Germans," 418, "Protestants and Catholics alike, agreeing for different reasons that 'language saves faith,' strove to retain the use of German as long as possible."

<sup>74</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 287. Goldberg's study of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in Milwaukee argues the contrary. She suggested that symptoms of Americanization could be detected in the Missouri Synod in Milwaukee prior to the First World War in terms of the use and understanding of the German language. Goldberg, "Cultural Change in Milwaukee's German Congregations," 122-24.

Set against the backdrop of German immigration and the construction of the German-American ethnic identity, the role of the ethnic church took on greater significance. The ethnic church, like the ethnic neighborhood, was an oasis. There the style of worship was rather familiar, the hymns were sung in German, the message was delivered in German, and the festivals and celebrations characteristic of German church life continued in the New World. Thus, the churches supported the continuation of familiar aspects of German culture. The churches promoted and maintained the ethnic character of immigrant communities. Church Germans often saw the English language, laxity in morals, and heterodoxy in theology as a threat to the purity of the German faith.<sup>75</sup> Conzen argued that religion and ethnic identity functioned in a circle of mutual support: "Religion thus nurtured and was nurtured by ethnic consciousness; the least Americanized communities tended to be those with the strongest religious ties."<sup>76</sup> Group identity and the concern for maintaining the theology and culture were factors in the development of German-speaking denominations in North America.

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<sup>75</sup> Writing about the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's view of American churches, Luebke explains that the Lutherans had problems with the typical American view of the relationship between salvation and ethical behavior. They opposed the idea that one received salvation by being a good or moral person. For many immigrants, salvation came through faith, as well as suffering. It did not come because one was a good person. Thus, the Missouri Synod leaders believed that their churches had to be protected from heterodox American influences. Luebke, "The Immigrant Condition," 4. Also, see the preceding chapter concerning the theology of the German Baptists. The German Baptists in North America demonstrated a desire to shield their young churches from the lack of discipline of the English speaking Baptist churches.

<sup>76</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 417. Timothy Smith provides an interesting perspective on the relationship between ethnic identity and denominational development in "Religious Denominations as Ethnic Communities," 217.



## The Difficulty of Defining a German-American Ethnic Identity

The problem of German-American ethnicity was, in fact, its complexity. Kathleen Conzen, in her essay in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, limited "Germans" to those born in the states that united to become the nation of Germany in 1871.<sup>77</sup> However, she also recognized that German-speaking Austrians, Swiss, and French (from Alsace and Lorraine) were often included among Germans, as were German-speaking Poles and Czechs.<sup>78</sup> Thus, German language usage among immigrants did not necessarily denote a common nationality.

Although German-speaking immigrants shared a common language, it was spoken with many different dialects. There was no common religion among German-speakers. The religious backgrounds of German-speaking immigrants varied with Lutherans, Old Lutherans, Reformed, Pietists, Catholics, and Jews. Some scholars have argued that German Americans never formed a solid ethnic identity due to the religious, cultural, and national divisions that existed among German-speaking immigrants.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, scholars such as Conzen have argued that an ethnic identity has not been monolithic, but an evolving social identity. She writes, "If ethnicity is regarded as a form of social identity resulting from a continuing process of core definition and boundary maintenance, which persons of a given national descent accept in varying numbers and with varying degrees of commitment, then we may speak in a very real sense of a German-

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<sup>77</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 405-406.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 406. Rippley, "Germans from Russia," 425-27;

American ethnicity.”<sup>80</sup> Luebke explained the differing levels of commitment to German ethnic identity in the descriptive terms of “stomach Germans” and “soul Germans.”<sup>81</sup> The “stomach German,” according to Luebke, “summarized all the habits of everyday life that were unconsciously related to German culture. It meant more than the convivial pleasures of a German beer garden or restaurant. It could include reading a German-language newspaper or magazine, enjoying a game of cards, or basking in the genial companionship of womenfolk gathered at church to quilt a blanket, all the while chattering in German.”<sup>82</sup> These were individuals who enjoyed the social activities of the German-American community, but who did not necessarily have an ideological commitment to their ethnic identity. The “soul Germans” were more intentional in the construction of their ethnic identity. It was, indeed, the desire of the “soul Germans” to perpetuate German culture in North America. The “soul Germans,” according to Luebke, moved beyond the social dimension of German-Americanism

to articulate, to idealize, to rationalize, consciously and deliberately, what he perceived to be his superior culture. Convinced that the German spirit and ideals were the noblest and loftiest in Western civilization, the ‘soul German’ felt constrained to cultivate and perpetuate them among his fellow ethnics in America. Essential to this was the maintenance of the German language, which he believed to be the most beautiful in the world. As he saw it, his mission was to promote and defend German culture in the American setting, and to graft its ideals, if possible, onto American practicality and inventiveness to produce the finest civilization in the history of mankind.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Adams, *The German-Americans*, 12. Kloss has also suggested that the Germans in North America were an ‘*unvollendete Volksgruppe*,’ “an unfulfilled ethnicity,” as reported in Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” 131-133.

<sup>80</sup> Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” 133.

<sup>81</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 27-56.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

The “soul Germans” constructed the philosophical foundation for German-American ethnic identity and set the agenda for language maintenance and cultural preservation in the United States.

While the German-American ethnic identity originated through the development of neighborhoods, social clubs, and churches, it was also forged in opposition to Anglo-American efforts to Americanize or assimilate the immigrant population. Assimilation connoted a process that resulted in greater social and cultural homogeneity.<sup>84</sup> In nineteenth-century North America, assimilation implied the forfeiture of the culture of the Old World for the sake of membership in Anglo-American culture. A three-stage debate over assimilation took place among German Americans from the mid-century mark until the United States entered into World War I.<sup>85</sup> An examination of the separate phases of the debate revealed the evolution of German-Americanism. Added to this debate was political and social pressure from Anglo Americans, as well as the cultural pressure of living in North America.

The discussion of assimilation began in the 1840s as the numbers of immigrants increased and the neighborhoods grew larger.<sup>86</sup> Some among the earlier phase of immigration argued for the necessity of full assimilation. However, there were those who immigrated after 1848 who were intellectuals and lovers of High German culture. They spurned the idea of letting go of their culture for the sake of assimilating with English America. Conzen writes of their attitude:

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<sup>84</sup> Abramson, “Assimilation and Pluralism,” 150.

<sup>85</sup> Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” 136-143.

Most of the exiles of 1848 judged American society far more harshly. They saw much that was praiseworthy in German culture, much that was crass, materialistic, and hypocritical in America. This view made the general American scorn for Germans all the more intolerable. Hence their rejection of the Anglo-conformist model was generally immediate and instinctive, based more on their sense of cultural superiority than on any reasoned theory of ethnic interaction.<sup>87</sup>

Instead, they argued for the maintenance of the German language, educational styles, and cultural traditions. They did not intend to submerge their culture into a lesser one. Nor did they feel that this was necessary to do in America where the constitutional democracy protected the rights of individuals and groups. Cultural freedom was, in their view, one of the unalienable rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States.<sup>88</sup> Thus, they found arguments to defend themselves against pressure to assimilate.

The pressure was intense and political, particularly during the 1850s. It was a period of nativist, anti-immigration sentiment, reflected in the formation of the Know-Nothing political party. The pressure of Know-Nothingism, along with the growing numbers of immigrants and the growing activity of German social clubs and churches brought a sense of group identity and community life to German Americans. In fact, Conzen argued that this developing sense of identity was often defined by the traits that Americans most opposed:

With their increased numbers and with the solidarity and self-confidence engendered by resistance to nativist and temperance attacks had come also, by the mid-1850s, a richly articulated German-American community life that was beginning to fulfill many of their perceived social and cultural needs. It seemed clear that German culture could be preserved in America only with the support of such group institutions and collective identity. It was becoming equally clear that what Germans most wished to

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 134-135.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 136.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

preserve of German culture, particularly their distinctive modes of socializing, was, in many instances, precisely what Americans found most objectionable.<sup>89</sup>

The loosely defined German-American ethnic identity consisted of a number of characteristics. Although the German-speaking immigrants came from many places other than Germany, those who spoke German tended to be grouped with the German Americans, particularly by outsiders who did not know the difference. German in North America was spoken in numerous dialects. Indeed, English may have provided a more common language for German Americans than German itself. The maintenance and use of the German language in North America, however, became part of the development and preservation of a German-American ethnic identity.

The social practices of German Americans, from club life to singing societies to Sunday strolls to summer beer gardens, were part of the general definition of the ethnic group. Additionally, Conzen argued that the German Americans invented rituals of celebration that helped establish group identity.<sup>90</sup> While a divide existed between club Germans and church Germans, religious affiliation and ethnic identity were often tied together. The preservation of language, customs, and liturgical tradition assisted the outreach of German churches to German speakers. As difficult as this identity was to forge, it was equally difficult to maintain through the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>90</sup> Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture," 48.

Debates continued throughout the nineteenth century concerning the maintenance of German-Americanism. In the face of Yankee scorn of German culture, there were advocates, as well as opponents, of German separatism. There was talk of forming a German colony or a German state. Some envisioned Texas, Missouri, or Wisconsin as the location for a German utopia in North America.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, there were German leaders, such as Carl Schurz and Friedrich Kapp, who argued that the future of the German immigrants was within the workings of America.<sup>92</sup> The lack of support of prominent leaders, along with the failure of most attempts to build German colonies, effectively squelched the movement.<sup>93</sup> On a smaller scale, in many school districts German parents were able to demand and receive German-language education for their children. A large-scale effort to move toward separatism never gained momentum. As Conzen noted, American institutions would inevitably use English and there simply was no clear means to separate, nor did the German Americans want to give up the economic advantages American society provided.<sup>94</sup>

It was actually the churches that were able to maintain separate ethnic communities. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod practiced a form of

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<sup>91</sup> Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America*, 102. von Stenger und Etterlin, "New Germany in North America, 1815-1860," 147-163. Roland P. Wiederanders, "The Immigration and Settlement of the Wiederanders Family," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 42 (August 1969): 113-18 recounts the settlement of a Lutheran family from Annaberg, Saxony that settled in Galveston, TX during the 1850s.

<sup>92</sup> Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America*, 102.

<sup>93</sup> Hawgood, 102, argued that the main reason for the failure of the New Germanies was that they were organized too late. He wrote, "The United States of America became a nation before Germany became one, and thus the feeling that would tend to resist the setting up of New Germanies on American soil actually existed before the feeling that found expression in the attempt to found them." Hawgood's work explains the efforts of Germans to establish New Germanies in Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin. A related essay is von Stenger und Etterlin, "New Germany in North America, 1815-1860," 171.

separatism through its choice of settlement locations, the development of parochial schools, and the exclusive use of German in both the churches and schools.<sup>95</sup> The ethnic parish in the Catholic Church allowed even those immigrants in urban areas to have an outlet or German sanctuary in the midst of a diverse culture.<sup>96</sup> German Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians also promoted the use of German and the retention of some German cultural traits. In the larger cities this may have been more difficult due to contact with more diverse groups. The German Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians were strongest in the Midwest and in the west, where areas were rural and more isolated. Also, German Catholic churches were strong in frontier settlements.<sup>97</sup> In the void of other social organizations, the German Catholic churches often provided much more than spiritual expression to enhance life on the frontier, like social clubs, dances, community defense organization, and baseball teams.<sup>98</sup>

The churches saw more success with the preservation of culture, at least for a time, because they gave people a greater sense of group identity. Most of the church Germans identified themselves according to their church affiliation first.<sup>99</sup> The label of Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, took priority over the label of German-American. Of course, those groups that were able to remain

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<sup>94</sup> Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," 138. Goldberg, "Cultural Change in Milwaukee's German Congregations," 121.

<sup>95</sup> Luebke, "The Immigrant Condition as a Factor in the Conservatism of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," 22-23. Goldberg, "Cultural Change in Milwaukee's German Congregations," 118-19.

<sup>96</sup> Shaw, *Catholic Parish as a Waystation*, 87. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, 70.

<sup>97</sup> Conzen, *Making Their Own America* addresses the settlement of German Catholics along the Sauk River.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>99</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 329, notes that this was particularly true after World War I. German-Americans tended to emphasize their religious affiliation rather than their ethnic identity.

geographically and culturally isolated from outside contact tended to retain their ethnic identity the longest. For example, Mennonites, Hutterites, and other sectarian groups that settled in prairie provinces of Canada and the plain states of the United States, developed their own schools, and established self-sufficient communities, maintaining their group identity well beyond the more mainstream German-American religious groups.

Although some religious groups were able to maintain an isolated existence, this was not possible for German Americans on the large-scale. In the mid-nineteenth century they faced the predominant view of assimilation and accommodation known as the melting-pot argument. Through this process, each individual immigrant would enter the melting pot. The smelting process would burn away those characteristics that were harmful to America. In the melting pot, all those traits that would build up the nation and its people would be blended and from the process would emerge the new man, a new nationality, the new American who possessed all of the best traits of all of the nations that made up America.<sup>100</sup> One of the German-American objections to the melting pot idea was that it was perceived by Americans on an individualistic level, while German-American thinkers wanted to approach the melting pot on their terms as a

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<sup>100</sup> Philip Schaff, *America: A Sketch of the Political, Social, and Religious Character of the United States of North America* (New York: Scribner, 1855), 58. *Der Sendbote*, August 16, 1862, 6. *Der Sendbote*, September 1862, 11. *Der Sendbote*, October 1862, 15. Abramson, "Assimilation and Pluralism," 151-52 explains the differences between Anglo-conformity and the melting pot. Elizabeth Totten, "Elusive Affinities: Acceptance and Rejection of the German-Americans," Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds. *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, 190-93.



group.<sup>101</sup> They believed that they brought much that was good to North America. The German culture was a higher culture; it was the culture of Bach and Beethoven, of Goethe, Schiller, and Kant. America could not match the cultural achievements of Germany; therefore, America had much to gain from the German Americans. This argument was used further to develop a sense of group identity. As Conzen writes, "But if Germans were to contribute to America the gifts of sociability, public morality, and an appreciation for the good, the true, and the beautiful, they would have to preserve and cultivate these traits among themselves, apart from the dross of German or American culture. They would have to unite to preserve their community."<sup>102</sup> Thus prior to entering the melting pot, the German Americans needed a greater sense of solidarity and a clear sense of identity. This was necessary if the higher cultural standards of the German homeland were to survive.

Interestingly, the German Baptist churches were not isolated from the assimilation and acculturation arguments. As German-speakers in North America, the congregations were part of the broader debate about the role of German Americans. At the same time, as part of the mission endeavors of an English-speaking denomination, their struggle to retain their ethnic identity spilled over into their desire to fulfill their mission. Much of the German Baptist debate with the American Baptists centered on the continuing use of the German language and the maintenance of separate German churches. The wider debate about

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<sup>101</sup> Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," 139. *Der Sendbote*, October 1862, 15 the author suggests that the cooperation between Germans and English in the United States will create a "new, noble Anglo-Germanic culture."

<sup>102</sup> Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," 139.

assimilation was also reflected in the views of German Baptists. For example, the question of assimilation into North American culture was addressed in a series of *Der Sendbote* articles questioning whether or not the German language and culture would survive in America.<sup>103</sup> In 1862, one writer echoed the sentiments of Fröbel and other secular German-American writers that German Americans had much to offer by way of culture and character.<sup>104</sup> Like some German-American writers, there were writers among the German Baptists who believed that the Germans and Americans possessed different national character traits. As Conzen explained, German Americans believed that the Americans were practical, with skills in the practical arts of politics and business, but possessing no gifts for higher culture and learning.<sup>105</sup> On the other hand, the Germans had gifts of knowledge and a love for those things that made a great culture, such as art, music, education, and enjoyment of life. A German Baptist writer described Germans and Americans in almost the same way. The writer noted that many Americans were learning German “to acquire the treasures which Germans have brought up from the mineshaft of science.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, German contributions to the store of knowledge through scientific discoveries were highlighted. Furthermore, German culture would have a modeling, shaping influence upon American culture. The writer stated:

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<sup>103</sup> *Der Sendbote*, August 16, 1862, 6. *Der Sendbote*, September 1862, 11. *Der Sendbote*, October 1862, 14-15. Other articles defending the use of German also appeared in *Der Sendbote*: *Der Sendbote*, February 10, 1869, 21. *Der Sendbote*, January 4, 1871, 1. *Der Sendbote*, April 8, 1874, 56. *Der Sendbote*, August 11, 1880, 253. *Der Sendbote*, July 19, 1882, 220. *Der Sendbote*, May 8, 1867, 73.

<sup>104</sup> *Der Sendbote*, August 16, 1862, 6.

<sup>105</sup> Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” 139.

<sup>106</sup> *Der Sendbote*, August 16, 1862, 6.

One could say, the German nation has a relationship to the Americans similar to that of the ancient Greek to the Romans. A German is mainly idealistic and speculative, an American more realistic and practical. The former has more depth of thought, and the latter has more depth of character. The former rules the world in the fields of art and science, the latter in the field of political life. A German creates thoughts and ideas, an American changes thoughts to decisions and decisions to action. Many ideas developed in German but not put into practice come to life in the hands of the practical Americans, like plants which have been transplanted to a different soil in order to be of use to the world by blooming and bearing fruit.<sup>107</sup>

There was a sense among secular writers that much of what was great about German culture would contribute missing elements to the development of the American nation. The German character, solidly built and providing a foundation for American society, would benefit the new nation. At the same time, some German Americans believed that this could only happen if the Germans fully interacted with American society. Far from losing their character, they would create a greater nation. This was reflected in the words of the German-American Christian scholar Philip Schaff who warned German Americans against isolating themselves from Anglo-American society or developing separatist settlements.<sup>108</sup> Instead, wrote Schaff, "He must rather, by his native cosmopolitan, universal spirit, boldly and energetically master the Anglo-American nature, appropriate its virtues, and then breathe into it, as far as it may be desirable, the breath of his own spirit and life....America is the grave of all European nationalities; but a Phenix [*sic*] grave, from which they shall rise to new life and new activity in a new and essentially Anglo-Germanic form."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Schaff, *America*, 58.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. Also quoted by Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," 140.

Schaff's sentiments were echoed by the words of a German Baptist writing for *Der Sendbote*. Both expressed a confidence that the melting pot would subsume the German nationality and replace it with the American national character and identity. German culture, however, as it entered the melting pot, would be so powerful as to shape the new American character. What would emerge as America would be a meeting of the Anglo and the German in a new and united Germanic nation. The German Baptist author wrote optimistically:

In America...the dispersed elements of the Germanic family of nations are gathered together again in order to rise once again as a rejuvenated Germanic nation. We see the customs of old Germanic tribes reappear as far as the jungles and prairies of the far West. We once again find here what Tacitus described about the ancient Germans who did not live in villages and towns at the time of Christ but settled individually wherever a spring or fertile valley invited settlement. Here we see once again brought to life the freedom for which the ancient Germans so bravely fought, the hospitality, the chastity, the respect for women and, most important of all, a worship service without images which once set apart the pagan Germans from other pagan nations. If therefore we do indeed lose the German language and character, we are satisfied that, as a good substitute, we can preserve the general characteristics of the German family of nations and can pass them on to our descendents in rejuvenated, refined form.<sup>110</sup>

While the first phase of defining a German-American ethnic identity dealt with the possibilities of assimilation versus German separatism, the second phase addressed the prevailing American idea of the melting pot. Rather than jumping into the American mix as individuals, the German Americans would enter it as a group. Through their influence, German culture would shape the American identity, giving it the cultural elevation and moral character lacking in Anglo Americans.<sup>111</sup> The product of the smelting process would be an Anglo-Germanic

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<sup>110</sup> *Der Sendbote*, August 16, 1862, 6.

<sup>111</sup> Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," 139. Wolfgang Helbrich, "The 'Trained Observer' and the Common Immigrant: Differences in the Perceptions of 'the

nation that embodied the best qualities of the Yankees and the German Americans.<sup>112</sup> While this process meant that the German Americans would have to sacrifice their language and some of their cultural traditions, they would be responsible for shaping a stronger nation and would emerge from the process rejuvenated and enlivened.<sup>113</sup>

After the end of the American Civil War, many German Americans had difficulty accepting that their ethnic group would be submerged into a dominant Anglo culture. They felt that they had proven their willingness to sacrifice for their nation and that they had purchased their place in American society through their service to the nation in its time of national crisis.<sup>114</sup> They believed that German and Anglo culture could co-exist, be of service to each other, and dominate the nation. It was, in essence, an argument for ethnic diversity or cultural pluralism based on the contributions and leadership of German Americans. The process of pluralism has been present when social conditions have allowed "sustained ethnic differentiation and continued heterogeneity."<sup>115</sup> An article published in *Der Sendbote* during the Civil War reflected the theme of ethnic co-existence.<sup>116</sup> The author of the article did not question whether or not German language and culture would continue to exist in the United States.

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Americans.'" in Eberhard Reichman, et. al. eds. *Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America* (Indianapolis: Max Kade German-American Center, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1995), 360-61 explains that German emigrant letters often described Anglo Americans as very materialistic and condemned American "money-mindedness."

<sup>112</sup> Schaff, *America*, 58. *Der Sendbote*, October 1862, 15. *Der Sendbote*, August 1862, 6.

<sup>113</sup> Schaff, *America*, 58. *Der Sendbote*, August 16, 1862, 6. *Der Sendbote*, September 1862, 11. *Der Sendbote*, October 1862, 15. Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," 140.

<sup>114</sup> Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," 140.

<sup>115</sup> Abramson, "Assimilation and Pluralism," 150.

Instead, he stated the reasons why it would and should continue. Like the German-American secular writers, he looked first at the history of German Americans in the United States. He presented a brief description of early German emigration to the United States, noting the religious character of the people who emigrated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The writer then described the numbers in which German emigrants had moved to the United States in the two decades prior to the Civil War. It seemed that he was trying to establish the argument that the German and American cultures already co-existed in the United States, particularly in the western states with heavy German populations. He wrote:

And if anyone wants to doubt whether these large groups, who went on to settle the interior of our country, remained loyal to the language and customs of their fathers, let us point to the many regions (many entire counties) in Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin and other western states which are settled almost exclusively by Germans; where one traveler greets another in German, even when not acquainted with him; where German congregations, German justices of the peace, German clubs of all sorts are to be found in large numbers. Let us point to the almost 3000 German preachers who proclaim the gospel in this country in our beautiful mother tongue; to the nearly 300 German newspapers (among them approximately 30 daily papers and approximately the same number of religious ones); to the numerous weekday schools founded partly together with Christian congregations partly with independent societies; to the even more numerous German Sunday schools which perpetuate especially the beautiful German hymns among the younger generation. And lastly, let us point out the many exclusively German regiments which have been rallying around the star-spangled banner in the present time of distress, carrying it victoriously at Richmond in the East and Corinth and Memphis in the West.<sup>117</sup>

The writer of the article described the strength of the German immigrants, their attempts to keep their culture thriving, and their contribution to the nation.

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<sup>116</sup> *Der Sendbote*, September, 1862, 11.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

In a follow-up article he briefly, but specifically addressed the relationship between German and American culture.<sup>118</sup> Like other writers, he found much in American culture that was worthy of praise, especially America's religious character, but believed that German culture had much to offer to America. He did not suggest, however, that they be melted into one another. Instead, he suggested that they learn and gain from one another to create a nation where both cultures would dominate. He wrote:

Finally let us indicate in which way the differences between us and our American fellow citizens can be used to mutual benefit. Above we spoke favorably of the good qualities of the Germans, but we do not want to be biased and condemn everything that is not German. On the contrary, we gladly admit that our English brothers, to whom we are ethnically related, have much to offer that is good which we would do well to accept, in particular their political education, their entrepreneurial spirit, and their pragmatism in general. In addition, American culture is leavened by Christianity to an unusually high degree...Therefore, we should willingly adopt what is good in them, and at the same time, try to share the good which we have to offer as Germans. If this is our goal, we will live with our English speaking fellow citizens in a peaceful competition of good works, our mutual exchange [of good works] resulting in a new, Anglo-Germanic culture on the free soil of America.<sup>119</sup>

During the post-Civil War period, German emigration to North America reached new peaks. With such large numbers of immigrants reaching North American shores, it was clear that there could be no fast or easy assimilation of German-speaking immigrants. At the same time, German neighborhoods, newspapers, social organizations, and churches grew. For a time it seemed as if German-American hopes for a permanent German ethnic identity in the United States might be fulfilled. However, as Conzen explained, "To assert that large-scale immigration could continue indefinitely, or that German language in the

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

schools could guarantee a lasting ethnic influence was wishful thinking.”<sup>120</sup> The second generation of immigrants began to assimilate rapidly, particularly in urban areas where there was greater contact with English businesses and schools. Also, the American reaction to mass immigration brought a revival of nativist feelings in the form of new immigration laws. Fearing the loss of the Anglo character of the nation, the use of the German language in public life and the teaching of German in public and parochial schools became a political issue. A sense of stability was regained during the first decade of the twentieth century. After World War I, Americanization became a watchword in the United States among politicians and within the denominations that funded separate churches for immigrants. Thus the German-speaking churches entered the debate about the long-term viability of German-American ethnicity.

## Conclusion

German Americans formed a loosely defined ethnic identity in the nineteenth century. Their definition was, in a sense, a means of self-protection. They crafted their identity, at times, according to or in reaction to the norms and criticisms that confronted them in North America.<sup>121</sup> From the mid-nineteenth century to the outbreak of WWI German Americans were involved in debates

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<sup>119</sup> *Der Sendbote*, October 1862, 15.

<sup>120</sup> Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” 141. *Der Sendbote*, August 1862, 6, the concept of an Anglo-Germanic culture was viewed as a consolation to German-Americans who would inevitably be asked to surrender their language. The author of the article wrote, “If therefore we have to assume that in time the English language will be the only ruling one in this country, we Germans can find consolation in the thought that we are not giving ourselves up into a totally foreign language and character, but rather are uniting with a nation that is closely and intimately related to us. The German and English nation are brothers since they both belong to the great Germanic family of nations.”

<sup>121</sup> Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” 133.



over whether they would be able to maintain their culture, education, customs, and language. The pressure to assimilate into North American society was in conflict with the resolve of some immigrants to protect a unique German identity. The desire to maintain a German-American identity existed among some secular Germans, who created a network of German clubs, choral societies, and political groups. Through these organizations, as well as the ethnic neighborhoods, efforts were forged to keep German culture and identity alive and thriving in North America. Yet, it was really the German-speaking churches that were the strongest ally of German-community and language maintenance. Efforts were made by German-American church bodies to create and preserve ethnic identity in order to protect the distinct theology, mission, and practices of the immigrant churches. Saving the German language and culture was equated with saving the theology and faith of the German-American churches.

## Chapter 5

### **Determination in the Midst of Change: The Challenges of Maintaining the Ethnic Mission and the Movement toward Independence**

#### **Introduction**

In the mid-nineteenth century the General Conference of German Baptists in North America developed a mission that was directed to German-speaking immigrants. Between 1851 and 1921 the German Baptists in North America engaged in an ongoing, though unofficial, debate about assimilation with the English-speaking Baptists in the United States. While the American Baptists were supportive of mission endeavors among German-speaking immigrants, as decades passed they raised questions about the necessity of maintaining churches that used the German language. The ABHMS reduced the amount of money allotted to German-speaking missions. Some American Baptists even objected openly to German Sunday schools for children and seminary training for young men in German. Although expressed with varying degrees of intensity, there was a general desire and expectation on the part of the American Baptists that the German churches would assimilate into the larger, English-speaking Baptist fold. In other words, it was assumed that they would Americanize. The public exchanges on the matter of Americanization were published in various American Baptist newspapers and magazines, in *Der Sendbote*, and in the minutes of the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

The issue of Americanization was often manifested in exchanges or questions about the language used by churches and the identification of

individuals or churches as German or German-American. From the perspective of the German Baptists, language, culture, and a sense of group identity were tools used to communicate with new immigrants and with the elderly in the churches. The German-speakers were often from different religious traditions and national backgrounds. Yet, as German Baptists they were bound by common beliefs, practices, polity, and a strong sense of mission, all of which were expressed in German. Just as language and culture protected the Pietist theology of the German Baptists, they were employed to protect the specific ethnic focus of the German Baptist work in North America.

German Baptists often expressed a deep affinity for the German language and for German culture. At the same time, the preservation of language and culture for their own sake was not the primary goal of the German Baptists in North America. Their goal was to preserve their mission to those who were ethnically and linguistically German. The evangelization of German-speaking immigrants and the development of German Baptist churches were of primary importance. Even when the transition from the use of German to English in the churches seemed inevitable, there was a resistance on the part of the German Baptists to being institutionally absorbed by the American Baptists. Hence, the ethnic mission of the German Baptists became a barrier to their complete assimilation into the larger, English-speaking American Baptist denomination. In this respect, the German Baptists were unusual, though not alone, among the ethnic conferences of the American Baptists, as well as the Methodists and Presbyterians. They resisted complete institutional assimilation, even as internal

circumstances pushed them to become more American in their use of English, as members transferred to English-speaking churches, and as the generations born in the United States grew increasingly unfamiliar with the language and cultural heritages of those who founded the German Baptists. The institutional independence of the German Baptists moved against the current of Americanization after World War I.

### **Americanization and the Protestant Vision of North America**

The masses of immigrants flooded the ports of North America in the 1840s and 1850s, and again in the post-Civil War period. The sheer numbers, as well as languages, customs, and religious traditions of the immigrants threatened the Anglo-Protestant vision of America as a “homogeneous Christian civilization.”<sup>1</sup> Robert Handy and Martin Marty each described the WASP concept of what America should be. Marty described the vision of America as a “righteous empire.”<sup>2</sup> Handy surmised that the WASP vision entailed progress toward a Christian civilization. Handy described the Protestant image of America:

The evangelical vision of Christian civilization was of a free, literate, industrious, honest, law-abiding, religious population. Though the rhetoric might vary some among the different denominations, there was a general agreement on such goals as an effective educational system, a sound legal order, and a widespread network of religious institutions. Through these agencies it was believed that standards of personal and public morality would be maintained and improved.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind*, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Marty, *Righteous Empire*, 14-23 and 126-27.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 42.

Handy noted that certain issues were considered markers for the extent to which America was progressing toward being a Christian civilization. The first issue Protestants saw as critical to the advance of evangelical desires for the country was Sabbath observance. A second issue was temperance. On both of these points, American Protestants conflicted with German Americans.<sup>4</sup>

Immigration on a massive scale presented a challenge, from the perspective of many American Protestants, to the development of a Christian and democratic society. The values of Christianity and democracy were closely linked.<sup>5</sup> The mass immigration of the latter part of the nineteenth century increased Anglo-Protestant worries about the survival of Anglo-American, Protestant, democratic America. Handy explained that large portions of the newcomers were from Eastern and Southern Europe, as opposed to Western and Northern Europeans who were much like the Anglos.

Among the Eastern and Southern Europeans were large numbers of non-Protestants, especially Roman Catholics, Jews, and Orthodox, as well as secular individuals.<sup>6</sup> The immigration of non-Europeans was also viewed as an alarming development, as well as an opportunity for mission. Baptist publications, such as *The Standard*, supported limits on immigration from China.<sup>7</sup> The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church expressed concern about the Chinese

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<sup>4</sup> Marty, *Righteous Empire*, 126. Higham, *Strangers*, 25. German Baptists and German Methodists, however, strongly supported temperance and Sabbath observance.

<sup>5</sup> For an interesting survey of the connection between the American democratic spirit and Protestantism see, Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Handy, *A Christian America*, 64.

<sup>7</sup> Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind*, 21-23. At the same time the ABHMS was critical of proposed legislation to exclude Chinese immigrants from U.S. citizenship and attempts

immigrants flowing into California and other areas on the Pacific Coast and called for vigorous mission work among them.<sup>8</sup> The Presbyterians, for example, shared the hope of other Anglo Protestants to Christianize and Americanize the immigrants. Handy wrote, "To make newcomers both Christians and good citizens seemed to be but the two sides of the same coin to the evangelical mind of the time. But the increasing difficulty of accomplishing this in view of the trends in the size and source of immigration was arousing Protestant anxieties anew in the later decades of the century."<sup>9</sup>

Baptists, as well as other Protestant groups, expressed their fears that immigrants would ruin the religious and moral character of the United States.<sup>10</sup> This perspective was expressed time and again through the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, even after the largest waves of emigration to North America ceased because of World War I. An editorial in *The Journal and Messenger* stated concern about foreign immigration and its effect on the nation: "The real objection to immigration is in its moral influences on the country; in the entire change it will work in the future character of our people; in the crowding

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to deny them basic rights while residing in the United States. *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 96-97.

<sup>8</sup> For insights into the Baptist work among Chinese immigrants see Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind*, 15, 17-19. ABHMS Annual Report 1910, 60. ABHMS Annual Report 1918, 29-34. Charles Brooks, *Christian Americanization* (New York: Council for Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1919), 2-8.

<sup>9</sup> Handy, *A Christian America*, 66.

<sup>10</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1849, 79. ABHMS Annual Report, 1851, 72. ABHMS Annual Report, 1852, 36, 63, 71. ABHMS Annual Report, 1853, 24, 26. ABHMS Annual Report, 1855, 75. ABHMS Annual Report, 1880, 34. W. H. Wilder, "The Evil of Immigration," 715-20. Wilder, a Methodist, stated his negative opinion of immigration, "Though Sabbath desecration, social discontent, nihilistic tendencies in the home, the school, the Church and the State, municipal misrule, the poverty of the poor, illiteracy, pauperism, insanity, and crime are on the increase.... That these portentous facts sustain an intimate if not direct relation to immigration will not admit

out of old American stock, and a substitution of that of the lower races of Europe.”<sup>11</sup> Only through Christian Americanization could the Anglo-Protestant denominations retain the values and culture of “old American stock.”

### Americanization

Americanization was the word used for a process of assimilating non-Anglo immigrants into Anglo-American mainstream culture.<sup>12</sup> The elements of Americanization took shape during the mid-nineteenth century and resurfaced at various points in the 1880s and 1890s, as well as during World War I and the post-War period. The process necessitated that immigrants surrender their mother tongue for English, reject parochial education for public education, and surrender any customs or cultural elements that contradicted the social and cultural norms established by Anglo-Protestant America.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the concept of Americanization bound together the behavioral norms of Anglo-Protestantism and the ideals of American democracy into a kind of mythic vision of what America was intended to be.<sup>14</sup> All who entered the nation were to conform to the vision of a WASP Christian America. Thus, Estella Sutton Aitchison could write in the Baptist publication, *The Standard*, in 1919:

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of doubt, and that the increase is due in all cases in part, and in some cases wholly, to the character of the immigrant cannot successfully be denied.”

<sup>11</sup> *The Journal and Messenger*, January 21, 1915, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Higham, *Strangers*, 9, 33-34. A twentieth-century manifestation of what Higham describes was the movement called Christian Americanization, see Mary Putnam Denny, “The Genius of America,” 470. Charles Brooks, *Christian Americanization*.

<sup>13</sup> Higham, *Strangers*, 9. Elmer Pearce, “Christian Americanization,” *Methodist Review* (May 1920): 410-414.

<sup>14</sup> Estella Sutton Aitchison, “The What, Why and How of Christian Americanization,” *The Standard* 67 (October 11, 1919): 129. Charles Brooks, “Missions to People of Foreign Speech as Affected by the War,” *Missions* (November 1918): 823. Denny, “Genius,” 470.

The founders of America were Christian men. They brought to America Christian ideals. Our country is marked by something more than a geographical division. It is marked by great ideals of brotherhood, equality of privilege, the right of all men to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." These ideals came to us from no one nation or language or race, but they did come from one spiritual source, the teachings of Jesus Christ. As we spread allegiance to Christ, we spread the ideals of America. So the church has a contribution to bring to Americanization that no one organization can give.<sup>15</sup>

According to Aitchison, the Americanization movement was not meant to be prejudicial toward any group of people. It was intended to spread the love of the nation and education about the ideals of the United States. She characterized Americanization as "a movement directed toward every lover of America. To know the ideals for which America has stood through the years, to love those ideas, and to help others to know and love them too—that is Americanization. To do away with the hyphen and to recognize in men of Italian or Lithuanian or French or Swedish or native American tongue, the foundations of a stronger, finer America – this is Americanization."<sup>16</sup>

### **Secular Views of Americanization**

The Protestant conception of Americanization mirrored, with theological overtones, the secular and political concepts of Americanization. At the secular level, the maintenance of non-Anglo ethnic identities was generally considered unpatriotic and anti-American.<sup>17</sup> For example, during the nationalist phase of the 1880s and 1890s, the "hyphenated" Americans, e.g. German-Americans, were less than American because they rejected full assimilation. Theodore Roosevelt

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<sup>15</sup> Aitchison, "Christian Americanization," 129.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Roosevelt, "What Americanism Means," 200, 204.



was an outspoken advocate of "Americanism." In an essay, "What 'Americanism' Means," published in *The Forum*, Roosevelt noted that "Americanism" could be used in two or three different senses.<sup>18</sup> One of the connotations of the term was the Americanization of immigrants. Roosevelt was in favor of the complete assimilation of all immigrants and strongly opposed the persistence of ethnic group identities. He wrote of the immigrants:

We must Americanize them in every way, in speech, in political ideas and principles, and in their way of looking at the relationships between Church and State. We welcome the German or the Irishman who becomes an American. We have no use for the German or Irishman who remains such. We do not wish German-Americans or Irish-Americans who figure as such in our social and political life; we want only Americans, and, provided they are such, we do not care whether they are of native or of Irish or of German ancestry.<sup>19</sup>

Roosevelt asserted the popular American viewpoint that complete Americanization meant cultural and linguistic homogeneity.<sup>20</sup> One of the clearest symbols of full assimilation was the adoption of spoken English by the immigrant. English was to be the language of government, business, school instruction, and worship. English instruction in the public and private schools became an important issue in numerous states, even prior to World War I. The Bennett Law in Wisconsin (1890) attempted to end educational instruction in German in the lower elementary grades.<sup>21</sup> If children had to use English in school

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 202. Roosevelt repudiated anti-Catholic forms of nativism, as well as those parts of the Americanization movement that called for severe restrictions on immigration. Higham, *Strangers*, 97-105.

<sup>19</sup> Roosevelt, "What Americanism Means," 202.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 203.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas C. Hunt, "The Bennett Law of 1890: Focus of Conflict Between Church and State in Education." *Journal of Church and State* 23 no.1 (Winter 1981): 69-93. Kloss, "German-American Language Maintenance Efforts," 233-237 contains a discussion of German language maintenance efforts in the classrooms, as well as laws in various states to limit or allow German language instruction in the nineteenth century.

and only heard German at home or in church, then English would become the language of the younger generations.<sup>22</sup> Roosevelt advocated English-only instruction: "We believe that English, and no other language, is that in which all the school exercises should be conducted."<sup>23</sup>

As ardent as Roosevelt was in his patriotism and advocacy of assimilation, he publicly repudiated any form of Know-Nothingism. He was not critical of immigrants because of their foreign origin, nor did he support anti-Catholic organizations.<sup>24</sup> He recognized that foreign emigration to the United States had both positive and negative dimensions. Whether immigration would ultimately benefit the nation depended solely on the adoption of American culture, the English language, and national loyalty on the part of the immigrant. The nation would be harmed by those who refused full assimilation:

But where immigrants, or the sons of immigrants, do not heartily and in good faith throw in their lot with us, but cling to the speech, the customs, the ways of life, and the habits of thought of the Old World which they have left, they thereby harm both themselves and us. If they remain alien elements, unassimilated, and with interests separate from ours, they are mere obstructions to the current of our national life, and, moreover, can get no good from it themselves....It is an immense benefit to the European immigrant to change him into an American citizen.<sup>25</sup>

### **The American Baptists and Christian Americanization**

To Christianize and Americanize seemed to be the objectives of the American Baptists in their mission to immigrants. Missions and the promotion of

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<sup>22</sup> Higham, *Strangers*, 59, 235-37. The public education movement, and particularly the efforts of some states to impose strict laws regarding attendance requirements and language instruction, were an attempt to strike against parochial schools, which were often ethnically oriented.

<sup>23</sup> Roosevelt, "Americanism," 203.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 203-204.

cultural assimilation could not be separated. Immigration on the massive scale was viewed by the ABHMS as perilous to the nation unless the immigrants could be Christianized and assimilated. An extract from a speech by Boston mayor Abbot Lawrence was included in the 1849 ABHMS annual report. Lawrence was reported as commenting that the great influx of foreigners had the potential of changing the manners, character, and religion of the American people.<sup>26</sup> The work of the ABHMS among immigrants would protect the nation from undue and unwanted cultural and moral influences.<sup>27</sup> In the fifteenth annual report of the ABHMS, Benjamin Hill, the corresponding secretary of the Society, expressed such sentiments when he reported: "The importance of our trust cannot well be appreciated. The promotion of the social and moral interests of our country; the perpetuity of its civil and religious liberty; the diffusion and prevalence of christian [sic] influences in moulding [sic] national character, and strengthening its bonds of union; we are bound to make subjects of our earnest solicitude."<sup>28</sup>

The purpose of the ABHMS was not limited to missions alone. The product of missions to immigrants would be a stronger nation. The goal of the home mission endeavor was to make the immigrant a Christian and an American.<sup>29</sup> The concept of Christian Americanization was often written about in Baptist publications and in the reports of the ABHMS in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>26</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1849, 79.

<sup>27</sup> ABHMS Annual Report 1844, 12-15. ABHMS Annual Report 1845, 14-15. ABHMS Annual Report 1847, 17-18. ABHMS Annual Report 1851, 72. ABHMS Annual Report 1876, 21. ABHMS Annual Report 1887, 15. ABHMS Annual Report 1910, 60. ABHMS Annual Report 1918, 29-34. Brooks, "Missions," 822-23.

<sup>28</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1847, 17.

<sup>29</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1887, 14-15. ABHMS Annual Report, 1876, 21. ABHMS Annual Report, 1859, 26-28.

It was also a popular topic in the early twentieth century, particularly during and after World War I.<sup>30</sup>

### **Christian Americanization and German-speaking Immigrants**

The largest of the non-English speaking immigrant groups was the Germans. Germans were usually afforded higher regard than other immigrants by Anglo-Americans, including English-speaking Baptists.<sup>31</sup> The German character was regarded as having closer kinship with the Anglo-American character. This observation was made by English and German-speaking Baptists alike. Jacob Meier, a German Baptist pastor, described the Germans in America to the American Baptist readership of *The Standard* as "industrious, intelligent, economical, social, and law abiding. He forms a valuable addition to our

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<sup>30</sup> Aitchison, "Christian Americanization," 129-30. Brooks, "Missions," 820-23. Denny, "Genius," 47. Bertha Clark, "American Attitude the Essential in Americanization," *Missions* (March 1921): 161-64. Articles published in publications of other denominations expressed the desire to assimilate and Americanize German-Americans. See for example articles in the Presbyterian journal *Continent* (formerly the *Interior and the Westminster Presbyterian Advance*): "The Church's Part in Americanization," *Continent* (February 12, 1920): 189. "A New Emphasis upon Americanization," *Continent* (July 7, 1919): 871-72. "Americanization – A Very Christian Task," *Continent* (November 22, 1923): 1427. The German Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church had approximately 60,000 members before the United States entered World War I. The Methodist Episcopal Church publication, *Zion's Herald*, published numerous articles on the subject of Americanization: "Eliminate the Non-English Conferences," *Zion's Herald* (October 15, 1919): 1327. "Knocking the Hyphen out of the Church," *Zion's Herald* (September 18, 1918): 1202. "Church Must Help, Not Hinder, Americanization," *Zion's Herald* (October 9, 1918): 1286-87. "Americanizing the Foreign Born," *Zion's Herald* (August 28, 1918): 1091. "An Americanization Conference," *Zion's Herald* (January 26, 1916): 99-100. "Methodism and Americanization," *Zion's Herald* (October 30, 1918): 1391. "Real Americanization," *Zion's Herald* (August 11, 1920): 1066.

<sup>31</sup> The 1883 ABHMS Annual Report from the Committee on Missions among Foreign Populations, 13-15, described the Germans as "a large-brained people." The report went on to say that when converted Germans "bring great intellectual ability to the cause of Christ. They have excellent staying qualities. Industrious, frugal, family-loving." Also see H. L. Morehouse, "German Baptists in America," 304 in which he complimented the German character, "Again, it is advantageous for the workman to have good material on which to work. The German stock is good material for Gospel purposes... If the German is slow to change, when he changes you may depend upon him in his new relation."

population.”<sup>32</sup> His American colleagues generally agreed with this portrayal of the Germans. O. A. Williams, an American Baptist pastor, wrote an article for *The Standard* in which he stated his positive sentiments toward immigrants from Britain and Northern Europe and the contribution they would make to American society. He noted that the 1900 census reported that ten million Americans immigrated from another nation. Of these, 2.6 million came from Germany, 1.8 million from Canada, 1.6 million from Ireland, approximately 1.2 million from Great Britain, and 1 million from Scandinavia. Williams then concluded:

You will, therefore, perceive that up to 1900 the bulk of our immigration was from the very best blood in Europe – the parent stock that gave us the Anglo-Saxon race – the nations that love law, order, justice, liberty, righteousness, and religion. No wonder that with such accessions of brain and skill and character this nation should have taken in the brief period of a century a foremost place among the nations of the earth.<sup>33</sup>

While the Germans were often given praise for some of the character traits perceived as positive and useful by Anglo-Americans, certain social habits of the German Americans troubled them. The German immigrants brought with them the continental Sabbath. Sunday was a time for relaxing with family, drinking in a tavern or beer garden, and exercising with a Sunday stroll. Only those Germans with pietistic origins, including the Baptists and Methodists, practiced strict Sabbath observance. The Germans also gained a reputation for their drinking in a period when temperance was emphasized in Protestant culture. As one Baptist proclaimed, “Our Sabbath is taking a European form. Our social habits have received a German stamp, and we can save our people, our institutions and our

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<sup>32</sup> Jacob Meier, “Mission Work Among Germans in America,” *The Standard* (October 17, 1903): 7.

<sup>33</sup> O. A. Williams, D.D. “The Stranger within Thy Gates,” *The Standard* (August 6, 1904): 6.

German fellow citizens only by increased vigilance and renewed consecration of heart and purse to the work of giving the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this powerful people.”<sup>34</sup>

Many of the Germans who immigrated during the 1840s through the end of the century were Catholics. Some Baptists viewed Catholics as a perennial threat to American liberty.<sup>35</sup> Others were Protestant with ties to the state church. A small percentage of the German immigrant population was Jewish, while still others were complete rationalists who rejected all forms of religion. Both the American Baptists and German Baptists agreed that vital piety was lacking among the German immigrants. A report to the ABHMS in 1865 by the German Baptist Mission Secretary, Gubelmann, divided the Germans into different groups according to their religious affiliation, and criticized all.<sup>36</sup> Gubelmann portrayed Catholics as superstitious and ritualistic.<sup>37</sup> He criticized the Lutherans as people who “swore by the words of Luther.” Gubelmann accused the Lutherans of placing too much emphasis on Martin Luther by stating, “he is to them infallible, just about in the same sense as the Pope. They inscribe in gold letters on their churches, ‘God’s word and Luther’s doctrine never perish,’ consequently progress is proscribed by them.”<sup>38</sup> Gubelmann was less critical of the Evangelical Church.

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<sup>34</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1883, 13-15. In 1887, a report was made to the ABHMS that claimed, “They are foreignizing our youth and estranging our laboring classes. Anarchy, Socialism, intemperance, and cognate evils increase under their bold and officious leadership.” ABHMS Annual Report, 1887, 14.

<sup>35</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1847, 18. The Methodists also tended to be suspicious of Roman Catholics, George Curtis, “Duty of This Nation and Church Toward Immigration,” *Methodist Review* (September 1891), 725. Wilder, “Evil of Immigration,” 718.

<sup>36</sup> ABHMS Annual Report 1865, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

He seemed to have saved the greatest ire and concern for those he termed as infidels. Of this group he reported:

Their religion is the religion of the beer garden and the theatre, and they regard Christianity as a sort of ingenious contrivance to keep society in order, but far below their intelligent conception. It might be asked why there are so many infidels among Germans. He would reply that Catholic superstition and Protestant formalism are the preparatory schools for infidelity. The German studies infidelity in his old home and graduates here.<sup>39</sup>

The American Baptists shared a similar assessment of the spiritual condition of German immigrants with Gubelmann. In 1853 the ABHMS received the report of its mission secretary on the need for mission work among the estimated three million Germans in the United States. The report quoted the speaker as saying, "It is quite evident that special effort for their evangelization is requisite, particularly as among them is found to a very great extent the rationalism – the dead infidelity which aims at the subversion of all that is dear in the social and religious relations of American Christians."<sup>40</sup>

The passing decades did not seem to change the general estimation or description of German immigrants. In 1880, nearly three decades after the organization of the General Conference of German Baptists, the same characterization was given of German immigrants by German-speakers as well as English-speakers. The report on the German work at the 1880 meeting of the ABHMS noted that there were only thirty-six missionaries to the Germans supported by the society, "There are too few for the 6,000,000 German-speaking population of this country, and for the multitudes more coming in every month,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1853, 26.

most of whom are in the bonds of fatal religious formalism or open infidelity, needing, as truly as the pagan, spiritual guides to instruct them in the truth about the new birth and salvation."<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the German Baptist author of the report was trying to make an impression on the ABHMS in order to receive additional funding for more missionaries. German Baptist reports and articles, however, revealed that they sincerely believed that most German-speakers did not have a true Christian faith.<sup>42</sup>

Near the end of the nineteenth century, Walter Rauschenbusch, a German Baptist pastor and scholar, commented on the spiritual state of German immigrants. Although Rauschenbusch was more liberal than other German Baptists in his theology, and particularly in his views on social issues, he was loyal to the church of his upbringing and wrote fondly of the success of the German Conference churches. In 1895 he provided a colorful description of German immigrants and their intellectual and religious backgrounds in an effort to defend the work of the German Baptist churches. He stated:

When you are face to face with a German, you are dealing with an obstinate customer. If he comes from the cities and has a touch of education, he is likely to have more than a touch of infidelity. If he is well to do, he will probably be a freethinker; if poor, a socialist...the mass of people still accept religion as one of the established facts of life, but their religion is, in the immense majority of cases, merely mild sacramentalism. To have their children sprinkled and confirmed, to go to church now and then, to take communion once or twice a year, to be married by a minister and buried by one, Catholic or Lutheran, to which they vowed fidelity in confirmation.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1880, 34.

<sup>42</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1882, 59, "The evangelization of these people, many of whom indeed are birthright members of churches, but who know no more than the ancient Jewish formalists of regeneration by the Spirit through personal faith in, and loving surrender to Christ, is a matter that ought most deeply to concern us, not merely on the ground of patriotism, but for their own soul's sake." Also, Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans?" 2.

<sup>43</sup> Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans?" 12.



Rauschenbusch claimed, moreover, that the majority of Germans were unfamiliar with “the need and possibility of a conscious and definite conversion and a personal religious experience.”<sup>44</sup>

It was paramount both to the ABHMS and the German Baptists that a strong mission program to German immigrants be developed and maintained. From the American Baptist perspective, missions were not only a means to treat the spiritual condition of the immigrant, through Christianity the German would become an American. As it was stated to the ABHMS in 1876, “In no better way can these Germans be ‘Americanized’ and rendered useful citizens of our nation than by diffusing among them the principles of the gospel. Baptist ideas have done more to bring them to our American ways of thinking than anything else.”<sup>45</sup>

### **The Relationship between the ABHMS and the General Conference of German Baptists**

The American Baptist Home Mission Society supported the formation of the General Conference of German Baptists in 1851. They aided the formation of new churches and funded salaries for German-speaking evangelists.<sup>46</sup> The American Baptist Publication Society sponsored German-speaking colporteurs.<sup>47</sup> Beginning in 1870, the ABHMS worked cooperatively with the General Conference of German Baptists. The Conference selected its missionaries and gave money to the ABHMS for their support. These monies were then matched at

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1876, 21.

<sup>46</sup> Priestly, “North American Baptist Conference,” 380. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 17, 22, 32, and 42.

<sup>47</sup> Priestly, “North American Baptist Conference,” 380. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 22.

a percentage set by the ABHMS. The pastors receiving this support were considered ABHMS missionaries until such time as the churches became self-supporting. This Cooperative Agreement between the ABHMS and the German Baptists was significant in the support and growth of the German Baptist mission.

While the American Baptist Home Mission Society was supportive of the mission efforts of the General Conference of German Baptists, it was never the Society's intention to create a separate German Baptist denomination.<sup>48</sup> The guiding principle of Christian Americanization would not have allowed for permanent ethnic churches. The American Baptists, however, clearly recognized that the surest method of reaching immigrants with the Gospel message and the principles of Christian, American democracy was for the immigrants to hear the message in their own language. The American Baptists supported missions to approximately twenty-six immigrant groups. These bodies often organized as foreign-speaking conferences, such as the General Conference of German Baptists, the General Conference of Swedish Baptists, and the General Conference of Norwegian Baptists. Even while these conferences existed as seemingly separate entities under internal leadership, they were considered by the American Baptists to be constituent American Baptist organizations and were encouraged to keep a close relationship with the American Baptists.<sup>49</sup> A close relationship would ease the eventual transition of the churches (and the leadership) from foreign-speaking, immigrant churches to American Baptist

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<sup>48</sup> *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 4. *The Standard* (October 19, 1895): 2. General Conference Minutes, 1895, 157-58.

<sup>49</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 217-218.

churches.<sup>50</sup> The American Baptists did not foresee that some of these conferences would desire to retain their distinct ethnic character, even after the effects of the assimilation process began to draw away the second and third generations of the ethnic churches.

Prior to the Civil War there was a sense of a shared purpose between the American Baptists and the German Baptists. While the ultimate goal of the American Baptists was Christian Americanization, they were very supportive of the work of the German Baptist churches. It was generally agreed that the use of German was the primary means to bring German immigrants into the church to experience conversion and to build a vital faith. As one German Baptist writer asserted:

[W]e want to take care that the great deeds of God shall be proclaimed in the German language. It is well known that one understands one's mother tongue best of all and that one is more readily inclined to believe a speech delivered in this language rather than in a foreign language, be it ever so familiar. Therefore, churches must be built among our countrymen from whose pulpits the pure gospel must be proclaimed in German. This is the only way we can hope to stem the tide of unbelief, to curb the corruption of morals, and to strengthen true freedom and moral rectitude.<sup>51</sup>

From the 1840s through the 1870s, there would have been little dissent from this point of view from the American Baptists.<sup>52</sup> Driven by the sense that the unconverted immigrants imperiled the well-being of the nation, they gave significant financial support to the German work. From the perspective of the German Baptists, appreciation for support was mixed with criticism for the laxity

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> *Der Sendbote*, October 1862, 15.

<sup>52</sup> Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind*, 101-102.

of morality and discipline they noted among the American Baptists.<sup>53</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch credited the German Baptists with possessing a genuine piety, which was an element in the success of their work.<sup>54</sup> Due, in part, to their sense of piety, the German Baptist leadership did not seem anxious to move their membership into the American Baptist churches. In fact, they seemed more intent on ensuring the protection of their mission to German immigrants and German Americans.

Tension between the German Baptists and American Baptists seemed to grow in the decades following the Civil War and continued to increase in the early decades of the twentieth century as their divergent purposes became more apparent. The American Baptist leadership and the German Baptists were in agreement upon the need for the German Baptist mission. There were, however, ongoing debates between the groups that called forth a defense of the German Baptist mission from the Conference leadership. While the American Baptist support of a temporary German mission was vocalized by its leadership, and may have represented the majority opinion of the ABHMS, there were clearly dissenting opinions. Some American Baptists raised questions about the need to maintain the German language in the churches, the need to educate the younger generations in the German language, and the need for the continuation of separate German churches, particularly after the massive waves of German immigration ceased.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans?" 12. *Der Sendbote*, July 1858, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Rauschenbusch, "What Shall we do with the Germans?" 12.

<sup>55</sup> Potter, "What to Do with the Foreigner," 2. Daniel C. Potter, "Must It Be in Their Own Language," 2. *The Examiner* (May 2, 1882): 4. Aitchison, "The What, Why, and How of Christian

The tensions that developed between the German Baptists and American Baptists were reflective of the larger social currents of the late nineteenth century. The impact of industrialization and urbanization was experienced in the American cities. While Americans generally continued to believe in the melting-pot theory, from which a new American would emerge, masses of unassimilated immigrants in American cities and enclaves of immigrant settlers in the Midwest seemed to overwhelm the melting pot. There was a general loss of confidence that America could succeed in assimilating the immigrants into an Anglo, Protestant, and democratic society.<sup>56</sup> This was the time of the Haymarket Riots in Chicago and the beginnings of the social gospel movement in America. The economic and social conditions of the nation were fluid, which fed the feeling of unrest. The immigrant became a target of fear and jingoism. There were calls and movements toward immigration restrictions in the legislative halls of the nation's capital.

At the same time, many German Americans, though not politically united, were not willing to surrender their ethnic identity or their language. They considered themselves loyal Americans, but did not want to reject their heritage. They had strength in numbers, with as many of 220,000 German-speaking immigrants arriving in 1882 alone. On the whole, those of German origin in the United States constituted nearly one-quarter of the non-English population.

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Americanization," 129-30. Samuel Zane Batten, "The New Problems of Immigration," *Baptist Home Mission Monthly* (July 1903): 175-78. Thomas Villers, "Immigration a Providential Opportunity of Evangelization," *Baptist Home Mission Monthly* (August 1900): 225-31. George Schulte, "The Other Side of the German Question," *The Examiner* (July 6, 1882): 2. Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans?" 12-13. "Attitude Toward Foreigners," *The Watchman* (September 6, 1900): 7. "Our Prejudices Against Foreigners," *The Watchman* (December 12, 1901): 8-9. "The New American," *The Watchman* (May 22, 1913): 7. Editorials from *The Journal and Messenger* 1914-1918.

<sup>56</sup> Higham, *Strangers*, 77.

Among the German Americans there were individuals who resisted assimilation on American terms because they believed that German culture was superior to what they perceived as the materialism of American culture.<sup>57</sup> In 1901 the National Alliance of German-Americans was founded to support German language maintenance efforts and German-American ethnic identity within the United States. As Americans sought to define the meaning of being an American, the Baptists sought the answer to what it meant to be a Baptist and an American.

### Language Maintenance

At the center of the debate in both the churches and larger society was the issue of language, specifically the maintenance of foreign languages and separate churches for non-English speakers. Language was not the sole determinant of ethnic identity. It was, however, often perceived as an outward and tangible measure of assimilation.<sup>58</sup> The maintenance of language also seemed a sign of the persistence of ethnic culture. For the American and German Baptists, the issue of language was part of a larger debate about the nature of, and need for, separate German churches.

The documents of the period, in fact, demonstrated that language maintenance was one of the key issues between the German Baptists and the American Baptists both prior to and following World War I.<sup>59</sup> The American Baptists seemed to expect that the German Baptist churches would give up the

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<sup>57</sup> Higham. *Strangers*, 123-26.

<sup>58</sup> Rippley, "Ameliorated Americanization," 221.

<sup>59</sup> *Der Sendbote*, August 1862, 6. *Der Sendbote*, September 1862, 11. *Der Sendbote*, January 4, 1871, 1. *Der Sendbote*, November 26, 1873, 186. *Der Sendbote*, July 19, 1882, 220. *Der Sendbote*, July 26, 1882, 228. *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 4. Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with

German language as their membership became better acquainted with English.<sup>60</sup> It was not expected that they would take measures to create permanent German churches or that they would continue to train young people in the language for the German work. German Baptists, however, often extolled the beauty of the German language, as well as its superiority to the English language. For the most part they were not intent on preserving the language for its own sake.<sup>61</sup> They believed that the survival of their ethnic mission depended upon the retention of the language.

Articles appeared in *Der Sendbote* that encouraged the maintenance of the language for the sake of the virtues of German itself. One such article, published in 1862, asserted that German had many advantages over English because of "its abundance of words and the depth of its expression."<sup>62</sup> An article about the German Baptist academy in Rochester also pointed out the need to continue the mother tongue. Hermann Schaeffer, a professor at the seminary in Rochester, encouraged German Baptists to send their young men to the academy for the sake of their economic and educational improvement, the work of the kingdom of God among German immigrants, and the German language itself.<sup>63</sup> Educating children in German could be of great benefit to them, in Schaeffer's view, because they would be trained to serve the large German population. He wrote in a persuasive tone:

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the Germans?" 12. Potter, "What to Do with the Foreigner," 1. Brooks, "Missions," 820-23. *The Standard* (October 19, 1895); 2. *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 129-33.

<sup>60</sup> *The Standard* (October 19, 1895); 2. *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 4. Brooks, "Missions," 221-22. ABHMS Annual Report, 1881, 22. *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 133-35.

<sup>61</sup> Schaeffer in *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 129-33.

<sup>62</sup> *Der Sendbote*, October 1862, 15.

<sup>63</sup> *Der Sendbote*, August 11, 1880, 253.

The German language is a valuable legacy of children of German parents. America with its six million German-speaking inhabitants needs German doctors, German lawyers, German merchants, German preachers. Whoever cannot speak and write German, is at a great disadvantage in many areas if he wants to start a business or is looking for a position as a clerk in a business. How little importance was attached to a thorough German-English education for their sons by the members of our congregations, is clearly evident from the fact that there are almost no doctors or lawyers members of our German Baptist congregations... Too bad that so many parents do not realize this. They allow their children to become anglicized so that they loathe speaking German and thus become incapable of starting businesses in the German circles in which their parents move. Thus to the children a great heritage is lost which the parents could easily secure if only they would send their children to a secondary German-English school at the right time, where they would not simply learn German, but where good German customs and the love of the German people would also be instilled in them.<sup>64</sup>

Those in the German churches who sought to preserve the German language for its own sake were fighting a losing battle. Their efforts were a microcosm of the efforts toward language preservation made in the larger population of German America.<sup>65</sup> The 1830s and 1840s brought educated refugees to North America. These Germans were intent upon preserving the German language.<sup>66</sup> They demanded the provision of German language education in American public schools. German-American social organizations that promoted German language and culture, as well as interaction between those of similar ethnic or linguistic heritage grew during the mid-nineteenth century. Additionally, German publications in the United States increased. These

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Jurgen Eichhoff, "The German Language in America," in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, Volume I (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 223-40. Huffines, "Language-Maintenance Efforts," 241-50. Kloss, "German-American Language Maintenance Efforts," 206-52. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty* includes discussions of German-American efforts to maintain the German language in North America. Thomas Sowell, *Ethnic America*, 61 has a brief account of the Berlitz language schools in the United States.



publications took the form of literature, books, and especially newspapers. At the turn of the twentieth century there were approximately eight hundred German language newspapers, constituting the largest foreign-language press in the United States.<sup>67</sup>

The period lasting from 1848 to 1914 appeared to be a time when the use of German in North America grew and flourished. Marion Huffines, however, argued that the appearance was deceptive.<sup>68</sup> The German-American ethnic identity was broad and encompassing. It was not monolithic. It could not homogenize the many differences among Germans in North America. Far from ensuring the success of the German language in North America, the massive influx of immigrants in the latter decades of the nineteenth century actually undermined its maintenance.<sup>69</sup> The many dialects did not provide a single, unified German language. The new immigrants reminded older generations of immigrants how Americanized they had already become and how corrupted the German they spoke was by Anglicisms.<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, German Americans, including the German Baptists, recognized that the German language in America would not survive if spoken in so many different dialects and if the language were corrupted by English idioms. In the secular realm, German Americans established societies to promote German

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<sup>66</sup> Huffines, "Language-Maintenance Efforts," 246. The immigration after 1848 brought an increased number of well-educated Germans.

<sup>67</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 420. According to Conzen, the peak of German publications at 800 was reached in 1893-94. By 1910 German publications numbered around 554. See also, Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 161-171.

<sup>68</sup> Huffines, "Language-Maintenance Efforts," 246.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 247. Kloss, "German-American Language Maintenance Efforts," 233.

<sup>70</sup> Huffines, "Language Maintenance Efforts," 247.

language instruction.<sup>71</sup> At the local level, parents demanded German language instruction for their children in public schools.<sup>72</sup> In some regions where Germans were in the majority, classes were conducted in German rather than English.<sup>73</sup> A pure and unified German was necessary to the survival of the language.

German Baptists realized the difficulties of preserving the language that formed the basis of their mission. This was the reason that a German Baptist writer could caution and admonish his readers for using English terms or for transliterating American idioms directly into German, such as “I make my living” (*ich mache mein Leben*). He further argued that not even “yes” or “no” should be used by the Germans if they wanted to have a unified language uncorrupted by English terms.<sup>74</sup> Another German Baptist contributor to *Der Sendbote* emphasized the responsibility of the church Germans in preserving their language. He wrote, “It is up to us Germans to preserve our mother tongue in its purity and strength.”<sup>75</sup> In his view, the language could be preserved if the Germans would take certain steps. The writer encouraged his readers to establish and support German schools; to consciously adopt and speak standard German and avoid using regionalisms or dialects in their homes; and to preserve German faithfulness, industriousness, and piety.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Conzen, “Germans,” 416-417. Kloss, “German-American Language Maintenance Efforts,” 224-26.

<sup>72</sup> Kloss, “German-American Language Maintenance Efforts,” 233-37.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 234-35. The report of the Missouri Superintendent of Public Instruction indicated that in some districts there were many schools where German was the main language of instruction and that some schools used only German.

<sup>74</sup> *Der Sendbote*, August 16, 1862, 6.

<sup>75</sup> *Der Sendbote*, February 10, 1869, 21.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

Language preservation efforts among the German Baptists reflected a love for the German language itself. They heralded the depth and beauty of the language. German was the language of their parents, the language of their prayers, and a link to the Old World. As one poem in *Der Sendbote* expressed:

This is the language that the mother spoke  
When I was a child in her arms.  
The most faithful love comforted me  
With these sounds, when I was sad  
When life's suffering beset me –  
I prayed to my God in this language!<sup>77</sup>

German was also the language of thousands of immigrants. In order for the German Baptists to be successful in their mission to German immigrants, they had to preserve the German language in their Sunday schools and churches.

### **Language and the German Baptist Mission**

German Baptist leaders recognized that the success of their mission hinged on the survival of the language. In one *Der Sendbote* article, written in the 1860s, the author forecasted that political events in Europe would result in a flood of immigrants to North America after the end of the American Civil War. This would open tremendous opportunities for the work of the German Baptists, but only if they continued to learn and speak the German language. Therefore, the writer urged: "Since we have such wonderful prospects for the future, we must make great efforts to ensure that our language here is spoken purely and beautifully....We must focus particularly on young people. Founding new weekday and Sunday schools must be vigorously supported and great care must

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<sup>77</sup> Emil Ritterhaus, "Mother Tongue: To a German Poetess," *Der Sendbote*, May 8, 1867, 73.

be taken that in the former the teachers employed have a true love for the German language and that they are at the same time truly educated.”<sup>78</sup>

German Baptists made efforts to teach German to the children. When the first Sunday schools were formed in German Baptist churches, their two-fold aims were to teach German to the children and to teach Bible lessons.<sup>79</sup> The teaching of German to the younger generation was generally troubling to the American Baptists. Although the ABHMS leadership tended to support the concept that immigrants could best be evangelized and Americanized through the use of their native language, there was the underlying assumption that foreign-speaking churches would exist primarily for new immigrants.<sup>80</sup> The assumption of the American Baptists seemed to be that those who were accustomed to American language and culture, as well as those who were born in the United States, would join American Baptist churches.<sup>81</sup> The continuation of German in the churches, and particularly among the second and third generations, necessitated the existence of separate churches. The American Baptists assumed that the German language would be used among the new immigrants and the older people, but that as the children learned English in the public schools they would move into the American Baptist churches until the separate German churches eventually

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<sup>78</sup> *Der Sendbote*, October 1862, 15.

<sup>79</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 104-105. General Conference Minutes, 1851. Otto Krueger, “The Strength of Youth,” in Hermann von Berge, ed. *These Glorious Years*, (Cleveland: Roger Williams Press, n.d.), 189-91.

<sup>80</sup> *The Standard*, October 19, 1895, 2. *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 4. *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 97-98.

<sup>81</sup> This is, in part, deduced from the numerous articles of German Baptists in which the authors became apologists for the continuation of the German churches and the maintenance of German language Sunday schools and seminary training.

disappeared.<sup>82</sup> This view was expressed quite clearly in the Baptist publication, *The Standard*, in an editorial that read:

The Standard has always believed that it is best for our brethren born across the water to maintain worship in their own tongue as on the whole, productive of the best results. Yet we do not believe that church of foreign speaking Baptists should always be maintained unless conditions remain as they are at present, with continual increase of membership from across the sea, unable as yet, to use the English language with facility. The aim should be the merging of these churches into the regular English-speaking churches or their gradual change from foreign to American organizations.<sup>83</sup>

The continuing efforts to instruct children in German and to develop German-speaking leadership for the German Baptists churches seemed to contradict the German Baptist assertion that their mission was only temporary. Furthermore, it contradicted the American Baptist, and generally Anglo-American view, that Americanization was synonymous with Anglification.<sup>84</sup> During the 1882 meeting of the ABHMS, the report of the Committee on Missions to Non-English-Speaking People included a statement asserting that those who "cling to the language of their native land and insist upon its study in our public school" act in a way that is "contrary to the best interests of the body politic."<sup>85</sup> Hermann Schaeffer, of the German Baptist Seminary, became upset at the assertions of the committee and demanded that the statement that foreign-speakers acted in a way

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<sup>82</sup>*The Standard*, October 19, 1895, 2. *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 4. *The Examiner* 66 (May 2, 1889): 4.

<sup>83</sup>*The Standard*, October 19, 1895, 2.

<sup>84</sup>Huffines, "Language Maintenance Efforts," 241. Abramson, "Assimilation and Pluralism," 151. Potter, "What to Do with the Foreigner," 2. Editorial, *The Watchman* (June 22, 1905): 8. "The New American," *The Watchman* (May 22, 1913): 7. "The Immigration Problem," *The Watchman* (January 3, 1907): 6. Aitchison, "The What, Why and How of Christian Americanization," 129-30. Clark, "American Attitude the Essential in Americanization," 162-64. Denny, "The Genius of America," 470. "Editorial Comments," *The Journal and Messenger* (August 9, 1917): 4. "Editorial Comments," *The Journal and Messenger* (March 14, 1918): 20. Brooks, "Missions to People of Foreign Speech," 821-22.

contrary to the good of the nation be struck from the report. The committee amended the report accordingly. This was not, however, the first or last incident of negative statements about foreigners or the use of languages other than English within the churches or society as a whole. Numerous ABHMS reports mentioned the dangers that immigrants posed to the welfare of the nation.<sup>86</sup>

As German immigration began to peak in the 1880s and 1890s, articles were published in leading American Baptist newspapers and magazines questioning the need for the continuation of German churches.<sup>87</sup> At issue was the perpetuation of German-language instruction, the training of German-speaking pastors, the maintenance of separate churches, and what the American Baptists generally perceived as a lack of assimilation on the part of the German Baptists. Some American Baptists believed that German churches, Sunday schools, academies, and seminaries were preventing a speedy assimilation of German churches into the American churches.<sup>88</sup> They seemed to believe that one had to speak English and be part of an English-speaking church in order for one to be an

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<sup>85</sup> *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 133-135. Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind*, 103.

<sup>86</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1849, 79. ABHMS Annual Report, 1851, 72. ABHMS Annual Report 1852, 36, 63, 71. ABHMS Annual Report, 1853, 24-26. ABHMS Annual Report, 1855, 75. ABHMS Annual Report, 1880, 34. ABHMS Annual Report, 1918, 29-34.

<sup>87</sup> Unlike the German Baptist organ *Der Sendbote*, the American Baptists did not have one denominational publication that expressed the views of the majority of English-speaking Baptists. This was, in part, because there was no unified convention of American Baptists. The Northern Baptist convention was formed in 1907. The leading publications at the end of the nineteenth century were *The Examiner*, *The Watchman* (they later merged to become the *Watchman-Examiner*), *The Standard*, *The Journal and Messenger*, and the monthly magazine *Missions*, published by the American Baptist Home Mission Society. *The Examiner* and *The Journal and Messenger* tended to print articles that were critical of separate immigrant churches, particularly from the 1880s until after World War I. The other publications were moderate and even sympathetic in their attitude toward immigrants, while advocating for the Americanization process.

<sup>88</sup> *The Examiner* (May 2, 1889): 4. Potter, "What to Do with the Foreigner," 2.

American.<sup>89</sup> The German Baptists became a target for some American Baptist criticism because they insisted on developing future leadership for German-speaking churches. An editorial in *The Examiner* questioned the intentions of the German Baptists in maintaining their separate churches and Sunday schools:

The one standing argument among all our Baptist German friends for separate German churches in this country, is the fact that there are old people here who cannot be made to understand preaching in English, and the question is pressed, "Would it be right to let them live among us without hearing gospel sermons?" We answer, by no means. But it does not follow that there must be distinct German churches with Sunday schools taught in the German tongue, and theological seminaries with German departments in them to provide preaching which these old people can understand. There are Baptist ministers enough coming to this country from Germany to supply all the old people with preaching without pursuing measures, the whole object of which *seems to be* to make German churches and Sunday schools large and indispensable institutions in our American civilization. On any other principle than this what need is there of German-speaking Sunday schools or of German departments in theological seminaries?<sup>90</sup>

In another article published in *The Examiner*, D. C. Potter, an English-speaking Baptist, harshly criticized all foreign-speaking immigrants, the American Baptist mission to immigrants, and especially the separate churches for immigrants.<sup>91</sup> Potter asserted that the immigrants should be Americanized and Christianized, and he seemed to believe that Americanization had to precede Christianization:

I have heard until it rings within my ears like the clanging of a bell.... "We must Christianize them [immigrants]." Doubtless we must, but saying we must do it won't do it. They will not come into our churches. We have had some little success in maintaining German churches and

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<sup>89</sup> Potter, "Must It Be in Their Own Language?" 2. *Der Sendbote* (July 19, 1882): 220. George Schulte, *The Examiner* (May 25, 1882): 2. J. C. Haselhuhn, "Work Among the Germans," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* (November 1882): 296-300.

<sup>90</sup> *The Examiner* LXVI (May 2, 1889): 4. Italics in the original text.

<sup>91</sup> Potter, "What to Do with the Foreigner," 2.

Swedish churches, but we have done little else; and I am firmly convinced that in doing this we are putting the cart before the horse.<sup>92</sup>

Potter continued by criticizing separate immigrant churches. He advocated complete assimilation of the foreigners through a process in which the immigrants gave up their national background, language, and customs. Potter argued that without this process, it would be impossible to Christianize and Americanize the immigrants.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, it would damage the nation to continue separate immigrant churches. Potter wrote, "There is nothing more short-sighted, un-American, and suicidal than to attempt the perpetuation of foreign churches! They can be kept only by holding their own youth and thus continuing their career.... These churches are dams of obstruction in that current of absorption into our national life, which should be constantly going forward."<sup>94</sup> Potter did not believe that the majority of immigrants were interested in the American churches. Still, he advocated teaching immigrants English before trying to Christianize them.<sup>95</sup>

The article Potter published in 1889 was only one in a long series of attacks directed at the foreign-speaking immigrants that spanned several years. In an earlier series of articles, he attacked German Americans and German Baptists specifically. An article Potter wrote for *The Examiner* in May 1882 claimed that the children of German immigrants wanted nothing to do with learning German. He asserted that children were coerced into learning German through beatings.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Potter, "Must It Be in Their Own Language?" 2. *Der Sendbote* (July 19, 1882): 220.



In yet another article, Potter harshly criticized the German Baptist churches and minimized their numbers in an attempt to show that their efforts were futile. He advocated the abolition of German Sunday schools and the transfer of children into English Sunday schools.<sup>97</sup>

### **The German Baptist Response**

The German Baptists, seeking to protect their work among German-speakers, tended to argue according to one of two patterns. The predominant argument presented to the American Baptists was that the German mission was only temporary.<sup>98</sup> Ultimately, the German work would strengthen the English-speaking churches. It needed to continue, however, until the immigration of German-speakers came to an end. In order to have leaders enough to preach to the elderly and to new immigrants, who were unacquainted with English, they needed to train young people to preach in German. Rather than impeding the movement of Germans to American churches and the overall Americanization of German immigrants, the German Baptist churches were preparing the way for all of their churches to join with the English brethren in time.<sup>99</sup> In his annual report to the ABHMS, G. A. Schulte wrote in reference to the German Baptist churches:

These churches are feeders to the English-speaking churches. There are, perhaps, at present as many Germans in English-speaking churches who, through the influence of German mission work, were brought in connection with the denomination, as the present membership in the German churches. Some of these are influential laymen and some are pastors of churches and leaders in the denomination. This is also a reason why the hands of the Home Mission Society ought to be strengthened to

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<sup>97</sup> D.C. Potter, *The Examiner* (June 22, 1882): 2

<sup>98</sup> ABHMS Annual Report 1865, 32-33. ABHMS Annual Report, 1882, 60. ABHMS Annual Report, 1896, 103. ABHMS Annual Report, 1897, 115.

<sup>99</sup> Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans?" 13.

prosecute this work more efficiently, as it is a work for the general cause. Eventually all will be one. The German Baptists are doing preparatory work. English-speaking churches can be named whose constituent membership were Germans...and places can also be named where the German churches, after fulfilling their mission, have disbanded and united with English-speaking churches.... If this is taken into account, the work surely has been crowned with great success.<sup>100</sup>

Schulte consistently used this pattern of argument in his relationship with the ABHMS as he sought, often unsuccessfully, additional funds for the German work. This seemed to be the mainstream argument voiced by those who saw the need and benefit of maintaining a congenial relationship with the ABHMS, as well as the American Baptist churches. An article in *Der Sendbote* expressed the tenets of the mainstream argument while taking D. C. Potter to task for his assertions published in *The Examiner* in the spring of 1882. The author of the *Der Sendbote* article responded to Potter's views of German Baptists and Americanization by questioning whether language was the only indicator of national loyalty. The writer argued further that it was inaccurate to claim that the German Baptists were perpetuating German-speaking churches forever. He wrote:

If it is said that we want to perpetuate German congregations and nationality forever and under all circumstances, this is a misrepresentation and distortion which has often been refuted. We consider German congregations a necessity as long as Germans arrive in masses, in order to preach the gospel to them in their language. The German mission would not have any foundation nor support without German congregations. But German congregations necessitate German Sunday schools. Furthermore we need German preachers – men who have a German heart which feels for their people, and if that is not the case they should stay away; for those who openly show their contempt for German will not be able to get very far with the gospel among the Germans. But if we have need of German congregations, we do, of course, need an institution to train German preachers in order to do blessed work among Germans. No German

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<sup>100</sup> G.A. Schulte. ABHMS Annual Report, 1897, 115.

Baptist would think of wanting to perpetuate the German language and German congregations after immigration has long ceased and the Germans here can be reached by using English.<sup>101</sup>

Even Albert J. Ramaker, the early historian of the German Baptist churches in North America, asserted in his 1924 history of the denomination that the German Baptist mission was intended to be temporary.<sup>102</sup>

A second pattern of argument developed in response to the American Baptist view of Americanization and assimilation. The argument was used less frequently and questioned the American Baptist understanding of being an American and a Baptist, namely that one had to worship in English. Weary of the American Baptist emphasis on Americanization, one individual published an article in *Der Sendbote* suggesting that the American Baptists had a limited and shallow understanding of their relationship with the German Baptists.<sup>103</sup> The writer called for their view to be replaced with a different understanding of the cooperation between the two language groups. The article was written in response to a speech delivered to the German Baptist General Conference (*Bundeskonferenz*) by the head of the ABHMS, Dr. T. J. Morgan.<sup>104</sup> In his speech, Dr. Morgan had apparently discussed Americanization and had made several points that offended some of the German Baptists. He left the impression with the author of the *Sendbote* article that the German Baptists would not be

<sup>101</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 19, 1882, 221.

<sup>102</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 50. At the time Ramaker's work was published, however, the German Baptist Conference had ended the Cooperative Agreement with the American Baptists and was essentially operating as a separate denominational body.

<sup>103</sup> *Der Sendbote*, July 19, 1882, 220. *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 4.

<sup>104</sup> Conference Minutes 1895, 156-57. *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 4, this reference includes a response to the speech of Dr. T.J. Morgan, secretary of the ABHMS to the *Bundeskonferenz* meeting of 1895 by a German Baptist. It also included a follow-up letter from Dr. Morgan in which he apologized for any remarks in which he appeared to be criticizing the German work.

considered a part of the American Baptists until they made a complete transition to being English-speaking churches. The author of the article asserted that the difference in language did not mean that the German Baptists were not united in the work of the ABHMS:

According to the mind of the ultra English-Americans we are not completely united with the denomination of American Baptists, not because of some difference with regard to biblical teaching of practice, but rather because we conduct our worship service in German...How much nicer would it be if these brothers would stress the true unity in Christ we all share...and if they would unreservedly encourage us in our difficult work.<sup>105</sup>

Whereas other German Baptists dealt with the issue of Americanization by emphasizing the temporary nature of the German work, the German Baptist who responded to Morgan's speech expected differences to continue between the German and English-speaking churches.<sup>106</sup> He, indeed, developed an argument to demonstrate to the German Baptists that the German language and ethnic character was far more pervasive in the United States than the American Baptists seemed to perceive. The writer argued that loyalty to the United States could not be judged on the basis of language alone: "They tell us: 'This is America, and not Germany or Ireland, Italy or France.' Why not list England in this category? Or is England not to be mentioned because of the language? Is the Englishman who refuses to unfurl the star-spangled banner in New York on July 4 a better American than the German who speaks no English but who, deeply moved, seeks to instill respect for the flag of this free nation in his children?"<sup>107</sup> His argument provided a contrasting view to mainstream Baptist views of Americanization and

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<sup>105</sup> *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 4.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

reflected the rhetoric of secular defenders of German-American identity and language maintenance.<sup>108</sup> The writer argued further that the transition from German to English among the Baptists would not rid the churches or nation of all German characteristics. He wrote:

We have often heard and regretted the view expressed in the words: "I consider this (our entire German work) a temporary institution which ought to last only as long as the immigration from Germany makes it desirable." In this case, the matter would not be urgent because German immigration is not likely to stop soon ... but even if immigration comes to an end, who would want to be so foolish as to assume that all language differences will disappear at once?"<sup>109</sup>

Indeed, not only would Americanization of Germans be more difficult than the transition from speaking German to speaking English, the complete assimilation of the German churches into the English churches would not be desirable. From the perspective of an article published in *Der Sendbote*, the 20,000 German Baptists were only one small part of the greater body of German Americans. The complete assimilation of the German Baptists would work against the effort to Americanize the larger German-American population:

Our English brothers of this type speak as if the only thing that mattered was for the 20,000 German Baptists to deny their mother tongue, then all traces of German origin in America would disappear. They do not consider that for every single member in the German Baptist congregations there is a German non-Baptist congregation, not to mention the innumerable societies; that in addition to the *Sendbote* there are 800 German periodicals in the United States; indeed, they do not consider the fact that the Germans outside our congregations cling much more tenaciously to everything that is German than we do; and that the denomination of American Baptists, if their German brothers were to

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>108</sup> Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," 137-43. Conzen describes self-conscious efforts on the part of German-Americans to define their ethnicity and influence the development of the broader American identity. It was common during this period for German-Americans to reflect on and assert the contributions of Germans to the formation and development of the United States. For example, see Frida Rauschenbusch, "The German Element in the United States," *The Journal and Messenger* (July 12, 1876): 5.

<sup>109</sup> *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 3.

discontinue their special mission, would be forced to start a new mission among the German-Americans or else become unfaithful to its motto "North America for Christ."<sup>110</sup>

More than one German Baptist argued that the perpetuation of separate German-speaking churches would actually aid the process of assimilation.<sup>111</sup> Although Walter Rauschenbusch resigned from his teaching position at the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester to become a professor in the American Baptist Colgate-Rochester Theological Seminary, he advocated the continuation of separate German churches. He consolidated the viewpoints of the German Baptists and expressed a need for the continuation of separate German churches for a number of reasons.

Rauschenbusch noted that the temper of the times led some to believe that the life and character of the nation was seriously threatened by foreign immigration.<sup>112</sup> The waves of immigration through the 1880s and 1890s brought more immigrants than the nation could easily assimilate, leading some to believe that national unity would be destroyed by the foreign element. According to Rauschenbusch, this led to the conclusion that any institution that slowed complete assimilation, including German-speaking congregations, should be dissolved for the sake of national unity.<sup>113</sup> While he could understand the reasoning underlying such an argument, Rauschenbusch disagreed with the assimilationists. He instead argued for the preservation of separate German

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>111</sup> Haselhuhn, "Work Among the Germans," 296-97.

<sup>112</sup> Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans?" 12.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

churches.<sup>114</sup> In his view, immigration would continue and Germans would continue to be among the immigrants.<sup>115</sup> This fact alone made the German Baptist work necessary. In order to spread the gospel message among Germans, the German language had to be employed.

Rauschenbusch also rejected the idea that it was necessary to stop immigration. The American Baptists were not in agreement on the matter of immigration restrictions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>116</sup> Rauschenbusch believed that the restriction of immigration would harm the nation because the strongest nations were those of "mixed stock."<sup>117</sup>

Like his German Baptist brother who published his thoughts in *Der Sendbote*, Rauschenbusch believed that American patriotism could not be equated with speaking the English language, and particularly not with a speedy movement to English.<sup>118</sup> Assimilation or Americanization had to be a slow and thorough process. It could not be undertaken in a manner that would destroy the bonds of family and cultural values. Rauschenbusch wrote, "It is a danger to the nation when the hearts of children are turned from the parents, and that happens whenever the children forget the tongue of their fathers; when a father's counsel is given in a language which the children have ceased to understand, or when it is given brokenly in a new language and its wisdom is veiled to the callow mind by

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>116</sup> "New Turn in the Immigration Question," *The Watchman* (May 2, 1907): 5. "Dealing Wisely with Aliens," *The Watchman* (July 3, 1913): 7. "The Immigration Problem," (January 3, 1907): 6. "How to Test Immigrants," (December 3, 1903): 6. *The Journal and Messenger*, February 14, 1914. *The Journal and Messenger*, January 7, 1895, 4. *The Journal and Messenger* January 21, 1915, 4. *The Journal and Messenger*, January 27, 1916, 4. *The Journal and Messenger*, February 8, 1917, 4. *The Journal and Messenger* January 30, 1919, 3.

<sup>117</sup> Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans?" 12.

being couched in broken English.”<sup>119</sup> Rather than impeding the process of assimilation, Rauschenbusch believed that the German Baptist churches assisted the Americanization of the German-speaking immigrants.<sup>120</sup> The churches provided a place of fellowship for new immigrants and those who were more acclimatized to their surroundings. Rauschenbusch wrote:

The German Baptist churches are organs for the slow and organic assimilation of the German in this country. Men in various stages of assimilation mingle there, and the process goes on more surely than if people who know only English and others who know only German were thrown together. The pastors almost without exception know both languages and mediate between them. The thoughts and views dominant in the churches are American, expressed in German language. We honestly believe that a young man born in this country can serve his country better as an Americanizing force by remaining with a German church than if he merges himself in an American church.<sup>121</sup>

The contention made by Rauschenbusch that the German churches were a force for Americanization was an accurate depiction. Evidence for the effectiveness of the German churches in Americanization was revealed in the fact that numerous older German Baptist churches either closed their separate church and united with an English-speaking congregation or left the German Baptist Conference to unite with the American Baptists.<sup>122</sup>

### **German Baptists and the Pressure to Americanize**

Americanization became an issue of great concern among the German Baptists beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth century. There were varying

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, Rauschenbusch, “Shall I Join an English Church?” *Jugend-Herold* (July 1896): 147.

<sup>121</sup> Rauschenbusch, “What Shall We Do with the Germans?” 13.

<sup>122</sup> For example, the three churches in Lycoming Co., PA, that developed after the revival led by Fleischmann and Michaelis were all English-speaking churches by 1895; see Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 18.



degrees of pressure from outside the Conference to promote Americanization, and there were movements within the Conference churches to Americanize. The internal debates about Americanization were not widely discussed in *Der Sendbote*, but were evidenced in the steady movement of German Baptist young people into American Baptist churches.<sup>123</sup> There was also agitation within the German churches for more services and activities in English. In 1895 *The Standard* reported that “the young people in the Swedish, Dane-Norwegian and German churches have adopted the English language as that in which their services shall be held.”<sup>124</sup> It was the case that the German Baptist Young People’s Societies primarily used English in all of their activities, meetings, and services. Many among the younger generations of German Baptists followed a pattern typical of second- and third-generation immigrants. Born and educated in the United States, they grew increasingly distant from the language of their antecedents and identified more with American culture than with the German culture of their parents or grandparents. Some, evidently, felt increasingly drawn to English-speaking congregations.<sup>125</sup>

Concerned about the loss of young people to English-speaking churches, Walter Rauschenbusch addressed the issue in an article entitled, “Shall I Join an

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<sup>123</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 281. The concern provoked Walter Rauschenbusch to deal with the issue frankly in the publication for young people, *Jugend-Herold*. The article was entitled “Shall I Join an English-Speaking Church?” Declining subscriptions for youth publications brought an end to *Jugend-Herold*, as well as its successors *Vereinsherold* and *Der Jugendfreund*. In 1922 the General Conference established the *Baptist Herald*, see Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 107-108.

<sup>124</sup> *The Standard* (October 19, 1895): 2.

<sup>125</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 281.

English Church.”<sup>126</sup> The article, written in English but published in the German Baptist publication *Jugend-Herald*, addressed the lure of the English churches in a straightforward manner. Rauschenbusch encouraged the young people to stay in the German Baptist churches. He noted that many young people were impressed with the appearance of the English churches, with their large, often beautiful and well-equipped buildings. Rauschenbusch, however, admonished the young people to be more concerned with the depth of Christian faith expressed in the churches they joined.<sup>127</sup> He developed an argument similar to the one detailed in “What Shall We do with the Germans” by explaining to the youth that they had a

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<sup>126</sup> Rauschenbusch was the most eloquent proponent of the Social Gospel in the United States, as he strongly advocated for Christianizing the social order to relieve the social ills of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His works included: Walter Rauschenbusch, *Why I Am a Baptist* (Rochester: Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, 1938; originally published in the *Rochester Baptist Monthly* 20 (1905-1906). Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: Macmillan, 1907; 1916). Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1913). Walter Rauschenbusch, *For God and the People: Prayers of the Social Awakening* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1910). Walter Rauschenbusch, *Dare We Be Christians?* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1914). Walter Rauschenbusch, *The Social Principles of Jesus* (New York: Association Press, 1916; 1919). Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1917). His work in this area caused the German Baptists both to admire the attention he brought to the Conference and to question his theology. Walter Rauschenbusch seemed to be more liberal in his understanding of Scripture and often chided his German Baptist brethren for being otherworldly in their Christianity. He believed Christians should not focus solely on their own salvation, but on realizing the Kingdom of God in the present social order. His emphasis upon social change seemed to emerge from his own deep sense of pietism. Rauschenbusch was recounted by students and colleagues as possessing a strong sense of personal spirituality and a deep sense of personal faith. These were the gifts of his German Baptist heritage. He sought to protect the German Baptist churches with their sincere Christian character. Thus, he did not hesitate to ask the young people who were attracted to English churches to consider whether those churches would contribute more to their spiritual growth and provide them with a deeper sense of Christian love than the German churches. Although he became a professor in the American Baptist Colgate-Rochester Theological Seminary, Rauschenbusch remained utterly devoted to the German Baptist churches and consistently argued that they expressed a greater sense of piety, Christian fellowship, and moral accountability than the English-speaking churches. Sources on Walter Rauschenbusch include: Klaus Jahn, *Rauschenbusch: The Formative Years* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976). Donovan Smucker, “The Origins of Walter Rauschenbusch’s Social Ethics,” Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1957. Donovan Smucker, “Walter Rauschenbusch: Anabaptist, Pietist and Social Prophet,” *Mennonite Life* 36 (June 1981) 21-23. “Edwin Dalhberg in Conversation: Memories of Walter Rauschenbusch,” transcribed by John Skoglund, *Foundations* 28 (July-September 1975): 209-18.

<sup>127</sup> Rauschenbusch, “Shall I Join an English Church?” 147.

special role in the German Baptist churches as agents of Americanization.<sup>128</sup> Rauschenbusch advised the young people, "We can do more Americanizing in a month by staying in connection with German people than in a year by leaving them and mingle [sic] only with those who are American already."<sup>129</sup> It seemed, however, that in both the *Examiner* article and the *Jugend-Herold* article Rauschenbusch used the Americanization argument as a means of protecting the mission and vitality of the German Baptist churches.

### The German Churches as Feeder Churches

There was, nonetheless, a continuous drain of members from the German Baptist churches to the American Baptist churches, especially among second- and third- generation German Americans who were more competent in English than German or who wanted to shed their ethnic background for an American identity.<sup>130</sup> One German Baptist commented on the durability of the German language even though there were those who choose not to maintain it, "The German language continues to exist although individuals or families were willing to give it up and replace it with English. Perhaps they considered it beneath their dignity to be called Germans; or perhaps they were influenced by poor knowledge of German, the predominant influence of English schools, social ties and the

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 282.

<sup>129</sup> Quoted in Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 282.

<sup>130</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1882, 60. ABHMS Annual Report, 1894, 93. ABHMS Annual Report, 1896, 103. ABHMS Annual Report, 1897, 115. ABHMS Annual Report, 1899, 103. Dippel, "German Baptist Churches Feeders to English Speaking Churches," 315-18. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 50. Ramaker lamented that as many as 10,000 German Baptists had joined English churches by 1924.

like.”<sup>131</sup> Those who chose not to maintain the German language or their ties with the German churches were aptly described by the writer of the article. Most often those who left the German churches were individuals who were not fluent in German. The movement from immigrant or ethnic church to an American church was often a symptom of class mobility.<sup>132</sup>

The German Baptists certainly noticed that those who gained in wealth and prestige tended to leave the German Baptist churches for English-speaking congregations. George Schulte, the Conference Missions secretary, noted this fact in numerous annual reports to the ABHMS. He often reported that men of prominence and financial means had been given to the American Baptist churches by the German Baptists.<sup>133</sup> In 1894, Schulte estimated that 8,000 or 9,000 members of English-speaking Baptist churches were initially won to the faith by the German Baptists.<sup>134</sup> He went on to state in his report, “The first church ever assisted by this Society has given during the first thirty years of its existence 300 members by actual count to English-speaking churches, the majority of which are prominent and influential men, standing in the front ranks of their respective churches.”<sup>135</sup> The loss of such members constituted an economic drain on the German churches. Those who might have supported their mission endeavors and

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<sup>131</sup> *Der Sendbote*, April 8, 1875, 56.

<sup>132</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1894, 93. ABHMS Annual Report, 1896, 103. ABHMS Annual Report, 1897, 115. ABHMS Annual Report, 1899, 103. Dippel, “German Baptist Churches Feeders to English Speaking Churches,” 316-17. Conzen, “Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods and Ethnic Identity,” 605. Abramson, “Assimilation and Pluralism,” 157.

<sup>133</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1882, 60. The Rockefeller family was among the most prominent families in the nation. The family began as German Baptists before migrating to the English-speaking Baptists.

<sup>134</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1894, 93.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

helped the German churches become completely self-supporting joined English-speaking churches as they grew in economic and social standing.

As the German Baptist churches and missionaries continued to work among the German immigrants, the constituency of the churches consisted mostly of farmers and laborers.<sup>136</sup> Neither the churches nor their people were wealthy. Instead, the economic status and employment of the German Baptists in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were consistent with those commonly associated with the second phase of German immigrants.<sup>137</sup> Among those who made the transatlantic voyage between 1865-1895, there tended to be fewer artisans and independent farmers and more agricultural workers, day laborers from rural areas who had been displaced by changes in the German economy.<sup>138</sup> These immigrants tended to settle in the midwestern and western states rather than in the large eastern cities. As churches and church members in the Eastern Conference became more and more Americanized, with some churches becoming English-speaking, the center of German Baptist activity, membership, and strength shifted to the Dakotas, Minnesota, Iowa, and the Prairie provinces of Canada.

While not wealthy, the German Baptist churches were generous in their support of the mission to German-speakers. In 1902 George Schulte reported to

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<sup>136</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1902, 111. In the ABHMS report of 1895, 94-95, George Schulte detailed the devastating effect that crop failures had on the finances of the churches in many regions, resulting in the inability of the churches to pay their portion of their pastors' salaries.

<sup>137</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 411. David Luebke, "German Exodus," 5. Kamphoefner, "At the Crossroads of Economic Development," 174-95 and Kollman and Marschalck, "German Emigration," 499-554.

<sup>138</sup> Conzen, "Germans," 411. Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee*, 174-78. David Luebke, "German Exodus," 8-9. Luebke, "Three Centuries of Germans in America," 166. Kollman and Marschalck, "German Emigration," 523

the ABHMS that the German churches had raised \$294,627.04, or \$12.65 per member, to meet current expenses, support the Sunday schools and Young People's Societies, and for mission causes.<sup>139</sup> Schulte commented on the generosity of the churches where "the members...with few exceptions, belong to the laboring class, and but little wealth is found in their possession."<sup>140</sup> Occasionally, former German Baptists came to the aid of the churches. In 1903 Schulte reported that a beautiful building had been donated to one of the Eastern Conference churches by a family that had once been in connection with the German Baptists. The cost of the building and lot totaled \$38,000 and was given to the church free of debt. Schulte commented on this gift, "We could do without aid in our mission work from any Society if all the former members of German Churches would manifest the same spirit of generosity for their first love, and would remember with gratitude their countrymen, through whose labors they were in years gone by led to Christ and perhaps to prosperity."<sup>141</sup>

The movement to the English churches also pulled potential leaders away from the German churches. The early development of the General Conference of German Baptists was enhanced by the outstanding leadership of individuals like Fleischmann, August Rauschenbusch, and others among the clergy. Strong lay leadership in the local churches also supported the work. As the hardworking German immigrants began to achieve financial success, which they often did, their leadership potential was lost to the German churches.<sup>142</sup> Schulte expressed

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<sup>139</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1902, 111.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1903, 103.

<sup>142</sup> Dippel, "The German Baptist Churches Feeders to English Speaking Churches," 316-17.

the concern of the churches on this matter, as well, to the ABHMS in 1899. He reported:

Some of our most efficient and successful laborers in the past are now frequently complaining that they are losing their best members, who, after having been trained in German churches, go to “mow” in the more inviting fields of English-speaking churches. While this is no loss to the denomination, it is extremely discouraging to the missionary, as he sees the fruit of his labors gathered in by others, and all his hopes for the upbuilding of a self-supporting church dashed to the ground. Churches already self-supporting are hindered in this way in the prosecution of aggressive work for evangelization of their countrymen. This work among the Germans is not continued for the sake of keeping up a foreign language, but in order to reach by means of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ those who can in no other way be reached.<sup>143</sup>

The drain of leadership was also felt as the Conference churches often lost those who were called to the ministry. As young men entered training for the ministry, they found that they could receive larger churches and better pay if they rejected the German churches and took, instead, the pulpit of an American Baptist church.<sup>144</sup>

Despite the loss of members, churches, leaders, and financial means to English-speaking Baptist churches the membership numbers of the German Baptist churches remained steady at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1899 George Schulte reported that there were 239 churches with a total membership of 22,162.<sup>145</sup> In 1900 there were 240 churches with a total membership of 22,291.<sup>146</sup> By 1903 there were 264 churches with a total membership of 24,012.<sup>147</sup> It

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<sup>143</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1899, 102-103.

<sup>144</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1894, 94. ABHMS Annual Report 1897, 115. Dippel, “German Baptist Churches Feeders to English Speaking Churches,” 318. Charles Zummach, “Our School of the Prophets,” in Herman von Berge, *These Glorious Years*, (Cleveland: Roger Williams Press, n.d.), 83-84.

<sup>145</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1899, 100.

<sup>146</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1900, 132.

<sup>147</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1903, 103.

seemed that those who left the German Baptist churches for English churches were consistently replaced by new converts from among the immigrant population.

### **The Ethnic Mission and the Challenge of World War I**

The outbreak of hostilities between the Central and Allied powers in 1914, and the eventual entry of the United States into World War I in 1917, presented a challenge to the survival of every German-American institution, and to the survival of the German-American ethnic identity itself. In fact, there has been a general agreement among scholars that World War I was, as La Vern J. Rippley has stated, "the catalyst that jelled the Americanization of the German population in the United States."<sup>148</sup> The war brought into question the survival of German-speaking churches in the United States. As states limited the teaching and use of German, the current of Americanization within the German-speaking churches was intensified.<sup>149</sup> During and after the war period the German Baptists in North America struggled with the question of their survival apart from the larger English-speaking institutions that supported their mission.<sup>150</sup> The leadership of the General Conference of German Baptists continued to defend the need for a separate German mission. The pressure to assimilate placed on the German Baptists by the war and by changing policies of the Northern Baptist Convention actually had the opposite effect. Instead of moving toward merger with the

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<sup>148</sup> Rippley, "Ameliorated Americanization," 217. See also, Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German America*, 297-98. Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 187-95.

<sup>149</sup> Albert J. Ramaker, "The German-Speaking Churches of America during the War and After," *The Standard* (March 22, 1919): 725-726. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 293-296. Pasiciel, "The



American Baptists, the General Conference of German Baptists took measures to make their mission self-supporting and to move away from complete institutional merger with the American Baptists.<sup>151</sup>

In the years leading up to the entry of the United States into the war, the opinions about immigration, separate ethnic churches, and the war in Europe expressed in American Baptist publications tended to reflect the opinions expressed in Anglo-American society as a whole. The years prior to the outbreak of the war in Europe brought new calls for restriction on immigration in political circles. The Chicago-based publication, *The Watchman*, tended to be sympathetic toward immigrants and the separate missions of the ethnic churches. *The Watchman* editors, Edmund Merriam and Joseph Swaim, cautioned against restricting immigration because they believed that the economic conditions in Europe would soon bring a halt to mass emigration to the United States.<sup>152</sup> In May 1907, the paper accurately predicted the changes that later occurred in immigration in the early twentieth century:

In all discussions of the problems raised by the large influx of foreigners it has been assumed that the incoming flood would probably continue at the present rate indefinitely. A little thought will show that this is hardly to be expected. Not to speak of the threatened depopulation of some parts of Europe, the loss of many of the working class by emigration to America was certain to improve the condition of those who remained behind by causing a greater demand for laborers and by consequence an increase of wages and easier conditions of living...All of which indicates that our immigration problems will in time solve themselves: which is what

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Interrelationship Between Sociocultural Factors and Denominationalism," 207. Zummach, "Our School of the Prophets," 83-84.

<sup>150</sup> General Conference Minutes, 1919, 12-36.

<sup>151</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 294-296.

<sup>152</sup> "New Turn in the Immigration [sic] Question," *The Watchman* (May 2, 1907): 5.

seemingly insoluble problems have a way of doing, if sufficient time is allowed.<sup>153</sup>

*The Watchman* continued to support an open-door immigration policy, expressing the belief that restrictive immigration laws would work against the will of God for the nation.<sup>154</sup> The paper expressed confidence in the melting pot of America, with its institutions, free press, and public educational system, to assimilate the immigrants and instill in them a sense of patriotism.<sup>155</sup>

The outbreak of war in Europe, however, shifted the focus of the publication, then called the *Watchman-Examiner*, from sympathy toward all immigrants to specific calls for amicable relations between Anglo-Americans and German Americans. The two ethnic groups were advised to remember: "You are brethren in Christ. Manifest this fact in your words and your conduct."<sup>156</sup> The editors of the paper maintained this conciliatory spirit even as United States involvement in the conflict seemed ever more certain. The *Watchman-Examiner* noted that some Germans in the country had been accused of spying and treachery; however, confidence was expressed that "the rank and file of German people in the United States have cast in their lot with us for all the future, and they may be depended upon to defend their adopted country."<sup>157</sup> As the United States prepared for war and anti-German sentiment spread rapidly throughout the country, the *Watchman-Examiner* cautioned against Americans going to war against each other and allowing suspicion of German Americans to bring division

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> "Dealing Wisely with Aliens," *The Watchman* (July 3, 1913): 7.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> "The War and Our Attitude," *Watchman-Examiner* (January 14, 1915): 38.

<sup>157</sup> "A United Country," *Watchman-Examiner* (March 15, 1917): 327.

to the nation.<sup>158</sup> The *Watchman* echoed the sentiments expressed in the papers and publications of other denominations.

Just as the *Watchman* pleaded for just treatment of German Americans, the *Independent*, a Presbyterian paper, urged its readers:

We are at war with Germany. But that is no reason why we should mistreat or insult individual Germans who live among us. Our own self-respect should make us deal kindly with them. Our own sense of decency should make us forbear to abuse them. We fight for humanity; let us be humane. We battle to uphold the rights of man; it behooves us to respect the rights of others. There are Americans in Germany. If they should be maltreated, our blood would boil. Let us give no such cause for righteous anger to the German people.<sup>159</sup>

The *Journal and Messenger*, a Baptist paper published in Cincinnati, took a contrasting position to the *Watchman* and *Watchman-Examiner*. The *Journal and Messenger* expressed the sentiments of the more conservative elements among American Baptists, who tended to hold opinions that conflicted with the denominational leadership.<sup>160</sup> The editorials in the paper supported restrictive immigration laws, particularly after the outbreak of war in Europe.<sup>161</sup> The publication acknowledged that most German Americans were loyal to the United States, while it expressed reservations about those who had recently emigrated to the United States and were as yet unnaturalized:

Nearly all of our citizens of German descent are as loyal to the government as anybody, even if some of them are in sympathy with the land of their birth or ancestry...At the same time it is necessary to recognize that there is an element of danger, especially in the recent

<sup>158</sup> "We Want No War Among Ourselves," *Watchman-Examiner* (March 29, 1917): 391. Ray H. Abrams, *Preachers Present Arms* (Scottsdale, Penn: Herald Press, 1933; rev. 1969).

<sup>159</sup> "The Alien Within Our Gates," *The Independent* (April 14, 1917): 99.

<sup>160</sup> Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind*, 171.

<sup>161</sup> *The Journal and Messenger*, (February 5, 1914): 3. *The Journal and Messenger* (January 7, 1915): 4. *The Journal and Messenger* (January 21, 1915): 4. *The Journal and Messenger* (January 27, 1916): 4. *The Journal and Messenger* (Feb. 8, 1917): 4. *The Journal and Messenger* (January 30, 1919): 3. *The Journal and Messenger* (February 8, 1917): 21.

arrivals who have not been naturalized and are still citizens of Germany. Some of them are members of the reserve of the German army. These should not take it ill if they find themselves objects of suspicion, because the protection of the nation is the first duty of the government and every loyal citizen.<sup>162</sup>

In keeping with their suspicion of unnaturalized German immigrants, the publication supported all restrictive measures directed toward this group. They were especially supportive of the plan of President Wilson to make it illegal for those without citizenship to be within one-half mile of a munitions plant.<sup>163</sup> The paper also supported a proposed legislation to ban unnaturalized immigrants from living along the coastal areas of the United States.<sup>164</sup>

Short editorials in the paper reinforced the anti-German hysteria in the country by suggesting that the nation was endangered by constant German intrigue and political influence. Comments published in the paper, unsupported by factual information, described the peril to the nation posed by German treachery, "We are again promised that the government will take more vigorous measures against German spies. Such laxness as has existed would be tolerated in no other country in the world. Factories have been destroyed, grain burned, and men murdered for the purpose of helping the German armies...German spies are known to work in munitions factories."<sup>165</sup> The paper supported severe punishment for those who were accused of or proven to be spies, suggesting that

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<sup>162</sup> *The Journal and Messenger*, (April 5, 1917): 3.

<sup>163</sup> *The Journal and Messenger*, (April 20, 1917): 20.

<sup>164</sup> *The Journal and Messenger*, (November 18, 1917): 20.

<sup>165</sup> *The Journal and Messenger*, (November 22, 1917): 19.

the execution of "a dozen spies would have more effect than any number of precautions."<sup>166</sup>

While the *Journal and Messenger* expressed more conservative and certainly harsher views of German Americans than generally expressed by American Baptist leadership, the opinions published were in tune with the strong waves of anti-Germanism that swept the United States during the war years.<sup>167</sup> The contrasting statements published in the *Watchman-Examiner* and the *Journal and Messenger* were made in the context of national strife over the preparation for and entry into the war. During the three years leading to American involvement, German Americans tended to feel a sense of loyalty to the German Fatherland. The National Alliance of German-Americans aggressively advocated for the United States to hold to a strict policy of neutrality.<sup>168</sup> Many German Americans believed that the United States, though claiming neutrality, pursued policies favorable to Great Britain.<sup>169</sup> German-American clergy were among those who argued that the United States should ban all arms shipments to Great Britain. They were critical of President Wilson and what was viewed as the anti-German bias of the mainstream American press.<sup>170</sup> It certainly seemed as if German Americans would be traumatized by an alliance between the United States and the Allied nations against Germany. Such sentiments were expressed by Kuno

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<sup>166</sup> *The Journal and Messenger*, (June 14, 1917): 4.

<sup>167</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 127, 252.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-24.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 279-83. Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German America*, 292-93, The German-American Alliance met August 5, 1914 and passed resolutions against U.S. involvement in the war. Through these efforts the League of American Neutrality was founded in January 1915 in Washington, D.C.

<sup>170</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 157-58. Dippel, "A German View of the War," *The Standard* (October 3, 1914): 6.

Francke, Curator of the Germanic Museum at Harvard, in a column prepared for *The Independent*. Francke wrote:

For obvious reasons, the great mass of German-Americans are fervently on the side of Germany in the European war. An alliance between this country and the enemies of Germany would therefore seem to them a crushing blow to their own most cherished feelings; it would make it extremely difficult for them to cooperate in the same friendly spirit as before with the political parties responsible for the alignment of this country on the side of Germany's opponents. Racial embitterment and resentment would poison public life in town, state, and Union. The very foundation of our national existence, freedom from racial rivalry and hatred, would be endangered.<sup>171</sup>

Francke's predictions of a breakdown in the cooperative spirit between American ethnic groups and a surge of racial intolerance were, to some extent, quite accurate. German Americans often became targets of harassment in communities where anti-German sentiment swelled.<sup>172</sup>

During the war years, security councils were established in local communities to guard against potential German intrigue. When Germany became the enemy of the United States, all things German in America became the enemy.<sup>173</sup> The German language was the first target of attack in many local communities, as well as state governments. While most states banned German language instruction in public schools, as well as private schools in some cases, Iowa and Nebraska attempted to restrict all public usage of German.<sup>174</sup> In Iowa it was illegal to speak German in nearly any circumstance. German could not be

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<sup>171</sup> Kuno Francke, "Americans and German-Americans: Their Mutual Obligations," *The Independent* (February 26, 1917): 346.

<sup>172</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 279-83. Luebke describes the harassment of Germans by "superpatriots."

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 250-54. Luebke, "Legal Restrictions on Foreign Languages in the Great Plains States, 1917-23," 37.

<sup>174</sup> Luebke, "Legal Restrictions," 37-38, 41. Luebke writes, "Most of the restrictions placed upon the usage of foreign languages during the war were extralegal. Even though the council of defense pronouncements were widely heeded, they were not legally binding."

used in worship services, public commerce or conversation, private conversation within the home, or in telephone conversations.<sup>175</sup>

### **German Baptist Views of the War in Context**

The German Baptists grieved over the outbreak of the world war. They grew especially concerned about the Baptist brethren in Germany and Russia. The General Conference meeting in 1914 received a special mission offering to send to the Baptists in Germany. Prior to the United States entry into the conflict the German Baptists in the United States supported the American position of neutrality.<sup>176</sup>

The German Baptists in Canada, although a part of the General Conference of German Baptists, found themselves in an altogether different situation than their German-American counterparts. Since Canada was part of the British Empire, some German Baptist churches in the eastern provinces severed ties with the General Conference of German Baptists and became English congregations.<sup>177</sup> Among these was the church in Berlin (Kitchener), Ontario, established by Heinrich Schneider with the assistance of August Rauschenbusch.<sup>178</sup>

The German Baptists were essentially like most of the German Americans in their attitude toward the war and American entry into the war. They wanted the United States to remain neutral and were disturbed by what were often perceived

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<sup>175</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 252.

<sup>176</sup> Ramaker, "The German-Speaking Churches," 725.

<sup>177</sup> Ramaker, "Earliest Beginnings," 37-38.

<sup>178</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 73. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 35.

to be American breaches of the neutrality policy.<sup>179</sup> No doubt that they must have been concerned about the affect the war might have on their mission. Christian Dippel, a German Baptist pastor, explained his view of the war in Europe in an article published in *The Standard* in 1914. Dippel criticized *The Standard* for stating that “public sentiment in America is against Germany” and suggested that it would have been more correct to state that “our people sympathize with that country in which either their own or their forefathers cradle stood.”<sup>180</sup> Dippel was compelled to write his article for *The Standard* because it appeared that the reporters for the paper were supporting the anti-German bias of the mainstream press by misrepresenting the national character of Germany, as well as that of German leadership.<sup>181</sup> He accused the mainstream American press of creating and fostering anti-German feeling in the country. Dippel also noted that the war news from Europe was communicated to North America through English cable lines and suggested that much of the news had been “manufactured and colored by the interested powers.”<sup>182</sup> He mounted a defense of the violation of Belgian neutrality by the German military, stating that English troops had conducted themselves similarly in previous wars. The English argument that the war was in defense of smaller, weaker nations was, in his view, invalid. Instead, Dippel argued that Britain entered war with Germany to protect British commercial

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<sup>179</sup> Ramaker, “The German-Speaking Churches,” 725. *Der Sendbote*, August 12, 1914, 6. *Der Sendbote*, August 19, 1914, 11.

<sup>180</sup> Dippel, “A German View of the War,” 6.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.



interests and to attempt to crush German competition in trade and industrial growth.<sup>183</sup>

The assertions of Dippel were certainly in conflict with the views of British Baptist J. M. Powis Smith, who viewed the war as a "holy war."<sup>184</sup> According to Smith, "Great Britain did not want war, but she could not honorably, even if indeed wisely and safely, avoid it. Germany has given her just that kind of a cause to fight for into which she can throw herself with all her heart. She looks upon it as in a very real sense a holy war. It is a war to determine whether weak nations have any rights which strong ones are bound to respect."<sup>185</sup>

The views expressed in the articles of Dippel and Smith, published in the same issue of *The Standard*, characterized the difference of opinions that divided German-American and Anglo-American Baptists. This divide between German-American and Anglo-American views was apparent in the *Journal and Messenger* when one editorial placed the whole blame for the war on the shoulders of the Germans. Another editorial argued that British and Americans were essentially one people.<sup>186</sup> The same argument was not applied to the Germans and Americans, though more than one-quarter of the population of the United States could claim German ancestry according to the 1910 census report.<sup>187</sup>

While Dippel did not speak for all German Baptists, his views were similar to other German-American pastors prior to the war.<sup>188</sup> In an article

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> J. M. Powis Smith, "Britons at War," *The Standard* (October 3, 1914): 7.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> *The Journal and Messenger* (June 28, 1917): 3.

<sup>187</sup> Luebke, *Bonds*, 29-30.

<sup>188</sup> Ramaker, "The German Churches," 725. Ramaker noted that a policy of absolute neutrality was prevented by a strong pro-ally sentiment in the United States. Writing after the war, Ramaker

published after World War I, Albert Ramaker, professor at the German Baptist seminary in Rochester, explained the views of the German churches and German-American religious press prior to the war. He recalled that prior to the declaration of war by the United States, "the sympathies of the German religious press were on the side of the central powers. It is fair to say that the press was representative of the German people also."<sup>189</sup>

The sinking of the British passenger ship, the *Lusitania*, by a German submarine provoked outrage among Americans and provided an interesting test case for weighing the different viewpoints of Anglo-American and German-American clergy. After the *Lusitania* was torpedoed in 1915, resulting in the loss of nearly one thousand lives, *The Literary Digest* published the responses of several Anglo-American and German-American clergy.<sup>190</sup> The unanimous opinion of the Anglo-American clergy was against the German nation. One clergyman even sent out a call to all German Americans, including the clergy, to protest against German aggression:

We now say to our sincerely respected German friends and German-American fellow citizens: "You have enjoyed here a thousand times more liberty of speech than either we or you would be permitted in Germany. You have won over nobody. The conscience of the American nation is against your Prussian militarism and its incarnation of Nietzsche's dictum, "Let every one who is strong seek to make himself dominant at the expense of the weak."<sup>191</sup>

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expressed a different view of German violation of Belgian neutrality than that stated by Dippel prior to the entry of the United States into war. He wrote, "This very marked pro-ally sentiment took on intense anti-German coloring by reason of the ruthless, unjust and flagrant violation of Belgium's neutrality on the part of the military leaders of Germany. A little later the sense of justice of great numbers of our people was outraged by the brutal and unlawful destruction of neutral shipping by German undersea craft."

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> "Voice of the Clergy on the 'Lusitania' Case," *Literary Digest* (May 22, 1915): 1218.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

In contrast, some of the German-American pastors justified the sinking of the *Lusitania* on much the same grounds as other supporters of Germany. They argued that the ship had been carrying contraband in the form of armaments for Great Britain and that Germany had no moral obligation to allow a ship bearing contraband to pass through the blockade.<sup>192</sup> The Rev. J. F. Keller of the Evangelical Lutheran Church was quoted in *The Literary Digest* as arguing, "These passengers [aboard the *Lusitania*] were warned before they sailed. Why should the submarine have given them a second warning? War is war, and the passengers must take their chances just as do those men who go to the front to fight in Flanders."<sup>193</sup> *The Literary Digest* reported that most of the "German clergymen defended the sinking of the *Lusitania*."<sup>194</sup> Two Chicago Lutheran pastors, Frederick Werhahn and Wilhelm Breitenbach, appealed to the German pastors of their city, through the Chicago German publication *Presse*. They called upon the pastors to inform their congregations that "the German Government had been forced by England to the horrible step, according to international law, and is not responsible for the loss of American life."<sup>195</sup> Yet another German Lutheran pastor, Dr. A. B. Modenke, of New York, took a more conciliatory view and sought to assure Americans of the loyalty of all German Americans.<sup>196</sup> Moldenke was reported as stating:

If the United States were to go to war against Germany, either over the *Lusitania* incident or for other cause, and the cause were regarded by

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 1219.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. See also, Luebke, *Bonds*, 133 for the response of the secular German-American press to the sinking of the *Lusitania*.

<sup>195</sup> "Voice of the Clergy on the 'Lusitania' Case," 1219.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

German-Americans as not just, even then Germans here would remain neutral. There is no fear that Germans resident here will be traitors to their adopted country. If the United States were to go to war against Germany with a just cause, German-Americans would go to war with their adopted country. Germans living here and enjoying the blessings of this country will not fight it. If they cannot fight with it, they will be neutral. There is no German anywhere, I am persuaded, who does not regret the sinking of this ship and the loss of life it entailed.<sup>197</sup>

The reactions of the clergy to the sinking of the *Lusitania* demonstrated the use of the German religious press by German-American clergy to defend the actions of Germany. The short quotes published by *The Literary Digest* were evidence of the range of feelings described by Ramaker after the war. He noted that in private conversations with German-American pastors and laymen over a period of several years:

Some were very sane and just in their utterance; others were rabid, to the extent of attributing motives to some of the allied nations, and to our nation also, which had no existence in fact. I have even heard the well-known prayer of hate: 'God punish England,' repeated in our own land. And it was uttered with such a fierceness of facial expression and a vehemence of sound that I feared very much it would never be answered.<sup>198</sup>

The reflections of Ramaker gave insight into the turmoil the German-American churches experienced as a result of the events of World War I. On the one hand, they were sympathetic to the needs of their ancestral home and provided funds for the German Red Cross and for the care of German citizens affected by the war.<sup>199</sup> On the other hand, they asserted their loyalty to the United States and believed

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ramaker, "The German-Speaking Churches," 725.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

that the best means to demonstrate their love for America was to encourage the nation to stay out of the war.<sup>200</sup>

When the United States entered World War I, the German-American religious press was affected by the legislative efforts to limit the rights of foreign language publications in the United States. The papers were forced by the Committee on Public Information to publish American propaganda that often questioned the loyalty of German Americans and derided any form of German culture in the United States.<sup>201</sup> The United States Congress enacted legislation in 1917 that placed financial burdens on the already struggling German press. The Trading-with-the-Enemy Act required all foreign language publications to file English translations of any printed materials addressing governmental policy or the war with postal officials.<sup>202</sup> Some publications responded by maintaining complete silence on the war and other governmental matters, while others tried to demonstrate their patriotism. Such actions were taken in hope of receiving an exemption from the requirement granted by the government to papers that demonstrated their loyalty.<sup>203</sup>

Once the involvement of the United States in the war with Germany became inevitable, the attitudes expressed by the German-speaking churches and German-American religious press abruptly changed.<sup>204</sup> Like the German-American secular press, the religious publications tended to omit any mention of

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid. Kuno Francke, "Americans and German-Americans," 346. Luebke, *Bonds*, 116-23. Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German America*, 293-95. Berquist, "The German-American Press," in Sally Miller, ed. *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1987), 185.

<sup>201</sup> Berquist, "The German-American Press," 148. Luebke, *Bonds*, 241-43.

<sup>202</sup> Berquist, "German-American Press," 149.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

the war. It was, perhaps, a conspicuous silence. Ramaker questioned the depth and sincerity of the sudden change from pro-German to anti-German on the part of the press and churches. He wrote, "the change, in some cases, was only an outward one. We dare not judge where the evidence is wanting. But a passionately fervid pro-German sentiment does not change into an anti-German conviction suddenly."<sup>205</sup>

For the most part, the German Baptists publication *Der Sendbote* refrained from discussing opinions about the war in Europe. The editor did, however, express his alarm at the measures restricting the German press, since it was feared that *Der Sendbote* would be adversely affected.<sup>206</sup> The German Baptist weekly was not alone in its general silence about the war. Ramaker noted that after the American entry into the war the German-American religious press, in general, grew silent about the conflict.<sup>207</sup> In his opinion, the laws that essentially forced the German-American press to omit reports or opinions about the war were necessary, even in the case of the religious press:

I am impelled to believe that the new postal and espionage act of congress has been a most fortunate measure. It has been needed in the case of a score of papers which I have felt myself under obligations to read from time to time. Some of these were religious weeklies. This literature has now become wonderously [sic] silent on all questions that concern the great war [sic]. From their editorials one could infer that it was being waged on the moon or on the planet Jupiter and had no importance for our mundane life.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ramaker, "The German-Speaking Churches," 725.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> *Der Sendbote*, April 10, 1918, 6.

<sup>207</sup> Ramaker, "The German-Speaking Churches," 725.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

The war forced most German Americans to adopt a position, not of silence, but of absolute and unequivocal loyalty to the United States. In the midst of the repressive environment, where everything German was put to shame and German Americans were humiliated by the anti-German propaganda, the challenge of maintaining separate German-speaking churches must have seemed insurmountable.

### **The General Conference of German Baptists after World War I**

At the end of World War I, all of the German-speaking churches in the United States were faced with the same crisis. They questioned whether they could survive as German-speaking churches. Had the time come for them to make a complete transition to English? Ramaker eloquently raised this issue in 1919: "What about the future of the German churches in an environment in which this war has brought about such violent antagonism against every thing that is a reminder of Germany – even her language?"<sup>209</sup> The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church answered the question by demanding the dissolution of the German-speaking conferences and the use of English in all worship services.<sup>210</sup> The Methodists became vocal proponents of Christian

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid, 726.

<sup>210</sup> Numerous articles appeared in the Methodist Episcopal Church publication, *Zion's Herald* describing the role of the foreign-born and the responsibilities of American churches. "Americanizing the Foreign Born." *Zion's Herald* (August 28, 1918): 1091. "An Americanization Conference." *Zion's Herald* (Jan. 26, 1916): 99-100. "Church Must Help, Not Hinder, Americanization." *Zion's Herald* (October 9, 1918): 1286-87. "Eliminate the Non-English Conferences." *Zion's Herald* (October 15, 1919): 1327. "How Unchristian Is Race Prejudice." *Zion's Herald* (August 8, 1917): 1000. "Knocking the Hyphen Out of the Church." *Zion's Herald* (September 18, 1918): 1202. "Methodism and Americanization." *Zion's Herald* (October 30, 1918): 1391. "Real Americanization." *Zion's Herald* (August 11, 1920): 1066. The Presbyterian publication, *Continent*, also carried several articles related to this subject, "Americanization – A Very Christian Task." *Continent* (November 22, 1923): 1427. "Church's

Americanization.<sup>211</sup> The Presbyterian Synod of the West, developed by the relationship of German Presbyterian churches, was dissolved with the "Declaration of Union" in 1959.<sup>212</sup> The Declaration of Union merged the Synod of Iowa of the Presbyterian Church, USA, the Synod of the West of the Presbyterian Church, USA, and the Synod of Iowa of the Presbyterian Church of North America. Together the three Synods formed the Synod of Iowa of the United Presbyterian Church, USA.<sup>213</sup> The late date of their merger was not necessarily indicative of their ability to retain their language and culture. The churches in the Synod used German in their services, but faced a period of transition after World War I. Pressure from within the Synod during the 1920s and 1930s resulted in the complete transition to the use of English by 1936.<sup>214</sup> The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, which had viewed the maintenance of the German language as essential to its survival, also succumbed to Americanization pressures and were using English in all worship services and business meetings by the early 1930s.<sup>215</sup>

Like other Protestant German-American churches, the German Baptists wrestled with the effects of World War I. Immigration from Germany and Russia ceased during World War I. The great masses of immigrants who had emigrated during the decades prior to the war were steadily being Americanized and their

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Part in Americanization." *Continent* (February 12, 1920): 189. "A New Emphasis on Americanization." *Continent* (July 7, 1919): 871-872.

<sup>211</sup> Elmer Pearce, "Christian Americanization," *Methodist Review* (May 1920): 410-414.

<sup>212</sup> Maynard Brass, "German Presbyterians and the Synod of the West," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 56:3 (Fall 1978): 237.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.



children were being raised in an American environment with English as their first language.<sup>216</sup> The Young People's Societies of the German Baptist churches tended to use English in all of their functions.<sup>217</sup> In 1922 the German Baptist Publication Society ceased the publication of German language magazines for the young people and began publishing the English monthly, *The Baptist Herald*.<sup>218</sup>

At the 1919 General Conference meeting, the issue of language was raised in an address by F. A. Bloedow. It was his contention that the future of the German Baptist churches increasingly depended on the use of English.<sup>219</sup> This was a radical shift from the beliefs expressed prior to the War. Whereas in decades past the survival of the mission had been dependent on the survival of the German language, now the survival of the General Conference of German Baptists depended upon the transition to English. The same concern for the ethnic mission continued, but the Conference was coming to grips with the reality that the monolingual German mission could not continue indefinitely. The attitude of the Conference was one of general agreement with Bloedow; however, the membership cautioned that the transition to English would have to be slow. The Conference fully expected that its churches would need to use both German and English for several more years.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Goldberg, "Cultural Change among Milwaukee's Germans," 121-24. Luebke, *Bonds*, 287 states that at the end of the First World War nearly three-fourths of all Missouri Synod churches were holding English services.

<sup>216</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 108. The subscription lists for the German Baptist publications for youth began shrinking so dramatically after 1910 that a solely German language publication had to be discontinued.

<sup>217</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 293. Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 108.

<sup>218</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 107-108.

<sup>219</sup> General Conference Minutes, 1919, 12. F.A. Bloedow, *Der Sendbote*, May 3, 1922, 7. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 294.

<sup>220</sup> General Conference Minutes, 1919, 12. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 294.

Indeed, they were not prepared to make a rapid movement to English.<sup>221</sup> Ramaker, citing the large number of first generation German-speaking immigrants living in the midwest and northwest, argued that the use of German in the churches needed to continue.<sup>222</sup> He wrote: "There is still a surprisingly large number of first generation Germans within the borders of our country, especially in the Middle West and Northwest. Our immigration statistics may have enrolled them as Rumanians, Russians or even Hungarians because in these countries they had held citizenship. But they are Germans, who had first gone there before they came here."<sup>223</sup>

The 1910 United States Census report showed that there were more than eight million citizens of German origin or parentage in the United States. Ramaker perceived that the real numbers of first generation of German-speaking immigrants was higher than the published numbers revealed because of German-speakers who were listed as Russians, Poles, Czechs, or Rumanians. These immigrants needed to hear the message of the German Baptists in their own language. Forcing English upon the German-speaking churches was likely to harm mission work among the first generation immigrants.<sup>224</sup> Ramaker articulated this perspective: "The prohibition of the use of German in the church services in some of our western localities, for no reason of disloyal utterances on the part of the clergyman, has proved a very severe hardship for many of this class, who have felt that this restrictive measure was an invasion of their

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<sup>221</sup> General Conference Minutes, 1919, 12.

<sup>222</sup> Ramaker, "The German-Speaking Churches," 726.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid. Zummach, "Our School of the Prophets," 84.

constitutional right of religious worship.”<sup>225</sup> He worried that the German-speaking mission work in the United States had been permanently crippled by the anti-German sentiments of World War I.<sup>226</sup>

The days of monolingual German churches seemed to be gone forever. Young men were needed to be trained as bilingual pastors who could help the churches survive the period of crisis and transition.<sup>227</sup> The future of the German-speaking churches was uncertain. It hinged, in part, on the future of immigration. If German-speaking immigrants began arriving in the United States in large numbers, then the work would continue to be necessary. If the emigration of German-speakers never revived, then the Conference would continue to make the transition to English. The concern at the heart of the struggle was for the ethnic mission of the German Baptist churches. In articulating his argument and concerns, Ramaker reiterated the sentiment that the work among German-speakers had not been conducted for the sake of the language.<sup>228</sup> The lives of many men and women had been poured into the German work for the sake of proclaiming the Christian faith to the immigrants in a language they could understand and to which they could respond. Ramaker wrote of the work:

It sometimes seems to be almost tragic in religious work when those who have given their heart's blood for the upbuilding of an interest are obliged, by reflection, to see that its permanency is not in the outward form, but lies rather in the spirit in which it has been done and in the spiritual forces it has generated. This is eminently true of the German missionary work in our land. Every attempt to build it up for the sake of the German language

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<sup>225</sup> Ramaker, “The German-Speaking Churches,” 726.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

has failed and is sure to fail in the future. This is writ large in the history of German-speaking Protestants in America.<sup>229</sup>

The preservation of the language could not be the basis for the mission work. Instead, the protection of the mission was the basis for the maintenance of the German language. Even after the strong Americanizing force of World War I, the need to continue the mission to German-speakers drove the desire to retain the German language, as was necessary. At the same time, however, a desire to protect the German Baptist churches, retain their membership and leadership, and preserve their independence drove the movement toward the use of English. As other denominations around them were quickly making the complete transition to English, the German Baptists maintained German and bilingual German and English congregations.<sup>230</sup>

### **The Movement toward Institutional Independence**

When the transition to English seemed to be inevitable, interestingly, the General Conference of German Baptists did not take measures to merge with the English-speaking Northern Baptist Convention. The German Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church were absorbed into the existing Annual Conferences. The German Baptists, in contrast, took steps toward complete institutional independence from the American Baptists.<sup>231</sup> Even if the German-speaking churches could not be sustained indefinitely, the ethnic mission would be through the existence of a separate General Conference of German Baptists. Although the

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 284.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 294. Leuschner, "Forward through God's Open Doors," in Hermann Von Berge, ed. *These Glorious Years* (Cleveland: Roger Williams Press, n.d.), 155-56.

leadership of the Conference had argued for fifty years that the mission of the German Baptist churches was temporary and would end when the immigration of German-speakers ceased, the decisions of the Conference in the post-war period demonstrated a movement away from assimilation with the Northern Baptist Convention of the American Baptists.

In 1919 the General Conference of German Baptists adopted a goal of raising one million dollars before 1922 to develop an independent mission program.<sup>232</sup> Prior to World War I, the German Baptist churches showed steady growth despite the continuous loss of members to English-speaking churches. This continued growth was managed with declining monetary support from the ABHMS. As the Society decreased the percentage of funding the German work received, the German Baptist churches were forced to take a greater level of responsibility for their mission work, as well as for the funding of their seminary.<sup>233</sup> An argument has been made by Eric Ohlmann that this helped the Conference move toward complete independence from the ABHMS in 1921.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid. General Conference Minutes, 1919, 39.

<sup>233</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 296 stated that the contribution to the German Baptist General Missionary Society was only \$5,000 in 1918. The Home Mission Board of the Northern Baptist Convention changed their policy toward the German Baptist mission in 1919 by informing the General Missionary Society that aid would no longer be given to the Society for distribution to the churches, but would instead be given directly to local churches through the state associations. This change, had it been accepted by the General Conference of German Baptists, would have effectively enveloped the German Baptists churches into the institutional structure of the Northern Baptist Convention.

<sup>234</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 199-201. On p. 201 Ohlmann writes, "As the ABHMS reduced its support of the mission, the German churches increased theirs. Believing that the urgency of their work would not justify retrenchment, they were compelled to give more simply to compensate for the Home Mission Society's cutbacks. This they did. As early as 1895 they had surpassed American Baptists in per capita giving. Nor were they to stop there. In an effort to meet the new opportunities that constantly kept arising, they almost doubled their home mission budget during this period and, in addition, raised an \$120,000 endowment. Thus, by 1920 they were sustaining almost four-fifths of their total home mission budget. From there it was only a small step to full financial independence, which they declared in that same year."

His assessment was accurate. The declining funds moved the General Missionary Society to move toward self-support rather than accept money from the Home Mission Society of the Northern Baptist Convention under newly imposed conditions.<sup>235</sup> The Home Mission Board of the Northern Baptist Convention changed their policy toward the German Baptist mission in 1919 by informing the General Missionary Society that aid would no longer be given to the Society for distribution to the churches, but would instead be given directly to local churches by the state conventions.<sup>236</sup> If the General Missionary Society accepted this new policy, the German Baptist churches would have become members of the state conventions and their contributions would have been solicited to benefit the general budget of the Northern Baptist Convention rather than the General Conference of German Baptists.<sup>237</sup> In other words, acceptance of the new policy would have had the effect of institutionally assimilating the German Baptist churches into the Northern Baptist Convention of the American Baptists.

The adoption of the million-dollar offering initiative was a vote for self-support and institutional independence on the part of the General Conference of German Baptists. Once it became clear that this goal would be met, there was no longer a need for any form of institutional cooperation with the American Baptists. In 1920 William Kuhn, the secretary of the General Missionary

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<sup>235</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 296.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. *Der Sendbote*, May 14, 1919, 6.

<sup>237</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 296.

Society, sent a letter to the American Baptist Home Mission Society terminating the fifty-year-old cooperative agreement.<sup>238</sup>

The dissolution of the cooperative agreement and the realization of self-support in missions were the first steps in complete institutional separation of the German Baptists from the English-speaking denomination that had supported their work. Further steps toward complete institutional independence were taken by the German Baptists in 1934 when they formed a General Council to coordinate the work of the Mission Society, Publication Society, and other departments. The General Council, along with its executive secretary, gave the German Baptists an internal structure that allowed it to operate as a denomination independently of the American Baptists.<sup>239</sup>

## Conclusion

The German Baptists in North America developed a distinct mission to German-speaking immigrants and residents in the United States and Canada. In this work they were partners with the American Baptist Home Mission Society. At the same time, however, they always maintained some level of independence in their leadership, institutional developments, conference structure, and publishing endeavors. Indeed, they were pioneers in the institutional relationship between the American Baptists and the home mission conferences.

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<sup>238</sup> *Der Sendbote*, April 7, 1920, 6. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 294 and 297, the agreement between the German Baptist churches in Canada and the Baptist Union of Western Canada also ended similarly in 1920. According to Woyke the Baptist Union of Western Canada began applying more pressure to the German churches to assimilate after World War I by becoming members of the Union. The German churches instead chose to sever their ties with the Canadian Baptists and remain with the General Conference of German Baptists.

<sup>239</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 294-303.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that the distinctive mission of the General Conference of German Baptists was one of the primary factors that kept the German Baptists from complete assimilation with the English-speaking American Baptists. While this could be regarded as an obvious factor, perhaps it should not be. Of the home mission conferences supported in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the ABHMS, covering twenty-six immigrant groups, only the German Baptists and Swedish Baptist Conferences resisted assimilation and created separate institutional structures.<sup>240</sup> This was because of their leadership, relative strength in numbers, and continuing immigration, as well as the Pietist theology the German and Swedish Baptists shared in common. In the case of the German Baptists, the movement toward independence was supported by the ongoing belief and commitment to the idea that the mission to German-speakers and those of German parentage in North America necessitated the existence of separate German churches, even if those “German” churches operated using the English language.

The necessity of the mission was recognized by ABHMS prior to the Civil War in the United States. The General Conference of German Baptists and the ABHMS acknowledged that organized evangelization work was needed among the largest non-English-speaking immigrant group in North America. The evangelization efforts on the part of the German-speaking Baptists were driven by

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<sup>240</sup> Brackney, “To Be Lost in America: The Saga of Swedish Baptists from an American Baptist Perspective,” 151, 153-54. Magnusson, “Along Kingdom Highways – American Baptists and Swedish Baptists in a Common Mission: An Introductory Essay,” 143-44. Olson, “An Interpretation of the Historical Relationships Between the American Baptist Convention and the Baptist General Conference,” Virgil Olson, “Neither Jew nor Greek: A Study of an Ethnic Baptist Group, the Swedish Baptists, 1850-1950, *Baptist History and Heritage* 25 (January 1990): 41.



the sincere belief that the majority of German immigrants did not possess a dynamic and personal experience of the Christian faith. Such an experience of the faith was best communicated to the German immigrants in the German language and through the organization of separate German churches. From the American Baptist point of view, the German-speaking immigrants of the 1830s-1850s imperiled American society with their numbers, political ideas, and habits. Through evangelization, vital Christianity in the American style, complete with respect for the sanctity of the Sabbath and temperance, would be inculcated in the immigrant. This would not only make the German immigrant a good Baptist; it would also transform the immigrant into a good American.

In the early stages of their relationship, both the German-speaking and English-speaking Baptists agreed that a separate, German-language mission was necessary to accomplish their respective purposes. This shared vision resulted in the development of cooperative efforts between the ABHMS and the General Conference of German Baptists. With the appointment of George Schulte as the Missions Secretary of the Eastern Conference of the General Conference, the German Baptists and ABHMS entered a Cooperative Agreement in mission endeavors that would continue until 1920.<sup>241</sup>

During the early phase of the relationship between the ABHMS and the German-speaking Baptists there was not an obvious thrust to Americanize the immigrants. The emphasis was more on building a successful mission. The underlying assumption of the ABHMS, however, was that such mission efforts

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<sup>241</sup> Leuschner, "Forward Through God's Open Doors," 138. In 1883 the Western Conference joined the mission plan envisioned by Schulte and formed the General Mission Society.

would be a temporary means by which the immigrants received both faith and American values. The tenor of the relationship shifted somewhat in the post-Civil War period. Massive immigration from Germany made Germans a target of criticism and Americanization rhetoric as Americans lost the sense of confidence that the nation could easily assimilate such large numbers of immigrants. Urbanization and industrialization, as well as trends in ethnic community development, led to the creation of ethnic ghettos. The nativism of the 1850s again surfaced in the 1880s and 1890s, and was expressed in certain quarters among the American Baptists. Fearing that the influxes of immigrants would overrun the nation and destroy its Anglo-Saxon character, arguments for the efficient and rapid Americanization of the immigrants were articulated in American Baptist newspapers and publications, addressing in particular the use of the German language. While the ABHMS leadership supported the separate German mission, the issue of language surfaced regularly in American Baptist and German Baptist publications as part of the greater issue of Americanization. The German Baptists developed arguments to defend their work, the use of German in their churches, and the continuing education of their young people in the language. The survival of the language itself was clearly desirable to many German Baptists. It was not, however, the primary reason for perpetuating German instruction in the Sunday schools and in the seminary training. The ability to communicate with the German-speaking immigrant or resident depended upon the skillful use of German. The survival of the German-speaking

churches depended upon trained pastors who could communicate effectively in German.

While the German Baptists often argued that their mission was only a temporary means of bringing immigrants into the greater Baptist fold, they also pushed in some of their writings to be respected as partners in the work of the ABHMS.<sup>242</sup> They expressed their sense of mission in continuing debates with the ABHMS about Americanization and what constituted an American. Their arguments reflected their sense of the urgency and importance of their work, as well as their determination to continue even as they received less and less financial support from their American Baptist counterparts.<sup>243</sup> At the same time, the General Conference expanded in churches, pastors, and publications, as well as in the size and work of their seminary.

Ohlmann and Davis argued that there was less pressure upon the German Baptists to Americanize during the 1890s and into the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>244</sup> Following the periodization of American nationalism posited by John Higham, nationalism in the United States, which included anti-immigration overtones, was continuous from 1880 to 1897.<sup>245</sup> Anti-immigration sentiments continued with less intensity until the outbreak of World War I in Europe. Economic recovery coupled with victory in the Spanish-American War restored a national sense of confidence in the ability of the nation to assimilate the

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<sup>242</sup> Hermann Schaeffer's address to the American Baptist Home Mission Society, recorded in *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 129-36. *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 4. *Der Sendbote*, July 19, 1882, 221.

<sup>243</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 201. ABHMS Annual Report, 1895, 94. ABHMS Annual Report, 1896, 105. ABHMS Annual Report, 1897, 115.

<sup>244</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 184. Davis, *Immigrants, Baptists, and the Protestant Mind*, 97-130.

immigrant populations. According to this assessment, the assumption was still present that all those of foreign birth or parentage would assimilate into Anglo-American society.<sup>246</sup> The ABHMS during these decades was generally supportive of the German Baptist mission efforts. Ohlmann interpreted the position of the ABHMS as one where they regarded the German Baptists as their partners.<sup>247</sup> At the same time, however, the ABHMS clearly believed and asserted that the German Baptists were partners only temporarily because the German mission was simply a means to bring German-speakers to the Baptist faith and, eventually, to the English-speaking churches. The pressure to Americanize was not overtly exerted by the ABHMS, but the prevailing attitude and presupposition was that the separate German Baptist churches would continue only as long as the mass immigration of German-speakers continued.<sup>248</sup>

In this supposed period of Baptist cosmopolitanism and confidence in the assimilative powers of the American national character, the German Baptists experienced internal pressures and movements toward Americanization. The pressure to use English in some church services and activities grew with needs of younger generations, who were products of the public educational system and whose ties to German culture were through their parents, grandparents, or church. Also, the internal working of Americanization was evidenced in the movement of upwardly mobile German Americans into English-speaking Baptist churches.

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<sup>245</sup> Higham, *Strangers*, 68

<sup>246</sup> Morehouse, "German Baptists in America," 304, 306. *Baptist Home Missions in North America*, 115-19. Schaeffer, "Does the American Baptist Home Mission Society Americanize Germans?" 312-14.

<sup>247</sup> Ohlmann, "The American Baptist Mission to German-Americans," 184-86.

<sup>248</sup> *Der Sendbote*, October 16, 1895, 4. *The Standard* (October 19, 1895): 2. Conference Minutes, 1895, 157-58.

While some German Baptists were resolved that their mission continue only as long as church membership was replenished by incoming German-speaking immigrants, other attempted to address the internal pressures in ways that would sustain the strength of the churches and expand the work of the Conference. Young People's societies were formed, the majority of which used English.<sup>249</sup> The work of the Conference was expanded to the support and evangelism of German-speaking Russian immigrants, as well as other immigrants who were not identified by Americans as ethnically German.<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, the Conference began movements toward its forays in foreign missions to the then German colony, West Cameroon.<sup>251</sup>

World War I and the post-war period brought renewed pressures to discard all things German, to destroy the hyphen in German-American, and to merge German churches with English-speaking churches. The American Baptist churches embarked on a full-scale effort to assimilate immigrants through Christian Americanization.<sup>252</sup> Again, the concern that surfaced during this period was for the needs and mission of the German churches. As the newly formed Northern Baptist Convention of the American Baptists made structural adjustments in mission allowances that would have effectively enveloped the

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<sup>249</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 281. *The Standard* (October 19, 1895): 2. B. R. G. "The German Baptist Young People," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (September 1898): 332-33. Otto Krueger, "The Strength of Youth," in Hermann von Berge, *These Glorious Years* (Cleveland: Roger Williams Press, n.d.), 192-200.

<sup>250</sup> ABHMS Annual Report, 1896, 104-105.

<sup>251</sup> Weber, *International Influences and Baptist Mission in West Cameroon*. Leuschner, "Forward Through God's Open Doors," 141-148. Previous missionaries, including August Rauschenbusch's daughter, Frida, and her husband, J. Heinrichs, went as missionaries to India under the Foreign Mission Society of the American Baptists, see "Rev. J. Heinrichs, Ramapatam, India," in *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (September 1898): 318-19.

General Conference of German Baptists, the Conference took steps that were clearly intended as a declaration of independence from the American Baptists. Although many churches were moving toward conducting more services in English, which was an outward symbol of Americanization, missions and organizational efforts were being conducted among German-speaking Russians resettling in the Dakotas and prairie provinces, as well as Poles, Rumanians, Bohemians, and Hungarians.<sup>253</sup> The enrollment of the German Baptist seminary in Rochester was hurt during the war and immediately after, but recovered by 1920, providing pastors and workers for the German churches. In 1920 the General Conference of German Baptists ended the half-century Cooperative Agreement with the American Baptists.<sup>254</sup> By doing so they effectively declared their independence from the larger denomination. Although many external and internal pressures to Americanize continued, the dissolution of the Cooperative Agreement freed the German Baptists to continue their ethnic mission and to preserve their Pietist theology as a distinct Baptist body.

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<sup>252</sup> Brooks, *Christian Americanization*. Brooks, "Missions to People of Foreign Speech," 820-23. Denny, "The Genius of America," 470. Clark, "American Attitude Essential in Americanization," 162-64.

<sup>253</sup> C. A. Daniel, "The Relation of German Baptists in America to Other Nationalities," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 20 (September 1898): 314-15. ABHMS Annual Report, 1893, 68. ABHMS Annual Report, 1896, 104-105.

<sup>254</sup> *Der Sendbote*, April 7, 1920, 6.

## Conclusion

Throughout their history, the German Baptists understood their work as part of the greater work of the Kingdom of God. While they concentrated on their ethnic mission and sought to preserve their theology and practice of Christian morality, they viewed themselves as one part of a larger Baptist body accomplishing their mission for the greater goal of winning North America for Christ. In 1924, Albert Ramaker wrote:

There is always a pleasurable satisfaction in thinking that one is a part, however small and insignificant, of something large, of something alive and doing big things.... Something of this satisfaction the writer has frequently experienced when he was saying to himself that, while early environment led him to cast his lot with the German speaking Baptist churches in our country, yet he belonged also to the larger Baptist Brotherhood which was doing great things for the Kingdom of Christ all over this world of ours.... The German Baptists...constitute only a small segment of the Evangelical Christian forces in our country, and they are also only a small fraction of the denomination whose name they bear. But there is nothing that separates them from the fullest participation in the struggles, aspirations and triumphs of the larger evangelical or denominational brotherhood but the adjective, and this adjective stands for the particular mission which they feel themselves called upon to perform.<sup>1</sup>

The theology, identity, and mission of the General Conference of German Baptists in North America have been the subject of this dissertation. Their story is one segment of a larger mosaic encompassing the story of immigrant churches in North America. The history of the General Conference of German Baptists reveals the significant role that theology and ethnic identity played in the development of denominations in North America. It also reveals that North American Protestantism was ethnically and theologically diverse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> Ramaker, *German Baptists*, 119, 120.

One goal of this dissertation has been to demonstrate that the theological foundation of the German Baptist leadership in North America was continental Pietism. The earliest leaders, pioneer pastors, and seminary professors were rooted in the Pietist traditions of Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Their Pietism included an emphasis on the penitential struggle of the individual and the necessity of conversion. The German Baptists professed a belief in the regeneration of an individual and used believers' baptism as a means of demarcating the new life of the Christian from the old life of the sinner. They also shared with continental Pietism an emphasis upon the literal interpretation of Scripture and upon the reading and hearing of Scripture as a means of grace, through which the Holy Spirit works to kindle faith in the heart of the hearer. Perhaps their Pietism was most evident in the German Baptist emphasis upon Christian living. The life of the Christian was to demonstrate the fruits of faith in prayer, Scripture reading, and practical morality. The German Baptists frowned upon drinking, fashionable dress, theatre attendance, the marriage of a Christian to a non-believer, card playing, gambling, and other forms of "worldly" behavior. They espoused a sober lifestyle, centered on faith and mission. In this respect, they were very much like their seventeenth-century Pietist ancestors in Germany.

The Pietist emphases were communicated to the lay people of the churches through the denominational publication, *Der Sendbote*. Konrad Fleischmann, the first editor and publisher of *Der Sendbote*, had been influenced by the Pietist leanings of the Swiss Separatists before his emigration to the United States. Generations of German Baptist pastors were trained in Pietist beliefs by



August Rauschenbusch, the first professor of the German Baptist Seminary in Rochester. The Pietism of the German Baptists, which blended with the emphases of Evangelical Protestantism in North America, was a common theological tradition that helped to bind the German Baptists during their formative years.

Another goal of this study has been to demonstrate that the theology of the German Baptists was a major factor in their movement toward independence from the English-speaking Baptist organizations that supported the mission work among German-speakers in North America. In what could easily be mistaken for a puritanical stance, the German Baptists sought to retain the *praxis pietatis* in the changing North American environment. It was their grounding in the practical aspects of Pietism and the desire for their churches to demonstrate moral purity and spiritual depth that served as a barrier to the institutional assimilation of the German Baptists. It was not that German Baptists became more American than the Americans or more Puritan than the Anglo-American Baptist inheritors of the Puritan tradition. Instead, it was their common theological heritage, which was clearly Pietist in origin, that influenced them to highlight the differences between their churches and those of the English-speaking Baptists. Although they did not refer to their beliefs or moral values as Pietism, it is clear that they treasured their Pietist theology. They continued to be Pietists in contradiction to what they viewed as the growing worldliness of the English-speaking Baptists.

The German Baptists were able to avoid becoming embroiled in the doctrinal controversies of the American and Canadian Baptists during the early

twentieth century precisely because of their common theological ground. While the sympathies of the German Baptists leaned toward fundamentalism, with its literal approach to Scripture, they were in general agreement on the authority of the Bible. They had no need or desire to become involved in the dispute between the modernists and fundamentalists. Indeed, the issues raised in the argument only reinforced the views of the German Baptists that their English-speaking counterparts were straying from biblical Christianity. The period of controversy distracted the English-speaking churches from their emphasis on Americanization and allowed the German Baptists to focus on the needs of their own churches and mission work.

Theology alone cannot account for the movement of the German Baptists toward institutional and financial independence from the American and Canadian Baptists. A second, rather obvious, factor was their ethnicity. Yet, ethnicity, or ethnic identity, on its own would not sufficiently explain the refusal of the German Baptists to assimilate into the larger English-speaking Baptist bodies. German-speaking Methodists and Presbyterians moved to assimilate with their English-speaking parent bodies just as the German Baptists were ending their cooperative agreement with the ABHMS. There were differences in the polity of these denominations that gave the German Baptists more freedom to declare their independence. At the same time, however, the history of German-speaking churches in North America demonstrates that ethnic identity alone was not a strong enough factor by the end of World War I to keep most German-speaking churches from Americanizing and identifying with larger, English-speaking

denominational organizations. The German Baptists were different in that even as they experienced the internal and external pressures of Americanization, including the pressure to adopt English language services and publications, they self-consciously continued to be a German church in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Through the first forty years of their existence, the German Baptists developed a sense of identity as German-speaking Baptists. They expressed their regard for German culture, German hymns, and the German language in much the same way that secular German-Americans did during the nineteenth century. At the same time, they developed an identity that was closely tied to their mission to evangelize the German-speaking population of North America. They sought to retain their institutional independence from the English-speaking churches in order to preserve what they believed was a vital mission. While they loved their language, worship styles, and customs, they did not try to preserve these for their own sake. Instead, they saw the ABHMS giving less and less to the work among German-speakers. They answered the criticisms of English-speaking Baptists who questioned the need to continue teaching German to the children and training pastors for work among German-speakers. They experienced the loss of affluent, upwardly mobile members to English-speaking churches. They saw the movement of their youth, who had English as a first language, into English-speaking churches. Some even accepted that their mission was only temporary.

At the same time, the German Baptists still saw a field that was ripe for harvest. Although immigration from Germany had slowed to a trickle by 1900,

German-speaking immigrants were arriving in the United States and Canada from regions of Eastern Europe. Some were already Baptists; others had sympathies with the Baptists. These immigrants were settling into the farmlands of the midwest and prairie provinces, the regions where the German Baptists were the strongest. Through the first two decades of the twentieth century, the leadership of the General Conference of German Baptists agreed that the mission to German-speakers in North America had to continue. If the ABHMS would not support the ethnic mission, then the German Baptists would finance the work themselves. They were clearly not prepared to allow their mission or their churches to be absorbed into the Northern Baptist Convention or the Baptist Union of Western Canada. Thus, their sense of ethnic mission prevented them from institutional assimilation with the English-speaking Baptists in North America.

Although not addressed in detail, it could also be suggested that the German Baptists were resistant to institutional assimilation as a whole because of their leadership. The German Baptists from their earliest inception developed strong internal leadership. They had their own seminary and chose their own professors. They developed their own publication board, their own mission board, and commissioned their own missionaries for the work in West Cameroon. They had individuals in their Conference who were regarded as leading pastors and preachers. They elevated respected individuals to positions of leadership within the Conference. If they merged into the larger English-speaking denominations, their leadership would be submerged, as would the many organizations and endeavors they had developed through the decades.

The subject of leadership is an area that needs further exploration, but not only as a factor that encouraged institutional independence. The contribution of the leaders of the General Conference of German Baptists to nineteenth-century Protestantism needs to be examined in depth. The surface has only been scratched regarding the work of August Rauschenbusch, who was clearly a most significant figure in German-American Protestantism. Indeed, he was a leading figure in the home mission movement to German-speakers across denominational lines through his work with the American Tract Society. Yet, owing to the English language bias of North American church history, very little is known about a man who was the leading German-American churchman of his day. Much more is known about his son, Walter, who published and taught in the English language, even while he adamantly defended the German-speaking Baptist churches. Additionally, little attention has been given to those who were born into the German Baptist churches but moved to roles of leadership within the English-speaking Baptist churches. What impact did their background have upon their ministry? What impact, if any, did the movement of whole German Baptist churches into their English-speaking associations have upon the American and Canadian Baptist churches? Another related issue is that of lay people who migrated from German-speaking to English-speaking churches. Some were quite affluent, including the Rockefeller family. This had an economic impact upon the German Baptist churches, but what impact did it have upon the American Baptist churches? Did the spiritual practices or theology of these migrating Baptists affect the American Baptists, or did the former German Baptists assimilate

quietly, exerting no influence? These are the types of questions that need to be asked if historians are to develop a full understanding of denominational development.

There are other areas of German Baptist history that merit further study. This thesis has been bound by a timeline. It stops with the end of the cooperative agreement in 1920. The reason for this is that the post-World War I history of the General Conference of German Baptists is another story altogether. After the dissolution of the cooperative agreement, the General Conference continued to develop an internal denominational framework and moved more and more toward the sole use of English in their churches. It was a time in which their foreign mission work in Africa took form and flourished.<sup>2</sup> As the German Baptists moved into the period of World War II, they made the conscious decision to become an American church as they adopted a new name, the North American Baptist Conference.<sup>3</sup> This is yet another story. Telling this story would entail describing their home and foreign mission work.<sup>4</sup> It would involve describing their attempts to hold on to the distinct traditions of their churches while moving with the cultural and social currents in North America. Telling their story would involve describing their work with displaced persons after World War II through the North American Baptist Immigration and Colonization Society.<sup>5</sup> It would

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<sup>2</sup> Weber, *International Influences and Baptist Mission in West Cameroon* details the developments in the German Baptist mission station in West Cameroon. Leuschner, "See His Banners Go," in Hermann von Berge, ed. *These Glorious Years* (Cleveland: Roger Williams Press, n.d.), 141-48.

<sup>3</sup> Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry*, 358.

<sup>4</sup> Weber, *International Influences and Baptist Mission in West Cameroon*. Leuschner, "See His Banners Go," 141-48. Leuschner, "Forward Through God's Open Doors," 153-67.

<sup>5</sup> William Sturnhahn, *They Came from East and West: A History of Immigration to Canada* (Winnipeg: North American Baptist Immigration and Colonization Society, 1976).

mean describing the work of the denomination today as it continues to organize Baptist churches among many different immigrant groups.

The place of immigrant churches within North America Protestantism warrants further study. Comparative work between denominations has not been done. A fruitful study could be conducted comparing the theology and experience of the German-speaking Baptists and Methodists. Both denominations began mission work in Germany at roughly the same time. Both drew on the Pietist theological heritage. In North America both German Baptists and German Methodists began mission endeavors supported by the larger English-speaking denominations. Both had their own publications, their own prominent leaders, and their separate conferences. Moreover, there was a period in the early history of the German Baptists in North America that the German Baptists often shared the meeting space of German Methodists and used German Methodist Sunday school materials. Their experiences seemed to diverge during World War I. The German Baptists moved toward independence, while the German Methodist Conferences were dissolved by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Knowledge of the German Methodist Conferences has all but been lost in contemporary Methodist history. Such comparative work between the development of these two Pietist groups would be fruitful, but has yet to be undertaken.

Lastly, an objective of this study was to add to the body of knowledge about the diversity of Protestantism within nineteenth-century North America. Much more work needs to be accomplished in this area. The American

experience is an immigrant experience. This continues to be the case at the turn of a new century. Yet, the history of American religious bodies and of the American religious experience has tended to have an assimilationist approach, as if the immigrant churches themselves were not significant until they assimilated, adopted English as their first language, and took on all the appearances of American or English Canadian churches. By then, their language and cultural traditions were all but lost. The historical works written by those within the immigrant churches or denominations have tended to be inwardly focused and celebratory of the achievements of their small group. They have not examined their place in the larger mosaic of North American religious history. In order to grasp fully the religious heritage of North America, historians must look more closely at what the immigrant churches offered to their denominations as a whole. They must move beyond looking at the immigrants as the objects of home missions or social outreach work and examine the contributions that the foreign language churches made to the development of denominational history in North America. Further, historians should look at the theological traditions of these groups and the impact of those traditions upon North American Protestantism. They should examine the shape that continental theological traditions, such as Pietism, gave to Protestantism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

What began as a scattered group of German-speaking churches practicing the baptism of adult believers in the mid-nineteenth century has evolved into a structured, English-speaking, North American denomination. The North American Baptist Conference still retains ties to its history and mission, but the



Conference has adapted its mission to the current North American context. The history of the Conference is a rich and interesting story of leadership and commitment to a Pietist theological tradition and an ethnic mission. The story of the German Baptists in North America is, however, only one of many such stories. There were other immigrant churches that shared a similar story and a similar experience in North America. For many, the story has yet to be told and has been all but lost. The story of North American religious development in the nineteenth century remains incomplete without their stories. In order to understand religion in the nations where immigration was a common experience, the stories of the immigrant churches must be explored fully and their contributions to the theological and denominational development of North America understood.

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