

FOR CONSCIENCE'S SAKE: THE 1839 EMIGRATION  
OF THE SAXON LUTHERANS

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OF THE SAXON LUTHERANS

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ABSTRACT

This study traces the assimilation process of more than six hundred Saxon Lutherans who migrated to Perry County, Missouri, in 1839. As one of the few groups in the nineteenth century who chose to move to the United States because of religious persecution, their history is a unique part of American religious and immigration history. Arriving during the antebellum period, the immigrants faced the unique challenges of the young American republic, which would include the trauma of the nativist movement, frontier-type conditions on the land they purchased in Perry County, the institution of slavery, and the growing tension between North and South while living in a volatile border state.

Their situation was further complicated by the distinctive nature of the German-American community, which was deeply divided along religious lines, due to the anti-faith stance of German liberals. Because the latter controlled the German-American newspapers, their opposition to the Saxons was widely known. In essence, the conflict over religion that they experienced in Saxony followed them to the United States, although it came from

within their own immigrant community and not from Americans. This situation was aggravated by the discovery of the deceitfulness of their once-respected leader, Pastor Martin Stephan. This proved to be a watershed moment for the laity, who emerged with a stronger voice in their churches. The study focuses on their lives as they maintained their language in school and church and parts of their culture and also embraced the responsibilities of citizenship in the United States.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies have examined a dissertation titled “The 1839 Emigration of the Saxon Lutherans,” presented by Lani M. Kirsch, candidate for the Interdisciplinary Ph.D., and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

Having left their native land for conscience’s sake—being persecuted by the Government, on account of their religious opinions—they have come among us; and it is well that they should be allowed the privilege of worshipping God agreeably to the dictates of their own consciences.<sup>1</sup>

*St. Louis Daily Evening Gazette*  
March 5, 1839

“Whoever heard him once,” recounts historian Walter A. Baepler, “if he was not filled with the spirit of scoffing, felt himself moved to the inmost depth of his being, without really knowing how this had come to pass.”<sup>2</sup> Pastor Martin Stephan had an innate knowledge of men, challenged the conscience rather than the emotions, gave advice from the Word of God, and frequently comforted those who needed reassurance and encouragement. Saxons who were weary of rationalism and unionism and pontifical sermons attended Stephan’s church, St. John’s Lutheran, in Dresden, Saxony. There they listened as he “set forth the doctrines of sin and grace” with the “ability to comfort and strengthen those who came to him with stricken consciences...”<sup>3</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, one of his opponents actually accused Stephan of driving people mad with his teachings. But, to conservative Lutherans, or “Old Lutherans,” he was an answer to their

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<sup>1</sup> *St. Louis Daily Evening Gazette*, March 5, 1839.

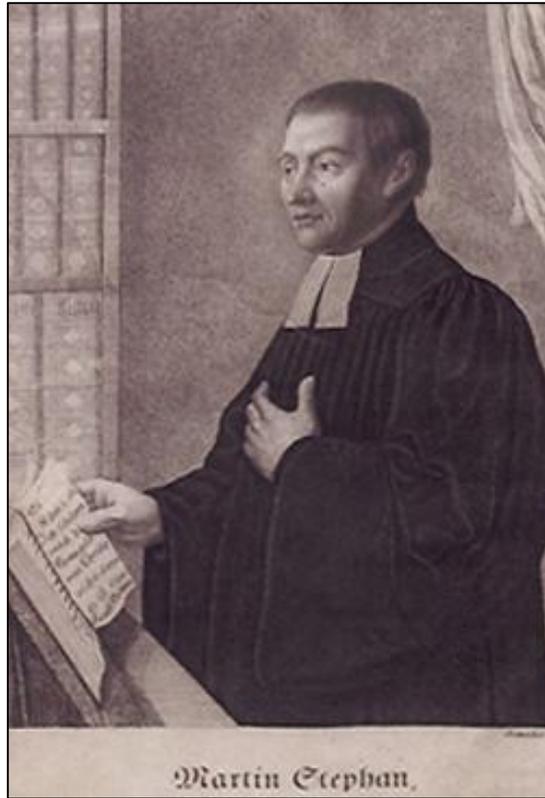
<sup>2</sup> Walter A. Baepler, *A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847-1947* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Th. Graebner, *Lutheran Pioneers I: Our Pilgrim Fathers; The Story of the Saxon Emigration of 1838, Retold Mainly in the Words of the Emigrants, and Illustrated from Original Documents Related to the Emigration* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), 4-5.

prayers. In the fall of 1838, he gathered over six hundred followers, prepared them to emigrate to the United States, and traveled with them to St. Louis, Missouri.

This dissertation covers the factors in early nineteenth century Saxony that prompted conservative Lutherans to emigrate to the United States in an effort to return to the roots of the Reformation church: the rise of rationalism and unionism, non-acceptance of their conservative beliefs by the state-controlled Lutheran church, and their increasing inability to freely oversee their churches and their schools. It also explicates the circumstances of their new lives in St. Louis and the surrounding area—the hardships they faced, the conflict of ideology within the German-American community, and the physical suffering while they adapted to the American environment. The remainder of the dissertation covers the unique process by which the Saxons engaged with American society, including their response to the events leading up to the Civil War.

The emigration was instigated primarily by Martin Stephan, a charismatic pastor from Dresden, who promoted the belief that the Old Lutherans (conservative Lutherans) could not remain a true church if they continued to live in Saxony. The true church, in this sense, consists of all who believe, no matter which visible, or physical church building they attend. Believing Stephan was a sincere man of God, more than six hundred believers followed him to the United States. Within three months, Stephan had been exposed as a charlatan, and he was stripped of his power and position by angry and disillusioned congregants.



*Figure 1.* Martin Stephan (1777-1846).

Religious freedom was not the prevailing reason most immigrants came to the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century, which is why the Saxon emigration is unique to the study of American religious, immigration, and cultural history. The story of the Saxon Lutheran immigrants, also called the Stephanites while still in Germany, had much in common with the sixteenth-century Pilgrim Fathers, who sought a land where they could worship in peace. By the time the Saxons arrived in the United States, religious freedom was protected by the Constitution but, unlike the Pilgrims, they did not come from English roots, and, consequently, were faced with adapting to a cultural and political system that differed from the one they left in their European home.

The source of the Lutherans' religious problems in Saxony was encapsulated in two concepts: rationalism and unionism. Both words are referenced repeatedly in the writings of the Saxons whenever they explained their reasons for emigrating. They opposed rationalism because they believed it undercut the heart of their faith by elevating human reason over the supernatural and, at times, ruling out the very existence of God. They opposed unionism because it was a government-sanctioned religious program that forced them to merge with the Reformed Church, thus watering down the Lutheran tenets of faith and compromising their celebration of the sacraments. In fact, "The opposition to Rationalism and other liberalistic tendencies<sup>4</sup> in the Saxon Church, noticeable ever since 1800, was the determining factor in the development of Stephanism."<sup>5</sup> When the Saxons decided the situation in Saxony was untenable, they chose Missouri as their destination. The driving force in their decision to leave was their conservative Lutheran faith and Saxony's interference in their desire to freely worship according to their beliefs.

Although much attention was given to Martin Stephan's leadership role against the state's intrusion into the church and the controversies surrounding him, the laity wholeheartedly endorsed the reasons for emigrating as outlined in their "Codes for Emigration."<sup>6</sup> Many of the Saxons were raised by parents who believed in rationalism, yet they still pursued answers to their particular faith questions. Theirs was a very personal

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<sup>4</sup> Rationalism is considered by some scholars as part of the Enlightenment. But I believe it is better understood as an individual movement begun in the sixteenth century by scholars such as René Descartes, who argued that all knowledge is obtained by reason alone.

<sup>5</sup> Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, 1839-1841* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 20.

<sup>6</sup> "The Emigration Codes," as cited in Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, 1839-1841* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953).

decision to leave everything behind and find a place to worship according to their conservative ideals. Unlike the Irish, who fled famine and lives that held little hope in their home country, these Old Lutherans owned farms, were clergy or candidates for clergy, lawyers, merchants, and tradesmen. Many of them gave up good salaries, farmlands, and positions of authority when they moved to America. For the Saxons, religion was not tangential: it was the epicenter of their identity and society.

Both rationalism and unionism were developed during an exceptional period of German philosophy, led by such renowned intellectuals as Immanuel Kant and G. W. F. Hegel. By the 1830s, their impact reached into all levels of education, the government, and the church in the German states as well as the Western world. To the Old Lutherans, who could be found in both Saxony and Prussia, rationalism was a direct attack on their biblical faith. Unionism also attacked their faith, but it involved a growing statism in conjunction with the call for a nationalized Germany, which was not fulfilled until 1871, many years after the Saxons emigrated. While, on the one hand, the philosophers used terms such as “individual autonomy” and encouraged people to pursue freedom within and to think independently, on the other hand, they promoted the magnitude and predominance of the state. In *Philosophie des Rechts*, Hegel advanced the concept that the laws of the state were rational and the bastion of freedom. From a religious perspective, the Saxons watched as God was nudged into a secondary role in education, whereby they believed the soul as the heart of man was replaced by the mind. The Old Lutherans or—Stephanites—disliked the trend, as they saw it influenced preachers to deliver sermons filled with intellectual diatribes that diluted the message of the Gospel. Ronald Taylor stated in the introduction of a work on

the intellectual tradition of Germany that because of this change in teachings, “inevitably, however, the power of the concept of God was weakened, and the distance between man and God lessened.”<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, statism, or the idealization of the state, encouraged the growing power of state bureaucracy, which was given control of both the church and the state. Saxony was much influenced by Prussians, who pushed for unionization of Lutheran and Reformed churches and whose own state-controlled church was mirrored in the Saxon government. In the 1830s it was increasingly difficult for a conservative Lutheran to attain a pastoral assignment. According to Old Lutheran standards, state officials were often not believers but still wanted to dictate religious policies to the church. The disagreement between church officials and Old Lutherans extended to the curriculum chosen for school, which, for these conservatives, was often too rationalist. The root cause of the conflict was theological. Three Reformation principles formed the cornerstone of the Lutherans’ faith: *sola gratia* (grace alone), *sola fide* (faith alone), and *sola scriptura* (scripture alone). The last caused the most dissension with rationalists, because Old Lutherans believed that “the Bible is God’s inerrant and infallible Word, in which He reveals His Law and His Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is the sole rule and norm for Christian doctrine.”<sup>8</sup> This put strict boundaries around scriptural interpretation, which clashed with rationalist attempts to approach the Scripture only with reason. It also made them uneasy about the Saxon government’s attempt to unite

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<sup>7</sup> Ronald Taylor, ed., *The Intellectual Tradition of Modern Germany: A Collection of Writings from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century*, vol. 1, *Philosophy, Religion, and the Arts* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1973), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, last modified 2014, [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org).

Lutheran and Reformed churches into one state church (or Confederation). When the situation in Saxony became untenable, they formulated a detailed emigration plan and left Saxony.

Throughout the climactic sea voyage from Bremen to New Orleans, Stephan began a series of duplicitous maneuvers to solidify his influence over the Saxon emigrants. Members of the Emigration Society, or *Gesellschaft*, as they formally referred to themselves, were verbally and emotionally coerced into obeying Stephan's every wish, including his not so subtle insistence on becoming Bishop Stephan and consolidating his authority over the emigrants before they reached Missouri.<sup>9</sup> It was a deceitful maneuver, because as he was telling the people he did not want to be bishop, he was convincing the leadership on board the *Olbers* that he must be bishop. His key psychological tool was guilt, which he inflicted based on his years of so-called selfless, sacrificial leadership of the Stephanites. Anyone who dared to question his motives, such as lawyer Franz Marbach, was subjected to severe and personal verbal attacks.

In spite of the distressing voyage, the Saxon Lutherans were consumed by their desire for religious freedom and proclaimed shortly after their arrival in America, their joy upon finding "that what we have sought we have found here...namely freedom, a free conscience, freedom of speech and freedom of divine service."<sup>10</sup> This was the Saxon understanding of the freedoms available in the United States. But a few months later, their

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<sup>9</sup> Rev. Gotthold Heinrich Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County, Missouri in 1839*, trans. Vernon R. Meyr (St. Louis, MO: Center for Regional History and Cultural Heritage, 1984), 4.

<sup>10</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westins*, March 16, 1839.

initial jubilation turned to despair, not because of the pragmatic, daunting difficulties of adapting to a new country and not out of any disappointment with America's religious freedom, but because of the downfall of their leader, Pastor Martin Stephan, whose licentiousness and thievery were uncovered only weeks after their arrival. The shock of his duplicity threw the immigrants into uncertainty about the validity of their immigration movement and the extent of their own sinfulness in blindly aligning themselves with Stephan's leadership. They ultimately overcame this setback, yet it would take a full two years before the majority of the original emigration group fully committed to remaining in the United States, let alone continued to form a Lutheran Church on their newly acquired lands in Missouri.

Stephan's deposition was swiftly accomplished after several Saxon women confessed to illicit relationships with their pastor. Americans in St. Louis became increasingly disillusioned by Stephan's luxurious lifestyle while the rest of the immigrants suffered from a lack of sufficient food and crowded living conditions. In addition, citizens were scandalized by the presence of young ladies in the pastor's house at all hours of the day and night. Preceding Stephan's arrival, he was known as a dedicated, fiery, and spiritual pastor who inspired his followers to live godly lives. But Stephan in person fell far short of their expectations. After Stephan was removed from leadership, the Saxon community fell into two years of spiritual confusion. The people had to decide if they were a valid church body or not, particularly since they signed a vow of loyalty to a man living a secret life of sin. They were angry, perplexed, indecisive, and ashamed during this time. Strong leadership among the laity pressed the issue of the ecclesiastical overstep of power, in which

they had claimed authority in both secular and spiritual matters. When Pastor C. F. W. Walther finally admitted the laity were correct and then presented a scriptural argument affirming that the Saxons remained part of the invisible church of all believers and not a cult, the newcomers began to settle into life in America.

The Perry County settlers then turned to making a living and surviving in an unaccustomed environment in which climate and disease took the lives of many of them. Some members of the original group remained in St. Louis because their skills as tradesmen allowed them to attain jobs, but the majority settled in Perry County, where they faced a mountain of physical and emotional obstacles. In Perry County during the winter of 1839, the settlers did not have proper shelter, and food would have been in short supply except for the generosity of their American neighbors. Much was required on the undeveloped land of Perry County, and the dangers to life were many. While German immigrants, as a whole, tended to settle on lands previously owned by Americans who already had worked it, the Germans in Perry County bought mostly undeveloped lands that required back-breaking labor to clear. As they worked, they were susceptible to the many Missouri fevers that made some dangerously ill. The Saxon women were, on the whole, a hard-working group who were essential to the survival of the new settlements. Spirited women such as Christiane Loeber, sister of Pastor Gotthold Loeber, stand out because of their informative, lively correspondence and devotion to education. Christiane provides an example of the limited amount of primary documents extant written by Saxon women, as Christiane died only a few months after she settled in Altenburg. She lived close to the first permanent building in the community—the school, which the Saxons opened to both girls and boys. Here the Saxons

were able to choose the curriculum for their children's school without any interference from government directives. Church, school, and family formed the core values of the community.

During the antebellum period, the wider circle of the German-American community remained divided along religious lines, although, as a group, they were consistently opposed to slavery. Because of the Democratic Party's steady support of immigrants and opposition to nativism since the 1820s, older German Americans were loath to change their political allegiance to the Republican Party. But in 1861, although several Lutheran pastors opposed fighting, the majority of the Saxons changed parties because of their consistent opposition to slavery and their understanding of the threat to the country. Although many of them still did not speak English, their support of the Union was overwhelming, particularly in St. Louis. In spite of twenty difficult years as they adapted to American life, they were dedicated citizens, willing to give their lives, if necessary, for the survival of the Union.

Oscar Handlin writes that immigration history is the core of American history, asserting that "the immigrants were American history."<sup>11</sup> In light of this statement, the Saxons' story sheds new light on the immigration experience, but the history of the immigrants and the church they founded has been written primarily by their descendants and those within the church body. This study enhances this often-told story by placing the experiences of Saxon Lutherans within the larger context of American religious and immigration history. The Saxons' acclimatization to their new country was typical in many ways, but the unique aspects of their emigration experience provide a lens through which to

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<sup>11</sup> Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 3.

examine both the politics and culture of the early nineteenth century United States. As newly-arrived immigrants, they faced the challenges of those tumultuous decades leading up to the Civil War, including a far-reaching national angst about the survival of the republican experiment; the rise of nativism; and the charged political atmosphere as the conflict over the institution of slavery intensified. On top of these issues, the Saxons grappled with the dangers of Missouri's volatile climate and the prevalence of life-threatening fevers and illnesses. The newly-arrived immigrants also answered to critics in their new home, especially among a greater German immigrant community that despised their fealty to their religious leader. They had left Saxony because of similar criticism and were dismayed to find more animosity among their fellow Germans than among the Americans.

In the 1960s and 1970s the image of the "melting pot," which dated back to a play of the same name performed in New York City in 1908, was challenged by historians who believed that diversity, not melting, defined American culture. For multicultural historians such as Michael Novak, the "melting" of an individual into American culture did not describe the actual immigrant experience because it implied the loss of the immigrant's original heritage and culture. For Novak, the "diversity of ethnic consciousness is exciting and valuable."<sup>12</sup> Ethnic consciousness, he insisted, was the key to interpreting American history and immigration because it is through the lens of ethnicity that we understand the American people. This perspective subsequently resulted in increased emphasis on studies of ethnicity and the history and culture of minority groups in the United States.

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<sup>12</sup> Teresa O'Neill, *Immigration: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 1992), 55.

The term *assimilation* also came under assault because it was equated with the melting pot concept, by which it was inferred that the immigrant totally melted into American society, losing all sense of his or her ethnic roots. Others viewed assimilation as a necessary part of adapting to American culture or the culture of any nation in which the immigrants decide to make their new home. Neither the melting pot nor diversity model encompasses all aspects of immigration. In fact, both diversity and assimilation have their role in the immigration process. Historian Russell A. Kazal chooses a middle ground in interpreting the immigration experience, basing his conclusion on his study of German immigrants who settled in Germantown, Pennsylvania. He disagrees with the exclusion of the concept of “assimilation” from immigration studies, defining it as the “processes that result in greater homogeneity within a society.”<sup>13</sup> Homogeneity assumes consensus within a group on basic issues that tie the members together as a community; the people are diverse but united.

A constructive assimilation process does not negate a person’s uniqueness, but it does rely on citizens accepting common foundational precepts for the nation. In America the underlying nationalist principles, or identity, have been based on the tenets of freedom and a constitutional republic as specified in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Many people, including the Saxons, were drawn to the United States because of the protections to individual and religious liberties established in the framework of the American government. A great deal of faith was put into phrases such as the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed, “We hold these truths to

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<sup>13</sup> Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 3.

be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness...”<sup>14</sup> The Saxons depended on this promise.

Concerning religion, people seeking freedom of worship were well aware of the First Amendment to the Constitution—“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”<sup>15</sup> Saxons chose to leave a state-controlled Saxony for a country where separation of church and state was fundamental. The United States government purposely protected religious institutions from regulations imposed upon them by the state, such as ordering people to attend state-approved churches. Taking advantage of this privilege, the Saxon Lutherans established parochial schools along with their churches in which they taught conservative Lutheranism, using their native language in both. Retaining their native tongue was essential in worship and education, because German was the native language of the Reformation and the first vernacular language into which the Bible was translated after Martin Luther and his followers broke away from the Catholic Church. For these reasons, Germans adhered to their language longer than any other immigrant group, but by doing so, they also irritated Americans who considered it a prerequisite for American citizenship to learn English as soon as possible. The Saxons did not intend this as an affront to America or a sign of ingratitude for the safe harbor they attained in Missouri, but their commitment to retaining such a tight grip on their native tongue was naturally suspicious to native-born Americans. The practice of

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<sup>14</sup> Terry L. Jordan, *The U.S. Constitution and Fascinating Facts about It*, 7th ed. (Naperville, IL: Oak Hill Publishing, 2000), 59.

<sup>15</sup> Jordan, *The U.S. Constitution*, 45.

maintaining their language often bred distrust among native-born Americans, who worried that the Germans were purposely not assimilating.

However, Steven M. Nolt explains the attitude of such immigrants in *Foreigners in Their Own Land*. His study is based on Pennsylvania Germans, but his thesis also applies to the Saxons. Germans in America were “easily identifiable and remarkably stable and cohesive” in settlements where they grouped together and intermarried for generations.<sup>16</sup>

But they were also loyal and devoted American citizens. Nolt explained,

becoming American has not frequently been an experience that simply pitted the power of assimilation against the forces of cultural resistance; rather, it has involved an adaptive process in which majority demands and minority wishes mixed and even furthered ironically complementary ends.”<sup>17</sup>

In essence, assimilation and ethnicity (or diversity) was continually balanced. There is a symbiotic relationship between assimilation and diversity which precludes positioning the two concepts on opposite ends of the immigration spectrum and instead allows a middle position whereby both assimilation and diversity is understood as part of the immigrant’s history.

The heart of the Saxon community, as assessed here, resided in the laity and their perspective on religious, cultural, and political aspects of their lives as well as the practical aspects of day-to-day survival. Nolt’s cultural study of German Lutheran and Reformed believers pays “special attention to the thought and action of ordinary lay members as well

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<sup>16</sup> Steven M. Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land: Pennsylvania Germans in the Early Republic* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land*, 3.

as clergy.”<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, it was the Saxon laity’s pivotal decision to retract the secular and spiritual control they had unwisely given to Stephan and the other pastors and to instead establish autonomous congregations, which saved them from becoming a spiritual fatality. As they gained first-hand knowledge of America’s church/state relationship, they painfully recognized the mistakes made in giving Stephan an inordinate amount of power over their lives. A “bottom up” study of this movement is somewhat hampered by the fact that the clergy were more likely to record their experiences than the laity. Yet, there were some powerful lay voices. Men such as Dr. Franz Marbach, a lawyer, and Carl Edvard Vehse, who was one of the authors of the protest movement following Stephan’s downfall, were intelligent, well-educated spokesmen for church members. Other information about the laity comes from primary sources, which include correspondence, court documentation, census records, newspaper articles, wills, and voting records.

Historian David D. Hall has written much on the lives of the laity in American history. In his discussion of “lived religion,” he asserts that “while we know a great deal about the history of theology and church and state, we know next-to-nothing about religion as practiced and precious little about the everyday thinking and doing of lay men and women.”<sup>19</sup> Hall has explored social history as the means to answer his questions about the laity, studying what is referred to as “popular religion.” Hall’s definition of religion reflects his emphasis on social history in religious studies:

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<sup>18</sup> Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), vii.

religion comprehends a range of actions and beliefs far greater than those described in a catechism or occurring within sacred space: it was a loosely bounded set of symbols and motifs that gave significance to rites of passage and life crises, that infused everyday events with the presence of the supernatural.”<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the studies conducted by Nolt and Hall, the “new cultural history,” central to David Hackett Fischer’s and James C. Kelly’s book, *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement*, is an important component of this study.<sup>21</sup> The authors explain that this cultural history “brings together both the old political history and the new social history. It studies large structures and processes, but with reference to particular events and individual people. The new cultural history thinks of people not as objects of deterministic processes but as agents who are actively engaged in choices that make a difference in the world.”<sup>22</sup> Cultural history focuses on the personal stories of those being studied and touches the essence of what was most important to them while also seeing the larger cultural and political structure. Referring to the struggles new settlers faced, the authors write: “the pressure of anxiety and nostalgia caused settlers to cling closely to their cultural beliefs. American pluralism has derived largely from that tendency—the persistence of ethnic and religious identity in an alien and often threatening environment.”<sup>23</sup> Whether a new settler on the frontier or a new immigrant, they clung to their cultural beliefs to give themselves a

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<sup>20</sup> David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 18.

<sup>21</sup> David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly, *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 294.

sense of security that was much needed during the stressful process of settling onto new lands.

To understand the Saxon story, many primary sources were utilized from the archives of the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis, although few have been translated or even transcribed from archaic German lettering to modern spelling. Almost all the correspondence as well as several short Lutheran histories I refer to in this study are available only in German. Examining these documents, as well as the extensive resources available at the Lutheran Heritage Center and Museum in Altenburg, Missouri, has been essential to this study. The researcher used these and other materials to emphasize the voice of the laity rather than the clergy. Few scholarly works on the Saxons have been published since historian Richard Forster's 1953 book, *Zion on the Mississippi*, although many articles have been printed in the *Lutheran Witness* and the *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*. Outside of these church publications, the Saxons have been mentioned in histories of Missouri and some works on religion or German immigration, but only briefly. Researchers at Concordia and in Altenburg are still discovering primary documents that will allow more insight into the Saxon history. In addition to these sources, in order to contextualize the Saxon narrative into a wider understanding of the United States' antebellum years, scholarship on the Jacksonian period as well as American immigration and religious history were consulted.

The history of the Saxons is best understood by utilizing religious and immigration history, the latter also encompassing cultural and political history. A recent article by Mark S. Cladis in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* addresses the relationships

between religion, democracy, modernity, and “the place of religion in the American public and political landscape.”<sup>24</sup> Cladis asserts that Americans “live in a deeply and diversely religious society” and in this atmosphere “we struggle with how to navigate our differences, religious, political or otherwise and within our complex, richly textured society, there is potential for shared democratic narratives, aspirations, and common projects.”<sup>25</sup> According to Cladis, religion in America “cannot be easily consigned to an isolated, personal sphere” and consequently the pervasiveness of American citizens’ religious views should be recognized and allowed voice in the political sphere as well.”<sup>26</sup> The Saxons are an example of how a conservative Lutheran immigration group found its voice in America, where it was allowed to nurture a unique perspective on worship and education, while at the same time its members became proud, contributing citizens of the United States. Any cultural differences or even language differences did not, in their own eyes, ever make them less than assimilated, grateful Americans.

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<sup>24</sup> Mark S. Cladis, “Painting Landscapes of Religion in America: Four Models of Religion in Democracy,” *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76 (December 2008): 874-875.

<sup>25</sup> Cladis, “Painting Landscapes of Religion,” 874-875.

<sup>26</sup> Cladis, “Painting Landscapes of Religion,” 885.

CHAPTER 2  
A TIME OF CHANGE:  
FROM THE REFORMATION TO RATIONALISM AND UNIONISM

But we live in the most terrible times of thanklessness and of unbelief. Having departed from the bright light of the blessed teachings, one sees the following of foolish rationalism and false knowledge of the world at almost all places. One sees reliance on the flesh and despising of God's Word in the countless numbers of erring sects and divisions which are lost in unrepentance and godlessness.<sup>27</sup>

Rev. Gotthold Heinrich Loeber,  
March 11, 1844

In his report to descendants of the Saxon immigrants, which was placed in the cornerstone of Trinity Lutheran Church of Altenburg, Missouri, in 1844, Rev. Gotthold Loeber wrote a short commentary on the immigrants' reasons for leaving Saxony, followed by a brief account of the community's first five years in Perry County, Missouri. The growth of rationalism, to which Loeber referred, was one outcome of a new age of German philosophy that was born in 1781 and whose influence spread to the rest of Europe. Historian Terry Pinkard argues that this new philosophy changed how nearly the entire world "conceived of itself, of nature, of religion, of human history, of the nature of knowledge, of politics, and of the structure of the human mind in general."<sup>28</sup> While those who admired the philosophers believed they were participating in an era of illustrious progress, conservative "Old Lutherans" perceived the opposite. They feared that the world

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<sup>27</sup> Gotthold Heinrich Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County, Missouri in 1839*, trans. Vernon R. Meyr (St. Louis, MO: Center for Regional History and Cultural Heritage, 1984), 1.

<sup>28</sup> Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy, 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

as they knew it was facing a corruption of values that only adherence to Reformation principles, such as the inerrancy of Scripture and devotion to the confessions of faith established by the early Christian church fathers, could remedy. By the 1830s, Old Lutherans were caught in a maelstrom of philosophical change that they believed would remove God from the center of life and challenged their perception of the original Reformation belief system. Ronald Taylor writes about the intellectual tradition of Germany: “Inevitably, however, the power of the concept of God was weakened, and the distance between man and God lessened.”<sup>29</sup> British cultural scholar Christopher Dawson explains that many Christians were troubled by this growing emphasis on human reason over the power of God.<sup>30</sup> One such group was the Old Lutherans, who grew increasingly apprehensive as they observed the philosophical, educational, and theological transformations in their homeland.

Conservative Lutherans believed that the only way to counter this unfortunate descent into rationalism was to return to the theological roots of the Reformation. Between the time of the Reformation and what was called the *Erweckung*—or revival—movement, the Saxon state increasingly embraced rationalism, unionism, and state control of the church and education. Although Saxony was a separate state, it is evident that the Saxon government attempted to mirror Prussian unionism, their model for state bureaucracy and state control of the church. German philosophy encouraged the Old Lutherans’ main

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<sup>29</sup> Ronald Taylor, ed., *The Intellectual Tradition of Modern Germany: A Collection of Writings from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century, vol. 1 of Philosophy, Religion, and the Arts* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1973), 2.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Dawson, *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture: A Way to the Renewal of Human Life* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 18.

nemesis—rationalism—and charged educators to give reason primacy over religion. Most Saxons were little disturbed by these developments, but conservative Old Lutherans viewed the changes as a spiritual fiasco. The Old Lutherans believed that Saxony was becoming less and less like the land of Martin Luther

The road to the Saxon emigration began more than three hundred years before when Martin Luther’s revelation about the concept of “grace” unintentionally started him on the path to separation from the Catholic Church. Tormented emotionally by feelings of inadequacy and unsure of God’s love for him, Luther went through an experience common to many Christians: he doubted whether he was really “saved.” He was finally “freed” from this apprehension by Romans 1:17, which reads: “For in the gospel of righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”<sup>31</sup> Martin Luther repeatedly taught “that the Bible’s most important teaching was justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone.”<sup>32</sup>

The reverberations emanating from this challenge were felt throughout Christendom. One consequence was the transformation of the relationship between the clergy and the laity. Luther’s understanding of grace as a leveler between clergy and laity in the eyes of God was not part of Roman Catholic practice at the time. The Christian was now exhorted to stand on his or her own before God without priest or pope acting as an intermediary. Neither

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<sup>31</sup> Romans 1:17 (NIV).

<sup>32</sup> Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord*, 2nd ed. (2005; repr. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 10.

was the clergy to remain sole interpreters of the Bible. The input of biblical scholars was still beneficial, but going forward, the ultimate responsibility for understanding Scripture resided in the heart of each individual believer. One of Luther's first undertakings was to translate the New Testament into the German language in 1522—so that he could put the Bible into the hands of the people. The responsibility for nurturing their faith and forming a personal relationship with God was now placed in the hands of the congregants. Much of the authority of the Catholic Church was based on uncontested submission to the authority of the clergy—particularly the Pope, who was the ultimate worldly authority over both secular and spiritual issues. The Reformation removed the proverbial veil of a Catholic clergy who stood as the intermediary between the believer and God. An example of this was the sacrament of Communion, in which only the clergy were allowed to drink the wine because the laity were not considered spiritually mature enough to partake in both the bread and the wine. Nor was the laity able to grow in their understanding of the Bible under these conditions, since only the Catholic clergy were allowed to read and interpret the Holy Bible. This was a serious doctrinal difference between the two church bodies, because in one the laity depended on the clergy for answers on spiritual issues and in the other, the laity was given the Scriptural authority to establish their own relationship with God.

In 1530, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V made his final attempt to bring Protestants back under the wing of the Catholic Church. In response to his demand for a written explanation of the dissenters' beliefs, Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Justas Jonas, and John Bugenhagen wrote the Augsburg Confession, which remains the best summary of Lutheran beliefs. Luther, who helped author the Confession, was much bolder than Melanchthon, but

Luther was still under an edict of death issued by the Catholic Church and could not risk his life by going to Augsburg. The laity, in this case embodied by the German princes, refused to be intimidated by Charles and staunchly supported Melancthon, standing strong from the very beginning of the meeting, when they gave “a clear signal that the courageous Lutheran laymen were not about to concede to the emperor’s demands, nor compromise their convictions.”<sup>33</sup> On the very first day of the conference, George, Margrave of Brandenburg, refused to give in to the Emperor’s demands, saying, “Before I let anyone take from the Word of God and ask me to deny my God, I will kneel and let them strike off my head.”<sup>34</sup> This was the last serious attempt to crush the Reformation, and after 1530, Protestantism flourished.

Yet, the continuing war of words between Catholics and Protestants turned into actual warfare in 1618, when the horrific Thirty Years’ War broke out. The war eventually expanded to all parts of Europe, but the majority of the battles took place on German lands and caused such devastation that it took years for the area to recover. The war caused the loss of eight million people, most of whom were peasants, damaged the economy, and arrested cultural and educational advancements. Beginning as a religious squabble between the Protestant majority in Bohemia and their pro-Catholic Hapsburg rulers, the war escalated internationally. The Catholic superpowers of the age—the Bourbons of France, the Spanish, and the Austrian Hapsburgs—all stepped in at various times to protect their interests. They were opposed, intermittently, by the Danish, the Dutch, the French, the Swedes, and the

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<sup>33</sup> McCain, *Concordia, The Lutheran Confessions*, 24.

<sup>34</sup> McCain, *Concordia, The Lutheran Confessions*, 25.

English. In addition, there were religious battles between Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists. European powers—Bohemian, Palatinate, Dutch, Swedish, French, and English—dominated various phases of the war. Catholic Hapsburgs supported the effort, while Bohemian Protestants looked to Holland, England, and Sweden for help. In 1630, Sweden, with Gustavus Adolphus at its head, entered the fray to help save Germany from the Hapsburgs and rescue the Protestants. The complex tapestry of religious and secular power struggles finally ended with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Under the treaty, the German states obtained full sovereignty, but no participant really won any significant “victory.” France and Sweden were the only countries to gain any significant land settlements. In the realm of religion, rulers were authorized to choose the religion of their subjects, although they were required to choose between Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed. If citizens disagreed with the religion chosen by their rulers, they had the right to emigrate to a different area. The Bohemians exercised this right in 1648 at the war’s end by opting to move to Dresden, where they founded St. John’s Lutheran Church.

The conflict left the German states scarred and impoverished, requiring the work of several generations to recover. Historian Dale Brown argues that the War left a psychological scar as well, saddling people with a feeling of “irretrievable disaster.”<sup>35</sup> As observed by historian W. R. Ward, diplomats in Europe realized that “religious changes often had political results” and molded political policies according to this viewpoint.<sup>36</sup> At

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<sup>35</sup> Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1978), 21.

<sup>36</sup> W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 4.

the conclusion of the war, Germany was a complex and “loose federal co-operation of internally independent territorial courts and administrations,” substantially different from the rest of the European countries who already had recognizable national identities.<sup>37</sup>

Out of the ashes of war arose the Pietist movement, a Lutheran attempt to revitalize their church. The movement was, in part, a response to the pervading sense of hopelessness following the Thirty Years’ War. Seeking reform within the Lutheran Church, Philipp Jakob Spener, the Father of Pietism, described the desired changes in his 1675 publication *Pia Desideria* (Pious Wishes), which included: more extensive study of the Bible; using the Bible as the proper guideline for necessary societal reforms; the priesthood of all believers; restraint during all theological debates; reform in the education of the clergy whereby piety and devotion would be central subjects; and edifying sermons which concentrated on living life according to biblical standards.<sup>38</sup> “The study of theology,” wrote Spener, “should be carried on not by the strife of disputation but rather by the practice of piety.”<sup>39</sup> He was more interested in holiness, which to him denoted living life according to God’s biblical principles rather than theology. Good works should be evident as a sign of faith, but were not a warranty of salvation. Preaching should edify the inner life of congregants instead of only

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<sup>37</sup> G. Benecke, *Society and Politics in Germany, 1500-1750* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 9.

<sup>38</sup> Spener’s *Pia Desideria* was originally the preface to John Arndt’s popular devotional *True Christianity*, which was first published between 1606 and 1609.

<sup>39</sup> Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (1675; repr. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 50.

feeding the mind with the latest doctrinal discourse. Where Luther taught justification, Spener taught regeneration,<sup>40</sup> and the term “new birth” became the “Pietist party badge.”<sup>41</sup>

Orthodox detractors often accused Pietists of sacrificing doctrine for emotional experience, but Spener was not a proponent of the experiential. What Spener wanted above all else was an emphasis on the heart rather than the mind or the intellect. Pietist beliefs were central tenets in the Saxon Lutherans’ faith, as well as those of German immigrants who came to America during the colonial period. These beliefs were also essential to the development of American Protestantism. Many believers, whose religious roots were planted in Pietist theology, became deeply engaged in the 19th century reform movements including mission work, prison reform, the abolition of slavery, and educational reform. According to their critics, followers of the faith were flawed by excessive emotionalism as well as by adherence to mysticism, and not enough underscoring of theology. Above all else, the emphasis on “religion of the heart” would remain characteristically Pietist in nature. Jonathan Edwards, one of the leaders of the Great Awakening in New England in the mid-1700s, explained religion of the heart in this way: “True religion is evermore a powerful thing; and the power of it appear, in the first place in the inward exercises of it in the heart, where is the principal and original seat of it.”<sup>42</sup>

True to Protestant tenets, education was extremely important to the Pietists. Spener established confirmation classes for children and conventicles, or *Collegia pietatis* for the

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<sup>40</sup> Justification signifies the more theological issue of the Christian’s position in Christ. Regeneration is more personal. The latter would signify the Christian’s personal relationship with Christ.

<sup>41</sup> Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 57.

<sup>42</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections* (1746; repr., Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), 28.

adults, which he described as an “ancient and apostolic kind of church meeting.”<sup>43</sup> The groups met on Wednesday and Sunday to pray, discuss the weekly sermon, and to talk about how to live Christian lives. He hoped to encourage spiritual growth in the laity as well as narrow the gap between the clergy and the people. For a while he held this type of meeting in Leipzig, until his enemies forced him to leave for Wittenberg, Saxony, where, with the aid of August Herman Francke, he was able to fully develop his teachings and help train the next generation of Pietists at the University of Halle.

Hermann Francke, the younger of the two Pietists, met Spener in one of his *collegia pietatis* classes in Dresden. Francke’s greatest accomplishment was the development of the University of Halle into a citadel of Pietist teaching. “Halle is often heralded as the point of origination for inner missions.”<sup>44</sup> Francke established a poor-school, a Latin school, a chemistry lab, a bookstore, a home for beggars, a full-time apothecary, and a Bible institute. An impressive list of targeted social changes included assistance to the poor, prison reform, and the abolition of slavery. Most famous of all of Spener and Francke’s endeavors, however, was the massive Orphan House, which could house three thousand people. Here students and teachers lived and worked together. All in all, it was a progressive, enlightened plan for educating the people, growing their faith, and reforming the world. In the classroom, Spener and Francke advocated the removal of social distinctions and modeled a compassionate Christianity. With Francke’s assistance, Halle became a Lutheran model of Christian service in action, although its influence was not confined to Lutheranism. The title

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<sup>43</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 89.

<sup>44</sup> Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 34.

of Francke's plan for social improvement, the "Great Project for a Universal Improvement in all Social Orders," demonstrated his desire to reach all levels of society.<sup>45</sup> This plan included the education of Prussian soldiers, women, and children. Servants were allowed to sit with their masters during classes.

The presence of Prussian soldiers in Halle classrooms was the result of King Wilhelm I's visit to the Pietist university in 1715, where August Hermann Francke, one of the founders, gave the Prussian king a tour of the facilities. King Wilhelm was attracted to the Pietist movement for a number of reasons, including the group's dedication to charity, service, and education while endeavoring to avoid involvement in politics.<sup>46</sup> The king hoped that well-trained chaplains would bolster better discipline and morale in his army. Because of his sincere admiration of the teachings and policies at the University of Halle in Saxony, King Wilhelm I became the "chief patron of theology graduates from Halle" soon after his accession to the throne.<sup>47</sup> Shortly thereafter he dispatched one hundred Halle-trained pastors to teach his soldiers and their families not only how to read and write but how to study the Bible and to form a new concept of *Ehre*, or honor, in public service. The German "state-service ideology," which the king purposely encouraged, was one of the by-products of the Pietist servant mentality, although the motives of the king and the Pietists were different. The Prussian king promoted it as good government, while the Saxon Pietists did it out of their love for God. Commenting on the influence of Pietism, intellectual historian Peter

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<sup>45</sup> Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 61.

<sup>46</sup> Chris Gehrz, "Francke and Friedrich Wilhelm: Can Pietists Serve 'Two Kingdoms'?" April 3, 2013, <http://pietistschoolman.com/2013/04/03/francke-and-friedrich-wilhelm-can-pietistss-serve-two-kingdoms>.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Watson, *The German Genius: Europe's Third Renaissance, the Second Scientific Revolution, and the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 48.

Watson writes that “Germanness as we now know it emerged in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and has much to do with Pietism.”<sup>48</sup>

Wilhelm I believed that the army should be a “moral force...united with the nation,” which was meant to serve and protect the people, not subjugate them.”<sup>49</sup> In another move to strengthen the rights of the people, the king “opened all land ownership and occupations to all Prussians.”<sup>50</sup> In 1717 he made education mandatory for the military and the civil service, which made these two career paths popular among the people. This solid support of education by the political leadership ensured that education would be considered an integral part of Germanness or the development of *Bildung*, “a heightened belief in achievement possible through education and culture.”<sup>51</sup> Historian John Daverio writes that it is “a blend of culture, education, and self-formation.”<sup>52</sup> The key areas of change were the state, education, the importance of order, the military, and the church, which felt the sting of a growing de-emphasis of God’s role in a person’s everyday life. Within this environment, as rationalism grew in influence, Germans began to develop a sense of their unique *Kultur* and

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<sup>48</sup> Watson, *The German Genius*, 45.

<sup>49</sup> As quoted in Heinrich von Treitschke, *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century: Selections from the Translation of Eden and Cedar Paul*, ed. Gordon A. Craig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 47.

<sup>50</sup> von Treitschke, *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, 35.

<sup>51</sup> Philip V. Bohlman, “Landscape – Region – Nation – Reich: German Folksong in the Nexus of National Identity,” in *Music and German National Identity*, Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 108.

<sup>52</sup> John Daverio, “Einheit – Freinheit – Vaterland: Intimations of Utopia in Robert Schumann’s Late Choral Music,” in *Music and German National Identity*, Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 59.

their place in the world. These changes spread beyond the border of the state of Prussia into the adjoining states that would finally become united as a nation in 1871.

Friedrich the Great, son of the Soldier King, played a significant role in encouraging the growth of German culture. Unlike his father, Friedrich the Great was a “lapsed Calvinist” who was tolerant of all faiths because he believed in none.<sup>53</sup> While he maintained the military and civil service structures his father built, he did not support the Pietist undergirdings that emphasized serving others. Although the king continued to promote education among the people, even establishing elementary schools, he replaced other aspects of Pietist influence with his preoccupation with the arts and philosophy or whatever interests he considered more learned and refined than the pursuits of his father. He was famous for gathering intelligentsia from throughout Europe in the dining room of his summer palace, Sans-Souci, where he retreated to escape from the pressures of Berlin. Men such as Voltaire were frequent guests. The king was undoubtedly “a brilliant commander, a thoughtful writer, and a highly cultured man,” but religion and any criticisms of him were the two topics banned from the otherwise free-wheeling discussions during these famous dinners. He encouraged the combination of education and culture that was becoming so important to the Germanic peoples.

The Napoleonic Wars affected all of the Germanic states including Saxony, which suffered a set of serious losses culminating in Prussia taking a large portion of Saxon land. As First Consul of the Republic of France in 1799, Napoleon’s model for warfare took him

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<sup>53</sup> Watson, *The German Genius*, 41.

to great heights of power as he forged a new era of military expertise. “Napoleon knew,” writes German historian James J. Sheehan, “that victory meant nothing less than the destruction of the enemy’s ability and will to resist further.”<sup>54</sup> Sheehan goes on to explain that Napoleon’s military tactics were unlike those of the Prussian military, which depended on military professionals who drilled their soldiers endlessly, implementing severe discipline, when necessary, to maintain control.<sup>55</sup> The French audaciously bypassed this tradition and instead, under the law of August 23, 1793, formed a citizen army, which allowed Napoleon to put large armies into the field. In spite of Napoleon’s success under this new system of warfare, Prussia remained loyal to the military techniques developed by Kings Friedrich I and II. King Frederick Wilhelm III did not have the leadership skills of his father or his grandfather, so purposely remained neutral until October of 1806, when he allied with Russia. Even then, King Frederick was soundly beaten by Napoleon at the battle of Jena. In retaliation, Napoleon, who was by then Emperor of France, “saddled [Prussia] with enormous indemnities.”<sup>56</sup>

Napoleon implemented a concept of conquest that went beyond winning battles, negotiating treaties, and returning home the victor. He envisioned himself as a world conqueror ruling over countries around the world. Hereafter, the needs of the French army were unending, and the peoples of already conquered lands were required to supply whatever the military needed. Britain managed to stand stubbornly against France’s attempts

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<sup>54</sup> James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866: The Oxford History of Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 229.

<sup>55</sup> Sheehan, *German History*, 228.

<sup>56</sup> Sheehan, *German History*, 255.

to subject their nation to French rule. Hence, France's economic policy for its "allies" was twofold—"an anti-British commercial blockade and an attempt to subordinate the entire European economy to the needs of the French military machine."<sup>57</sup> France did not leave their demands at these, however. Under French rule, all conquered countries were required to reform their institutions to align with the French political system. Sixty per cent of the German population was placed under new rulers during Napoleon's regime.<sup>58</sup> Each German state dealt with Napoleon's demands in their own way, but it was clear to all that the "reform" the French requested would be implemented by force if the French deemed it necessary.

Prussia's defeat in 1806 resulted in the loss of its Polish holdings to Frederick Augustus, the king of Saxony, who was one of the short-term beneficiaries of Napoleon's Empire. At the beginning of the war Napoleon made Elector Frederick Augustus III King of Saxony. He remained Napoleon's ally until 1813, when the tide began to turn and Augustus attempted to remain neutral. Napoleon made the mistake of invading Russia in 1812, and when his army lost, his defeated troops were chased westward by Russian soldiers. Disgruntled European countries, including Prussia, joined as allies as they routed the Emperor's army. Prussia declared war on France in March of 1813, followed by Austria and Sweden. The decisive battle, the "Battle of Nations," was fought in Leipzig, Saxony, on October 16, 1813. At the beginning of the battle the Saxons were still among Napoleon's allies on the field, but on the third day of fighting they deserted and joined the other side, a

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<sup>57</sup> Sheehan, *German History*, 255.

<sup>58</sup> Sheehan, *German History*, 251.

ploy which fooled no one. As Napoleon dashed across German territories to escape complete defeat, one German state after another was elated to join the armies chasing the little general. Before Napoleon was banished to the island of Elba, he lost all of his German conquests. The Prussian army was restored and installed as one of the four major European powers—Prussia, Russia, Britain, and Austria. Germans were finally free once more of foreign intruders.

Saxony was punished for their alliance with Napoleon when the Congress of Vienna met from 1814 to 1815 to negotiate the terms of France's defeat. As a result, Saxony lost 7,800 square miles of their kingdom to Prussia, a sore point for the Saxons for many years to come.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, Saxony joined the German Confederation of thirty-nine states, dominated by Prussia and Austria, which was established in 1815. The Confederation essentially restored the boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire, which had for centuries provided a tenuous government structure for several European countries before it was abruptly dissolved in 1806 when Napoleon formed the Confederation of the Rhine and reduced the number of states in the former Holy Roman Empire from over three hundred to thirty-nine.<sup>60</sup> Under Napoleon, each state was granted sovereignty and promised mutual aid and protection for all members of the Confederation.<sup>61</sup> In 1815, the leading powers of Europe intended the German states to remain a mediator of sorts—a buffer zone—between

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<sup>59</sup> Sheehan, *German History*, 401.

<sup>60</sup> Esther Singleton, ed. *Germany Described by Great Writers* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1909), 11.

<sup>61</sup> Conflicting descriptions of the Confederation were given in at least four of the sources I referred to. Some said Austria and Prussia were not members of the Confederation. Another said that Austria and Prussia as well as France and England had representatives for the Confederation. Another source said that parts of Prussia were in the Confederation.

hostile forces. With Napoleon's defeat, Germans again faced lands scarred by conquest and war. The Emperor severely damaged the linen-producing areas of Saxony and, in general, stunted the growth of its economy, leaving it and other German states lagging far behind countries such as England, which were rapidly industrializing. In education, culture, and philosophy, however, the German states were about to make a huge leap forward.

Intellectual historian Peter Watson traces the beginning of the philosophical developments to early in the eighteenth century, pointing in particular to alterations in the university system. He directs attention to men such as Gerlach Adolph von Münchhausen, the *Kurator* of then recently established Göttingen University, who, in 1728, removed the historical privilege of the theological faculty to censor teaching materials and classes in both theology and philosophy.<sup>62</sup> This action dramatically decreased the emphasis on theology in university studies and promoted philosophy, which was traditionally considered the inferior discipline. The university promoted student research for the purpose of expanding their personal knowledge and developing their critical reasoning skills, the development of PhD programs, and the rise of the seminar approach to teaching. The variety of classes greatly increased as subjects such as physics, politics, natural history, math, geography, and modern languages were added to the curriculum. As universities removed God as the centerpiece of education, much was happening on many different levels in the German states. Throughout this period, the search continued for a shared history that could unite the Germanic peoples into one nation with grand hopes for attaining a place of prominence among the European world leaders.

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<sup>62</sup> Watson, *The German Genius*, 51.

Much has been written about the damage to the corporate German image throughout all these destructive years of war and turmoil. As historian David Blackbourne explains it, the perception of their critics that they were backward, even semi-barbaric, led Germans to over-compensate for their so-called defects.<sup>63</sup> Early in the nineteenth century, German scholars intensified their efforts to identify shared values, histories, or cultural accomplishments in an effort to unify the German people. Still sensitive to European opinion, Germans were especially anxious to develop their own unique *Kultur*. At this point a remarkable group of scholars appeared on the world stage. The list of contributors to the German “Golden Age,” which also encompassed the Romanticist movement, was impressive—Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich von Schlegel, the Grimm brothers, and many more.<sup>64</sup> Intellectually and aesthetically, the Germans reached a new level of achievement that strongly resonated with the people and began to build a sense of what it meant to be German. Their *Sonderweg*, or singular path, differed from the West as represented by England and began to set the Germans apart as a phenomenon unique unto themselves. The development of this unique path, however, ran contrary to the beliefs of the Old Lutherans and contributed to their growing disapproval of the changes occurring in Saxony, as well as in the other German states.

The reaction of the Old Lutherans to the German philosophers is outlined by Robert C. Schultz in *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church-Missouri*

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<sup>63</sup> David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 189.

<sup>64</sup> Aesthetically, an incomparable group of musicians ushered in three hundred years of German genius with men such as Ludwig von Beethoven, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Richard Wagner, and many others.

*Synod*.<sup>65</sup> In this summary, Schultz traces the root of the problem to the “rejection of the theology of the Lutheran Confessions in the philosophy and theology of the early 19th century.”<sup>66</sup> He asserts that the “Saxon emigrants were particularly conscious of the spread of rationalistic theology throughout Germany.”<sup>67</sup> Schultz highlights the philosophies of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Immanuel Kant, Johann Fichte, Georg Wilhelm Hegel, and Friedrich Schleiermacher as major advocates of a “new rationalistic religion as the completion of the Reformation.”<sup>68</sup> As far as the philosophers were concerned, they, not the Old Lutherans, were the standard bearers of the Reformation message, arguing that conservatives were forcing the letter of the Law on the people, instead of the intent of the Law.

Schultz follows the preceding section by discussing Hegel’s and Schleiermacher’s desire for a “unified religious base.”<sup>69</sup> Several of the philosophers purposely attempted to form the church into one group. As an example, Schultz points to a sermon Schleiermacher gave in commemoration of the Augsburg Confession, in which he declared: “Becoming thus one body and one spirit we will be eager to preserve the unity not of the letter but of the spirit through the bond of peace and not foolishly over and over again separate and divide

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<sup>65</sup> Robert C. Schultz, “The European Background,” in *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, ed. Carl S. Meyer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 47-89.

<sup>66</sup> Schultz, “The European Background,” 47.

<sup>67</sup> Schultz, “The European Background,” 47.

<sup>68</sup> Schultz, “The European Background,” 48.

<sup>69</sup> Schultz, “The European Background,” 56.

ourselves!”<sup>70</sup> The remarks were aimed at those such as the Old Lutherans who were refusing to form a Union of the Protestant and Reformed churches. Schultz observes: “The above sections of Schleiermacher’s sermons are obviously aimed at the Lutherans who insisted on maintaining the historic position of the Lutheran Confessions as the rule of preaching and teaching in the church.”<sup>71</sup> This was one of the goals of Schleiermacher and other German philosophers, and it was this attitude that the Old Lutherans strongly resisted.

Concerning the issue of unionism, one of the issues that divided the Reformed and Lutheran churches was expressed in an 1800 sermon preached by Franz Volkmar Reinhard in which he urged the people to return to Martin Luther’s teachings on grace, that: “All men, without distinction, are sinners, and all of them lack the glory which they should have before God. All of them will be righteous and blessed without any of their own merit through the free grace of God” [author’s italics].<sup>72</sup> Those attending Reformed churches believed good works ensured salvation, while the Old Lutherans believed that people engaged in good works because of God’s grace, but doing so would not earn salvation; salvation was freely given by the Lord to those who asked to receive it. Reinhard continued: “our church owes her existence to the doctrine of the free grace of God in Christ.”<sup>73</sup> Pastors such as Reinhard stridently argued that the philosophers who called for a revival of the Reformation through the unification of the churches into one organization fundamentally did not understand

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<sup>70</sup> Schultz, “The European Background,” 53.

<sup>71</sup> Schultz, “The European Background,” 53.

<sup>72</sup> Schultz, “The European Background,” 62.

<sup>73</sup> Schultz, “The European Background,” 62-63.

Luther's teachings. These philosophical and theological disagreements set the stage for the Stephanites' resistance to changes in the Saxon church.

Saxony's government was influenced by the example of Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, who developed a model for the Union that was presented at the 300th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. His plan was subtle in its declaration of protection of religious freedom while opening the door for government intervention. In the Prussian Civil Code, he declared that "complete freedom of faith and of conscience is guaranteed to every inhabitant" and then directed that "secret gatherings, which could endanger the order and security of the state, shall not be tolerated even if they pretend to be divine services in the houses."<sup>74</sup> The latter is the logic behind the Saxon government's prohibition of Stephan's Bible studies in his home and the constant surveillance of Saxon leadership.

Hegel advanced the concept of the state in his *Philosophie des Rechts*, in which he asserted that the laws of the state were the most rational and a bastion of freedom. "At a time when religious values and dynastic rights no longer seemed valid," Hegel proposed that the state would provide a stable and free society.<sup>75</sup> But Hegel was not a nationalist; his ideal state was universal, and he highly favored monarchies. In Hegel's estimation, the state was divine in its own right. Through the divine idea that was the state, human will and freedom were expected to be expressed in their highest level. This was a mystical, internal freedom but not necessarily a political freedom. Because of the divine nature of the state, the individual should willingly put the state before his or her personal interests. For Hegel, the

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<sup>74</sup> Schultz, "The European Background," 59.

<sup>75</sup> Sheehan, *German History*, 433.

state was the “moral ideal,” so there was no need to protect citizens from what should be the best and most trusted of institutions.<sup>76</sup>

Whether or not Hegel intended to diminish the role of God in the world, his philosophy aided the progress of that ideological trend. In his trilogy of Idea, Nature, and Spirit, Idea is spoken of as God’s will, and the science connected to Idea is logic. Within space, the Idea is Nature and Nature operates in space and time; its science is geometry. The Spirit operates in time and its science is history. But the Spirit, in this context, can be construed as a reference to God. History, Hegel wrote, “is the simple concept of Reason.”<sup>77</sup> Did Hegel then mean that reason must be the basis of faith? If so, this was not what conservative Lutherans believed. For them faith was a gift from God. German historian Heinrich von Treitschke, who was a staunch supporter of an imperial Germany, wrote that Hegel viewed the “state as the actualization of the moral ideal.”<sup>78</sup> In Von Treitschke’s assessment, Hegel destroyed the philosophy of natural rights and political romanticism, such as the views of Jacob Grimm, who argued that the state received its beginnings from a “primitive contract entered into by individuals.”<sup>79</sup> Treitschke disdained Romanticism because its proponents “declared war on the world of reality” and he worried that Hegel’s concept that the rational is real could go dangerously wrong if a man of power but not

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<sup>76</sup> von Treitschke, *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, 244.

<sup>77</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Reason in History*, trans. Robert S. Hartman (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997), 11.

<sup>78</sup> von Treitschke, *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, 244.

<sup>79</sup> von Treitschke, *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, 244.

wisdom attempted to remodel the world.<sup>80</sup> In other words, Hegel seemed unaware of how his philosophy of the rational could go dangerously wrong in the real world, where ego and power might take advantage of the state as the “moral ideal” to justify their own immoral actions.

Throughout the German states with Protestant majorities, such as Prussia and Saxony, conservative Lutherans were unhappy with the shift away from traditional church mores. Even laity who had not been exposed to the curriculum of the universities could clearly see the changes in the ideas that the pastors were promoting from the pulpit. The laity and clergy sounded the alarm in 1817, when King Frederick William III united Prussian Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinist) churches into one evangelical organization. Saxony was directly affected by Prussian unionism, as Saxony officials sought to copy the concept. This liberal plan to unite all Protestant churches into one church body was intentionally launched at the three-hundred-year anniversary of the nailing of Luther’s Ninety-five Theses to the door of All Saints’ Church in Wittenberg, Saxony. Unionists pushed a neutral liturgy and a sacrament that they insisted be celebrated by both Lutherans and Reformed. Old Lutherans were in the minority in opposing the watering down of Lutheran theology, sacraments, and confessionalism. Reformed and Lutheran Protestants identified theological differences from the early days of the Reformation when John Calvin ceased his support of the Augsburg Confession because of differing opinions on communion and salvation. In their refusal to join the Union, Saxon Lutherans demonstrated their deep-seated opposition to compromising their beliefs.

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<sup>80</sup> von Treitschke, *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, 83.

The laity sought spiritual haven at whatever church preached the “pure” Gospel, according to their standards, and the original tenets of the Reformation. As they grew steadily more discontented with the teachings in their local Saxon churches, these so-called “heretics,” or dissenters, called for a return to the undiluted teachings of the Bible and to the tenets of the Reformation. In their eyes, the Lutheran church was listing dangerously away from the foundational precepts established by Martin Luther and his associate Philip Melancthon in the early days of the Reformation. Adopting the motto “God’s Word and Luther’s doctrine shall never, never perish,” conservatives demonstrated their devotion to this position by voting with their feet, if need be, and attending the services of pastors who they believed were still preaching the Gospel.<sup>81</sup> In order to attend conservative church services, they often were forced to leave their local churches and walk several miles to the few conservative churches still remaining in Saxony.

Although Old Lutherans attended churches scattered throughout Saxony and Prussia, many attended Martin Stephan’s church, St. John’s, in Dresden. Stephan’s sermons were renowned to his contemporaries for what they believed were their pure devotion to the Gospel. As a young man, Stephan intended to become a linen weaver but due to the influence of another Pietist, Pastor Ephraim Scheibel, he decided to enter the ministry. Scheibel took Stephan under his wing and allowed Martin the use of his rather large library. From here he proceeded to study at the universities at Halle and Leipzig and graduated in 1809. By 1825 Stephan’s reputation as a charismatic but conservative Lutheran pastor was

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<sup>81</sup> Gotthold Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839: The Experiences and Adventures of the Stephanites who Emigrated from Saxony: Their Journey to St. Louis, Their Stay There and the Condition of Their Colony in Perry County* (Dresden, Germany: C. Heinrich, 1839), 37.

drawing hundreds of people to his church services. Lutheran historian Walter Baepler said of Stephan: “Whoever heard him once, if he was not filled with the spirit of scoffing, felt himself moved to the inmost depth of his being, without really knowing how this had come to pass.”<sup>82</sup> “He was,” observed W. H. T. Dau, “a man of exceptional talents, captivating address and great psychological insight.”<sup>83</sup>

In 1820 Stephan wrote *Petersburger Catchismus*, which clearly reflected his conservative stance. A volume of sermons published by Stephan in 1825 solidified his widespread notoriety. In it, he proclaimed: “I am firmly convinced that only the Bible can be the fountain of pure doctrine.”<sup>84</sup> Fame drew criticism and more strident attacks as well. In a newspaper article in *Der Correspondent von und fur Deutschland*, which was printed on August 24, 1821, Stephan was called a mystic, a separatist, and, even the cause of criminal insanity in those who followed him.<sup>85</sup> Some of Stephan’s critics believed that his ideology and leadership could only lead to disaster, by which they meant that his teachings smacked of a cult and were leading people astray.<sup>86</sup> One critic referred to his followers as the “papal Protestant Stephanists, who consider it a sin to serve a united church since, according to

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<sup>82</sup> Baepler, *A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod 1847-1947* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 19.

<sup>83</sup> W. H. T. Dau, ed., *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 19.

<sup>84</sup> Baepler, *A Century of Grace*, 18.

<sup>85</sup> Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, 1839-1841* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 35.

<sup>86</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 35.

their opinion, the Reformed are the children of Satan.”<sup>87</sup> But these scathing denunciations did not deter the laity or many pastors, who came in droves to hear Stephan’s sermons. People were refreshed by his emphasis on the grace of God. He preached simply and succinctly, filling a void in those who hungered for a caring, yet just Heavenly Father. His knowledge of the Bible and his counseling skills were considered a powerful combination by his conservative contemporaries and appear to be a viable description of his ministry in the 1820s. Those following him so wholeheartedly naturally became known as “Stephanists” or “Stephan-led Alt-Lutheraners.”<sup>88</sup>

Stephan counseled many aspiring pastors who were unsettled by the rationalist curriculums of their universities and who turned to the Old Lutheran movement. Several students at the University of Leipzig, who were unable to find traditional Lutheran teachings in their classes, joined an “awakened” group called the “Holy Club,” led by Candidate Johann Gottlieb Kuehn, who had advanced enough in his schooling to be officially in training for the ministry. Among the members of the group at one time or another were future Stephanites Ernst Moritz Buerger, Theodor Julius Brohm, Ottomar Fuerbringer, J. F. Buenger, E. G. W. Keyl, and the brothers Otto Walther and C. F. W. Walther. For these young Lutherans, a new wave of Pietism was an appealing form of Lutheranism in light of what was being taught in the lecture hall. Kuehn’s students shared similarities with the founders of the original Pietist movement, which included a strong trust in the power of

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<sup>87</sup> Carl E. Schneider, *The German Church on the American Frontier: A Study in the Rise of Religion among the Germans of the West* (St. Louis, MO: Eden Publishing House, 1939), 104.

<sup>88</sup> Adolph E. Schroeder, “The Survival of German Traditions in Missouri” in *The German Contribution to the Building of the Americas, Studies in Honor of Karl J. R. Arndt*, eds. Gerhard K. Friesau and Walter Schatzburg (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1977), 296.

prayer, in catechetical teaching, and in “religion of the heart.”<sup>89</sup> Both groups shared a common desire to return to the teachings of the early Church fathers, and of Martin Luther.

Although the Old Lutheran theology students gained comfort from the group led by Kuehn, his emphasis on the experiential often dragged the believer into insecurity about the state of his salvation. Students wondered if they were devout enough or if they spent sufficient time in prayer. Kuehn contributed to the problem by pressuring his compatriots for increased outward demonstrations of their faith with the result that the men began to doubt their spiritual position rather than grow confirmed in it. Kuehn believed a Christian had to go through “the awful terrors of the Law and the qualms of the fear of hell.”<sup>90</sup> Club members “sought certainty of salvation through the mortification of the flesh, self-denial and as conscious avoidance of everything which was considered evil.”<sup>91</sup> Emotions often ran deep and drove more than one person to the edge of despair as they struggled with their failure to live consecrated lives. Ironically, in their earnest desire to please God, their reactions to Kuehn’s teachings began to resemble Martin Luther’s deep depression as a priest before he discovered the grace of God in Romans 1:17.<sup>92</sup> The very men who wished to revive the Reformation repeated Luther’s initial mistakes. Some gave in to hopelessness, exhaustion, depression, and even illness as they despaired of ever being in a right relationship with God.

Both C. F. W. Walther and his brother Otto went through periods of doubt while they attended Kuehn’s meetings. C. F. W. suffered a physical and emotional breakdown and

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<sup>89</sup> Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 44.

<sup>90</sup> Dau, *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod*, 24.

<sup>91</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 15.

<sup>92</sup> Romans 1: 17 (NIV).

returned home for a while to recover. Years later he gave his personal analysis of the shortcomings of the movement. There was not, he wrote, a clear understanding that they must rely on God's strength rather than their own. There was too much emphasis on emotional experiences, such as the "crushing of the heart" or attempts to measure the extent of a person's repentance. The result was "that Christianity appears more as a serious burden, which Christ is made out to be a hard, demanding Savior rather than a gracious one who brings everything" [necessary].<sup>93</sup> Walther spent his time studying the Bible and Luther's writings while he was at home recovering his strength. During this period of introspection and study, Walther first came into contact with the Reverend Martin Stephan. Stephan's ministry to both of the Walther brothers enabled them to finally find peace and move forward in completing their education. It was Stephan who advised Carl Walther in a letter that he should "hasten to the saving arms of Jesus, and he would find healing under His wings."<sup>94</sup>

All of these men remained adamantly loyal to the confessions written by the Christian early church fathers, which had long been considered an essential element of Lutheran theology. Chief among these foundational creeds were the Apostles' Creed, written in the second century, and the Athanasian Creed, written around the sixth century. For Lutherans, the confessions were non-negotiable; they were originally written by the church fathers to teach new believers the basics of the Christian faith, and they remained just as

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<sup>93</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *The Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther, Selected Letters*, trans. Roy A. Suelflow. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 60.

<sup>94</sup> Julius A. Friedrich, "Dr. C. F. W. Walther," in *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century*, ed. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 24.

valid in Luther's time as they were at the beginning of Church history. Luther discussed the Nicene Creed, written in 325 and 381 by church leaders at the Council of Nicaea and the Council of Constantinople, in his Small Catechism, because the creeds were a straightforward, succinct statement of what he believed. These confessions of faith professed, for example, that Lutherans believed in "God the Father Almighty." "Jesus Christ, the only Son of God," and "the Holy Spirit."<sup>95</sup> The Creeds discussed baptism, salvation, the Virgin birth, the resurrection, and other central issues Christians have discussed since the early days of the Church. They were concise statements of the biblical beliefs of the Lutheran Church. Those who adhered to confessionalism, such as the Old Lutherans were, at times, not allowed to hold their own church services and were even prevented from having their children baptized or confirmed.<sup>96</sup>

The Saxon government was increasingly intruding into areas that conservative Lutherans believed should be left in the hands of each congregation and its pastor. Although the outward structure of the Lutheran church seemingly had not changed, a great deal of havoc was being caused by forces within the church. The Saxon Constitution of September 4, 1831, placed both church and state under the king of Saxony. On November 7, 1837, just one year before the Saxon Lutherans emigrated to the United States, a Saxon law was enacted that gave authority over the church to the department of the minister of education

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<sup>95</sup> Martin Luther, *A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), 90.

<sup>96</sup> The history of confessionalism in the Protestant church is complicated, but the Old Lutherans were unique in their emphasis on the creeds, including the reading of sections of them during worship services. The latter is still done in churches that have remained in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Church officials in Saxony opposed the creeds because the miraculous in the Bible was clearly supported, as was the definition of the divine nature of God. One of the first statements in the creed states that God is the creator of heaven and earth, which identified him as an all-powerful God.

and worship, who was always to be a Protestant. The church was governed by an ecclesiastical council, or a consistory, made up of theologians and jurists who were to administrate matters of church and state. The officials were predominantly rationalists, so they wielded their power to appoint pastors and educators whose beliefs were either rationalist or leaned towards rationalism. It was difficult in this environment for conservative pastors to receive appointments to churches, and, if they did, they were continually under government surveillance. The experience of Ernst Moritz Buerger, a young pastor from Seelitz, is a classic example of the tension between conservatism and rationalism.

Reverend Buerger, a former member of the Club at the University of Leipzig, wrote an extensive report in his memoirs about his problems as a pastor in Saxony. He claimed that rationalism “began to break forth in great strength in Germany, 1753.”<sup>97</sup> Buerger and his father, who was a pastor in Seelitz, continually argued about rationalism and doctrine because his father “was also carried away by the indifferentistic and rationalistic current of unbelief, as was the case with almost all the pastors of Saxony.”<sup>98</sup> “Though external discipline,” Buerger explained, “was not lacking in the parental home, yet there was lack in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as that was quite generally the case, since the church was in a rather sorry state, and prophecy, namely the pure doctrine, was missing in the church.”<sup>99</sup> The teaching at the university was also abysmal, according to Buerger, who wrote

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<sup>97</sup> Ernst Moritz Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, trans. Edgar Joachim Buerger (Lincoln, MA: Martin Julian Buerger, 1953), 6.

<sup>98</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 8.

<sup>99</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 8-9.

that "...my first years at the University were wasted years, because I permitted myself to be dragged into the mire of Rationalism..."<sup>100</sup> He complained that "the conduct among the students was just what might be expected under the leadership of unbelieving, rationalistic teachers."<sup>101</sup>

Hungry for the truth about the Bible, Buerger spent time not only at the Club but also with "an aged Christian shoemaker by the name of Goetsching," who was "rich in Christian Knowledge and experience."<sup>102</sup> After graduation he passed his *Examen pro Candidatura* in Dresden and then returned home to help his father from 1829 to 1833. He met Martin Stephan sometime during these years and visited with him in Dresden. At these meetings, Stephan encouraged him to study the entirety of the Bible, meditating on what he read. Finally, Buerger was asked to preach a sermon in Glaucha to the Duke of Schoenburg, who was known as a pious man. His friend Kuehn had died while serving as a pastor in Lunzenau, and there was a chance Buerger could take his place, but not without submitting to a rigorous and baffling procedure, which resulted in years of problems, not with the Duke, but with state authorities in charge of the church and education.

Buerger and many conservative pastors struggled with the hypocrisy of taking an oath to defend the inerrancy of the Bible and confessionalism and then pastor churches where the state authorities blocked the very intent of that oath. Buerger recalled that he "pledged in my teaching to hold myself strictly and faithfully to the Word of God in the

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<sup>100</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 18.

<sup>101</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 15.

<sup>102</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 19.

Holy Scriptures and the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church...”<sup>103</sup> Men went through a series of hurdles before they were allowed to take this oath. Leipzig was the home of the Consistorium, the group of officials who made all decisions about the church and education, and who were in charge of ordaining pastors such as Buerger. He was afraid that during the appointment process he would be identified as a “mystic,” a term referring to his Pietist experience, and not given a chance to be a pastor.

The process went well, however, and he became the deacon and pastor in the village of Lunzenau. Buerger pointedly referred to his document of ordination by which he proclaimed his devotion to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Word of God, the catechisms of Martin Luther, and so forth. But government officials were not really interested in the traditionally conservative sentiments expressed in the oath. Buerger received his “ordination diploma from the unbelieving and radically rationalistic Consistorium in Leipzig.”<sup>104</sup> He further explained that “the diploma of vocation I did indeed receive from the pious and believing Count of Schoenberg, but, as was necessary since the church was under civil authority, it was handed to me by an unbelieving magistrate.”<sup>105</sup> In short, conservative clergy were taking the words of the oath literally and solemnly, only to find that it was all a farce. The government had little or no intention of honoring the vows the pastors took in good faith.

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<sup>103</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 32.

<sup>104</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 33.

<sup>105</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 33.

When he took over his first congregation in Lunzenau in 1833, Buerger found that the formal pastoral vows were in direct contrast to the actions supported by the church leadership. In the third year of his pastorate, his rationalist opponents posted caricatures of him on a barn tower labeling him a “mystic, or hypocrite.”<sup>106</sup> The local police were instructed to keep an eye on him and to stop any conventicles he might convene. He was warned not to teach the letter of Scripture or symbolical books, not even to discuss original sin. An 80-year-old teacher sat in his church services searching for any digression from rationalist teachings. The latter complained that “[Buerger’s] fanatical followers are of the lowest class of people,” and that “they multiply themselves through the example and encouragement of others, through evening meetings, through tracts given out by Pastor Buerger, and through other mystical books.”<sup>107</sup> The teacher’s accusations were made to local authorities but also to state authorities, which compounded the possibility that Buerger might be removed from the ministry.

Because Buerger trusted Stephan and was stymied by state persecution for continuing to teach what he considered the pure tenets of the Bible, he joined the emigration and left Saxony in 1838, although he later chastised himself for leaving his congregation without fighting more against the unbelieving state officials who ran the Saxon church. In his memoirs he added a comment intended for Americans:

To us here in America, where Church and State are separate, and the congregation possesses all its divinely ordained rights, it must seem remarkable, how this call proves that the State, the temporal government in Germany, had the power and authority to choose and call ministers for the congregations, and that the

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<sup>106</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 41.

<sup>107</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 41.

congregations merely had the right to raise objections against the election and call if they could prove something reprehensible against the person.<sup>108</sup>

It was very difficult for conservative Lutheran pastors to preach the Word of God in Saxon pulpits without condemnation from state authorities.

C. F. W. Walther, too, was reprimanded in 1837 for refusing to use a “rationalistic hymnal” while a pastor in Braeunsdorf, Saxony. Walther also disapproved of the textbooks chosen by the teacher in charge of the parish school. He contended that the textbooks, as well as the hymnal, were filled with rationalist teachings. In spite of the teacher’s adamant objections, the superintendent ultimately sided with the pastor. Count Detlev Einsiedel, who was a pious local leader, came to Walther’s aid and donated books that were acceptable to the young pastor. The controversy over education, however, turned out to be a crucial part of the decision to leave for America. Walther would later reflect: “Concern for the future of their children in both church and school, was the most compelling reason for the emigration to America.”<sup>109</sup>

Throughout these years, Martin Stephan was the authorities’ most celebrated target. Nevertheless, as Pastor Loeber wrote, “when [Stephan] was questioned by the government and they could not find him guilty of any specific offence, we were then convinced, as he had always claimed, that it was mainly the Lutheran Church itself that was the target and not Stephan personally.”<sup>110</sup> The Saxon authorities distrusted clandestine and unsanctioned meetings, which led them to keep Stephan’s evening “Concordia Hours” meetings under

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<sup>108</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 29.

<sup>109</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 174.

<sup>110</sup> Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County*, 3.

surveillance. Purportedly, the meetings were intended to study the Formula of Concord in a small group setting, which allowed for deeper discussions of the subject matter at hand. The government accused the Stephanites of holding the meetings as a cover for immoral activities. While there actually were teachings on the Formula, Stephan developed a love for nocturnal wanderings afterwards and would often build campfires in the nearby wood, around which he gathered both male and female friends.

Around 1831, many of the citizens of Dresden suspected the pastor of conducting some of his late night walks with only women. His first arrest, however, did not come until February 1, 1836, when Saxon gendarmes raided a meeting at the home of a Mr. Nitzschke and accused Stephan of disturbing the peace. No substantial proof was produced, but from that point on, the situation became increasingly tense. In spite of the lack of concrete evidence, city authorities ordered Stephan to remain at home in the evenings. Then, as now, a hint of sexual immorality could ruin a pastor's reputation and destroy his ministry. On one occasion, eight gendarmes arrived at five in the morning to set a trap for Stephan, who was out strolling with a young lady by the name of Sophie. However, by coincidence or by plan, Stephan sent her on ahead of him and thus avoided scandal. Due to the hostile environment in which conservative Lutherans were living at the time, Stephan's supporters believed their leader was a victim of persecution, which hastened their decision to leave Saxony.

An entry in the Altenburg Castle Archives left an indelible impression of how the followers of Stephan were viewed by other Christians in Saxony. Farmer Georg Klügel and six of his family members were among those who joined the emigration. Whoever recorded this information into the church records wrote that the Grubers were a respectable family

although they had for a long time favored the Moravians. But the family was described less favorably after they began their association with Stephan:

When Pastor Gruber came to the town of Reust in 1825, he gained influence over them and later under Stephan's deluded sway won them by false pretense to believe that the true Lutheran faith had died out, that the pastors in the country were false teachers, that a new agenda was to be introduced as in Prussia, and that God's punishment would break out shortly. Only then did these pitiable people become mistrustful, inclined to separatism, and in blind faith followed their leaders to America, taking a substantial fortune with them. Reports have it that they painfully regretted this step, against which they had been warned from all sides.<sup>111</sup>

Some Saxon Christians seemed genuinely concerned about Stephan's growing power over his parishioners. From the Stephanites' perspective, however, the government's intrusion into their lives was becoming unsustainable because it involved not only Stephan but others such as Walther and Buerger. The police were monitoring the Concordia Hour meetings, which affected the people as well as the pastors because it restricted their ability to meet in homes to study the Bible in a small group setting. No ruling was made in the case against Stephan, which meant that the entire incident was known by only a few, and it is not clear how Stephan managed to remain unconvicted yet another time. Without a conviction, he was still innocent as far as his followers were concerned. In their eyes, the persecution against all of them was increasing, and they believed the time to leave had come. By the early 1830s many "Old Lutherans" had joined together under the leadership of Martin Stephan or under other pastors preaching revival. Pietism helped many of the future leaders rediscover the Reformation's teachings and the devotion of the Pietists to their faith. The laity sought out churches where the Gospel was preached rather than rationalism and, in

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<sup>111</sup> LaVerne T. Boehmke, "Some Paitzdorf Saxons," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, 58, no. 3 (Fall 1985): 105.

their own way, bravely contended against increasing pressure to give in to the forces of change working against traditional Christian doctrine. Although the Old Lutherans did not comprise a large percentage of the population, their complaints against the philosophical changes found within the university and church often resulted in harassment from local authorities. It is clear that these Lutherans desired to restore the Lutheran Church to the grounding principles of the early heady days of the Reformation and that they would not settle for less than the freedom to worship as they pleased.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE JOURNEY

Before we leave Germany and Europe, we desire to transmit friendly greetings and farewells to our friends who are remaining behind. After many years of defamation we are at long last delivered from the hands of our enemies and are traveling in peace to that part of the world where they who are slandered have the privilege of defending themselves publicly.

Martin Stephan  
Fall of 1838<sup>112</sup>

By December of 1837, the Stephanites seriously considered leaving Saxony to find a land where they could gain religious freedom. Believing that the persecution of the Stephanites by the government would only grow worse, the Old Lutherans concluded that freedom of religion could not be secured in Saxony. After considering several possibilities, they turned to the United States in hopes of fulfilling their vision of worship undeterred by government interference. Pastor Gotthold Loeber believed it was “impossible to hear a good sermon [in Saxony] on the Word of God.”<sup>113</sup> As the situation worsened, the Saxons prepared a very detailed, thoroughly practical plan for a successful emigration to St. Louis. The Old Lutherans forged a highly organized emigration group, which was a significant success, considering that more than six hundred passengers were involved, including women and children. Their “Articles of Emigration” covered every imaginable situation, including the purchase of land and guidelines on establishing their community in America.

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<sup>112</sup> Walter A. Baepler, *A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847-1947* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 27.

<sup>113</sup> Gotthold Heinrich Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County, Missouri in 1839*, trans. Vernon R. Meyr (St. Louis, MO: Center for Regional History and Cultural Heritage, 1984), 3.

What the Stephanites did not anticipate was the evolution of their leader, Pastor Martin Stephan, from father figure to aspiring spiritual dictator. The voyage to New Orleans and the trip up the Mississippi River to St. Louis were filled with conflict that went beyond the normal trials and tribulations of travel in the early 1800s. As the trip progressed, the pastor increasingly belittled the people while demanding that he be treated with special deference and granted greater authority over the emigration community. During the voyage, the rifts that would plague the group after their arrival in Missouri were just beginning to show. The language and the actions of Pastor Stephan from December 1838 to February 1839 reveal a leader who had lost all humility and no longer viewed himself as a servant to the people. At the time, the Saxons did not recognize Stephan's actions as signs of deeper trouble, but in retrospect they regretted that they had been blind to the true nature of his behavior during the journey. The Saxons faced an additional, vexing problem upon arrival in St. Louis. They found themselves in a complex German-American community, in which liberals controlled the voice of the German language newspapers. German-American liberals detested the Saxons; in general, because they did not support Christianity and, specifically, because of the Saxons' ecclesiastical structure. The Stephanites left their homeland in support of a man they placed on a pedestal as a respected spiritual leader, but in St. Louis their opinion about their honored leader would quickly change.

When the Stephanite leadership began to search for a new home, they sought guidance from fellow Lutherans in New York, but they were most influenced by a report on

the benefits of Missouri written by Gottfried Duden in 1829.<sup>114</sup> The Saxons briefly considered Australia but finally decided against it because they did not want to be under British rule. Michigan was also considered for a while, but Duden's travel journal ultimately convinced them to head to Missouri. Per Duden's advice, St. Louis was selected as the Saxons' initial destination because it was an excellent hub from which they could search for a suitable place in the surrounding states to purchase land for the community.<sup>115</sup> Duden temporarily settled in the United States in order to gather reliable information about the country so that Germans who chose to emigrate to America could do so successfully. In 1824 he purchased some inexpensive government land at \$1.25 per acre, about fifty miles above the mouth of the Missouri River in Montgomery County, in order to actually experience farming conditions in Missouri. He continued his experiment until 1827, when he rented out his farm and returned to Germany, never to return to Missouri. Historian LaVern Rippley gives Duden credit for the increase in German immigration to Missouri during this period. German immigrants, Rippley writes, flooded Missouri because of Duden's book, in which "he made the youthful United States into a utopia for the oppressed and the downtrodden."<sup>116</sup>

Duden was later criticized for misleading potential immigrants about life on Missouri farms by painting the experience in idyllic, almost utopian, terms. Land was so rich in

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<sup>114</sup> Gottfried Duden, *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America and a Stay of Several Years along the Missouri (During the Years 1824, '25, '26 and 1827*, trans. and ed. James W. Goodrich (Columbia, MO: The State Historical Society of Missouri and University of Missouri Press, 1980).

<sup>115</sup> Carl Edvard Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, trans. Rudolph Fichler (1840; repr., Tucson, AZ: Marion R. Winkler, 1975), 161.

<sup>116</sup> LaVern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), 44.

Missouri, proclaimed Duden, that “it seems to me almost a fantasy when I consider what nature offers a man here.”<sup>117</sup> Lots of fertile land was available on the north side of the Missouri, and he believed much of this would not require fertilization for one hundred years.<sup>118</sup> One oak tree, he claimed, was so huge that its acorns were the size of small hen eggs. The area supported several types of grapevines, which was good news to German viniculturalists, who eventually settled areas such as Hermann, Missouri, while brewers set up operations in St. Louis and Perry County. Duden boasted that “beer can easily be brewed since enough hops grow in the forests.”<sup>119</sup> Although he claimed that “no European poverty prevails here,” the years he spent in Missouri also happened to be four years of unusually fine weather conditions and bountiful crops.<sup>120</sup> This led to false expectations among those who followed later and who were disappointed when they did not experience the same ideal conditions. When Frederick Julius Gustorf, another German traveler, visited Duden’s former farm on August 16, 1836, after Duden had returned to Germany, he described the cabin as “shabby.”<sup>121</sup> He was disgusted that a poor shoemaker with several ragged children was living there and rued the day that people “were captivated by Duden’s fallacious accounts of

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<sup>117</sup>Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 57.

<sup>118</sup>Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 55.

<sup>119</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 71.

<sup>120</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 59.

<sup>121</sup> Frederick Julius Gustorf, *The Uncorrupted Heart: Journal and Letters of Frederick Julius Gustorf*, ed. Fred Gustorf, trans. Fred and Gisela Gustorf (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 134.

America.”<sup>122</sup> For such disappointed immigrants, Duden became known as “*der Lughund*,” the lying dog.<sup>123</sup>

To be fair, Duden discussed at length what he referred to as the “dark side” of American life.<sup>124</sup> He warned of the dangers of forest fires that could last as long as a month, plus rattlesnakes, vipers, copperheads, ticks, and lice. He mentioned the mosquito plague of 1826 and cautioned new arrivals not to settle in the Missouri Valley, which frequently flooded. Health hazards abounded; he mentioned bilious fever, malaria, feverish colds, and croup, yellow fever, and whooping cough.<sup>125</sup> To make matters worse, he warned that American doctors were inept, used bleeding to the detriment of their patients, and were few in number. He had little patience with the American people concerning their illnesses. “Most of the ailments from which the natives suffer are their own fault,” Duden charged.<sup>126</sup> In his opinion, they ate far too much meat. Unfortunately, in spite of these clear statements about the obstacles facing newcomers, most Germans who read his travel journal focused on the glowing reports of the bounty of the land and paid insufficient attention to the warnings.

The Stephanites likely focused on Duden’s descriptions of religious freedom in the United States. At one point he compared religion in the United States to that in Europe, observing that in Europe “one believes that when the future is threatened by the action of inner forces it can be met by outer forms,” while in the States “one puts trust in these inner

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<sup>122</sup> Gustorf, *The Uncorrupted Heart*, 137.

<sup>123</sup> Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 44.

<sup>124</sup> Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 161.

<sup>125</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 131.

<sup>126</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 134.

forces themselves and seeks comfort in the thought that a people living in a situation such as that in the United States will not soon turn away completely from the eternal voice of truth and that the essentials of Christianity must be preserved beneath all outward forms.”<sup>127</sup> The American tradition of sabbatarianism corresponded with this emphasis on “inner forces” and a prevalent Puritan heritage, as almost every state in the Union demanded by law that Sunday was to be a day of quiet and peace. Duden explained that in every state except Louisiana, “the lawmakers were unanimously of the opinion that noisy pleasures were least fitting for Sunday.”<sup>128</sup> This became a long-term point of contention with Germans, who traditionally spent Sundays visiting with friends and family in a neighborhood beer garden after their own church services. Although German-Americans intensely disliked Sabbatarianism, religious freedom remained a central tenet of American ideals. “The general law,” Duden wrote, “that no one needs to account for his religious opinions is as old as the Union itself.”<sup>129</sup> But he reassured his readers that Americans would not tolerate a lack of order indefinitely and that they clearly distinguished freedom of religion from license.<sup>130</sup> Unlike in Saxony, where only Lutheran and Reformed churches were allowed, Duden’s neighbors were Lutherans, Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Swedenborgians.<sup>131</sup> Based on Duden’s account, the Stephanites were convinced that they would have no problem worshipping as conservative Lutherans in Missouri.

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<sup>127</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 100.

<sup>128</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 100.

<sup>129</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 99.

<sup>130</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 100

<sup>131</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 100.

Lutherans, especially Pietists, had been in the United States since the colonial period, at which point they typically settled in the middle colonies. Among the earliest settlements was St. Matthew's congregation in New York, which was formed in 1648 and the Germantown, Pennsylvania, congregation, which was founded in 1689 by Pietist Francis D. Pastorius.<sup>132</sup> In 1742, Pastor Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the "father of American Lutheranism," was sent by officials of the University of Halle specifically to influence German Lutherans, who they believed were being swayed by what were considered radical, separatist Pietists, such as the Moravians. The latter were originally led by Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a one-time Halle Pietist, who broke from the group in 1722.<sup>133</sup> The original, or church, Pietists "despised the Moravians for their extreme spiritualism, predestinarian teachings, militant expansionism and for the pompous behavior of their count."<sup>134</sup> Muhlenberg opposed the sectarianism of groups such as the Moravians and encouraged members of his congregation to become active citizens and participants in the American community. He staunchly supported the patriots during the American Revolution. His son, the Reverend Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg, served as a Virginia colonel during the

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<sup>132</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Selected Letters* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 1.

<sup>133</sup> Count Zinzendorf was Spener's godson and one of Francke's students. He was a devoted disciple of the two until he graciously housed Moravian refugees on his estate, began teaching them about the Bible in conventicles, and then developed his own Pietist movement. At this time he also moved away from the more conservative tenets of the Halle Pietists to requiring an emotional conversion experience as a sign of true Christianity in the believer. Eventually the group became separatists, which was the exact opposite of the evangelical vision of the Halle Pietists.

<sup>134</sup> Aaron Spencer Fogelman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America: 1717-1775* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 119.

War, and another son was the first speaker of the United States House of Representatives.<sup>135</sup> Many German Lutherans followed his example and fought for the independence of the colonies. While the Moravians burrowed themselves away in separate communities, those Lutherans led by Muhlenberg embraced the colonial community, often placing their lives on the line for independence.

German emigration remained limited until the 1830s, when approximately 12,000 people began to arrive annually. By the 1840s, that number nearly doubled to 20,000 per year, dramatically increased to 60,000 per year in the 1840s, and 130,000 in the 1850s.<sup>136</sup> By the time the Saxons arrived in Missouri, German immigrants were one of the largest and internally divisive immigrant groups in the United States.

The immigrants included liberal intellectuals, uneducated farmers and laborers, and skilled tradesmen, and their religious beliefs varied from Lutheran to Catholic. A revolutionary atmosphere in Saxony in 1830 and 1831 is one reason Germans migrated to the United States and other countries at this time. The Industrial Revolution arrived in Saxony earlier than other German states. Workers worried about the evolution of modernization, which threatened their livelihood. Because of their concerns about industrialization, they staged protests in Leipzig. On September 2, 1830, apprentice blacksmiths gathered in the city to protest the arrest of one of their own.<sup>137</sup> Two days later,

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<sup>135</sup> Carl S. Meyer, *A Brief Historical Sketch of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, rev. ed. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 4.

<sup>136</sup> Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 15.

<sup>137</sup> James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866: The Oxford History of Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 605.

journeymen attacked a printing company and “threatened to destroy the machines they feared would put them out of work.”<sup>138</sup> Historian James Sheehan writes that Saxony was in a dangerous position in 1830 because it was dominated by an aristocracy and ruled by an antiquated administration.<sup>139</sup> When a group of civil servants enabled Prince Frederick August to take the reins of government, a constitution that attempted to protect individual rights was finally written for the kingdom in September 1831.

At the same time, the guild system still existed in Saxony. Because so many of the Saxons were tradesmen, they would have been members of the various guilds. According to historian Mack Walker, guilds held tight control of their members, even insisting on upright behavior as a requirement for remaining under the umbrella of guild protection of their occupations.<sup>140</sup> The Saxons did not relocate the guild system to the United States, although workers in New York City did. Bookbinders, carpenters, and cabinetmakers formed cooperative shops from 1850 to 1851.<sup>141</sup> Because the Saxons were mainly tradesmen, along with farmers and farm laborers and lady maids, they were primarily considered middle class. Even Stephan had started out as a journeyman linen weaver before he changed his mind and studied for the ministry.<sup>142</sup> Rev. Gotthold Loeber hinted years later that Stephan encouraged

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<sup>138</sup> Sheehan, *German History*, 605.

<sup>139</sup> Sheehan, *German History*, 607.

<sup>140</sup> Mack Walker, *German Home Towns—Community, State, and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 80.

<sup>141</sup> Norman Ware, *The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860: The Reaction of American Industrial Society to the Advance of the Industrial Revolution* (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1964), 196.

<sup>142</sup> Walter A. Baepler, *A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847-1947* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 15.

the configuration of those in the Saxon emigration group—candidates of theology, teachers, an attorney, doctors, painters, merchants, tradespeople, and artisans. Loeber suggests that Stephan viewed this mix of professions as necessary for the growth of the community they would establish in the United States. Duden reported that tradesmen were much needed in Missouri and could easily find jobs.<sup>143</sup>

In spite of the improvements in the Saxon government, the power of the Consistory pushed rationalism in the church and school. When the Saxons arrived in St. Louis, it was as if they simply transferred their disagreements with the German government and proponents of rationalism throughout Saxony from the Fatherland to the United States. German liberals had little tolerance for organized religion, making the Stephanites an instant target. The stage was set for friction between the Stephanites and the German immigrants who had preceded them.

The immigrants included liberal intellectuals, uneducated farmers and laborers, and skilled tradesmen, and their religious beliefs varied from Lutheran to Catholic. In fact, when the Saxons arrived in St. Louis, it was as if they simply transferred their disagreements with their fellow Germans from the Fatherland to the United States. German liberals had little tolerance for organized religion, making the Stephanites an instant target. The stage was set for friction between the Stephanites and the German immigrants who had preceded them.

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<sup>143</sup> Gottfried Duden, *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America and a Stay of Several Years along the Missouri (During the Years 1824, '25, '26 and 1827*, trans. and ed. James W. Goodrich (Columbia, MO: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1980), 182.

The most vocal critics of the Stephanites were a faction of liberal German-Americans, who in the 1820s were derisively dubbed the “Latin Farmers,” because they possessed excellent education pedigrees but proved to be poor farmers. Historian Carl Wittke refers to Latin Farmers, such as Duden, as the “misfits on the prairie.”<sup>144</sup> Working an American farm required grueling labor, leaving little time for reading and leisure. In addition, it was often difficult to hire workers to help run the farms because labor was often in short supply in the developing West. The pervasive German distaste for slavery, one of the few opinions most Germans held in common, dissuaded most from using slave labor, although Duden did mention that purchasing or hiring slaves was an option. Germans saw slavery in terms of aristocracy versus democracy, which is also the reason they rarely settled in the South. They believed that slavery was a “contradiction of what America represented,” as written in Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.<sup>145</sup>

Latin farmers, who settled in Texas as well as Missouri, were classical liberals who often supported the concept of a New Germany; that is, a section of the United States set aside to be completely German in culture, language, and liberal ideology. When reality set in and their particular type of Utopia proved unfeasible, they often had difficulty finding work, which was disconcerting to these men with such high levels of education. Germans with a classical education, reared during the stimulating days of German liberalism and rationalism, were not prime candidates for the practical or skilled laborers most needed on the edge of the American frontier. Consequently, many gave up and returned to Germany, or they

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<sup>144</sup> Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 39.

<sup>145</sup> Glen E. Lich, *The German Texans* (San Antonio: The University of Texas, Institute of Texan Cultures, 1981), 91.

moved into urban areas. Several turned to the newspaper trade, where, by the time the Saxons arrived, strident, anti-ecclesiastic voices prevailed. The *Anzeiger des Westens*, founded in 1835 by Herr von Festen and Christian Bimpage, was considered one of the best German language newspapers in the West. Owners of the *Anzeiger* considered it their particular mission to be a “watchdog” over religious matters.<sup>146</sup> Henrich Koch, of the *Anzeiger*, was described as the “stormy petrel of the vociferous coterie of St. Louis Germans.”<sup>147</sup>

Several German immigrant groups arrived in America in the nineteenth century with the sole purpose of forming little Germanies across the United States. Wilhelm Weber, lawyer and revolutionist and the first editor of the *Anzeiger*, supported this concept of a “New Germany.” Weber took over the newspaper when Bimpage sold the paper, setting the “caustic, progressive style that would always mark the St. Louis German press.”<sup>148</sup> He was one of the first courageous German immigrants to publicly protest the lynchings of blacks and to oppose slavery. But he also exemplifies the sense of superiority that pervaded the attempts to establish a New Germania.

Duden had little patience with Germans who were disdainful of what they considered a less refined American society. He argued that “it is ridiculous self-praise when Germans maintain that there is more intellectual activity among them [the German community] than

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<sup>146</sup> Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 33.

<sup>147</sup> Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, 1839-1841* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 262.

<sup>148</sup> Steven Rowan, ed. and trans., *Germans for a Free Missouri: Translations from the St. Louis Radical Press, 1857-1862* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 35.

in North America.”<sup>149</sup> He warned them that not learning English because they considered German a superior language would set them behind in their newly adopted home. “Devotion to the old homeland,” he stated, will only have “detrimental results.”<sup>150</sup> Duden did speak of creating a German colony but not with the same intentions as those German political idealists who settled in places such as Hermann, Missouri, or New Braunfels, Texas. In March of 1827 he wrote, “As soon as a German has set foot on the soil of the United States it will occur to no American to claim any advantage over him, and in this respect conditions could not be better if the whole country were a German colony.”<sup>151</sup> Duden’s intention was to find a place where Germans could begin a new life, not to change America, or part of America, into Germany.

Still, many Germans formed communities intent on establishing havens of German culture in the West. German immigrants, such as Paul Follenius and Friedrich Muench, who formed the “Geissner Gesellschaft” in 1833, believed that “the foundation of a new and free Germany in the great North American Republic shall be laid by us.”<sup>152</sup> Historian John A. Hawgood points out that the Society desperately wanted a place in the United States that would be thoroughly German in every aspect, a model of excellence for all to follow.<sup>153</sup> Muench led a group of settlers to lands around the present town of Washington, Missouri,

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<sup>149</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 140.

<sup>150</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 96.

<sup>151</sup> Fogelman, *Hopeful Journeys*, 243.

<sup>152</sup> Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 49.

<sup>153</sup> John A. Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America: The Germans in the United States of America During the Nineteenth Century – and After* (New York, London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1940), 99.

settling just a few miles from the land Duden had previously occupied. The Society conferred with Duden throughout the planning stages of their emigration and was well acquainted with his journal. With all these factors in their favor, they still did not manage to form an entirely German state. Muench became a writer and very vocal supporter of Missouri, but even his strong voice could not establish a New Germania, although the area still bears strong historical reminders of its German heritage. Rippley comments that Muench's success influenced "the Lutherans from Saxony, who made St. Louis into a bastion of German Lutheranism in the United States."<sup>154</sup> Except for the group in Texas, however, Germans in favor of a "New Germania" attempted to set aside towns or specific areas, but not an entire state. On all levels, the plans for the Germanization of parts of the United States were not successful. The utopian vision failed because the Americans surrounding them envisioned a country which was the direct opposite—a country where all types of peoples worked together to form a republican government as outlined in the Declaration of Independence, although it was still a work in progress, as the presence of slavery clearly showed.

The founding of Hermann, Missouri, marked another attempt to develop a German state, but this settlement was the brainchild of the organization Deutsche Ansiedlungs-Gesellschaft zu Philadelphia, whose purpose was to achieve a "Germanic purity of a sort."<sup>155</sup> On December 6, 1837, the first seventeen settlers arrived; by 1839 the population had grown

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<sup>154</sup> Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 49.

<sup>155</sup> Rowan, *Germans for a Free Missouri*, 25.

to 450.<sup>156</sup> Hermann's growth was ultimately stifled by a small hinterland impacted by the fact that no bridge was built over the adjoining Missouri for ninety years. The Philadelphia Society that launched the town's founding was disbanded in 1840, and so no further support came from the original organization. Hermann eventually formed a vibrant economy based on wine production, becoming at one point the third largest wine producer in the United States.<sup>157</sup> In 1848 they would hold the first *Weinfest* celebration along the Missouri River and for years enjoyed profits from the fruit of the vine. By the turn of the next century Hermann was "one of the largest wine producing regions in the world."<sup>158</sup>

Germans who emigrated to Texas came closest to building a German state because they purposely picked an area where the American government was not yet established. Texas was still an independent republic in 1838; it was "wide open" when the Germania Society of New York first purposed to establish a German state in Texas territory. The government of the new Texas Republic needed settlers and was comparatively more accommodating towards incoming immigrants than it would be after 1845, when it was annexed to the United States.<sup>159</sup> One year before Texas became the twenty-eighth state, the organization Adelsverein, consisting of five German princes and sixteen noblemen, established a settlement society and worked hard from 1844 to 1847 to develop a Texas state

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<sup>156</sup> Adolph E. Schroeder, "The Survival of German Traditions in Missouri," in *The German Contribution to the Building of the Americas, Studies in Honor of Karl J. R. Arndt*, eds. Gerhard K. Friesau and Walter Schatzburg (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1977), 297.

<sup>157</sup> Schroeder, "The Survival of German Traditions in Missouri," 297.

<sup>158</sup> Hermann Vintners Association, "Hermann Wine Trail," accessed May 1, 2013, [Hermannwinetrail.com/about-missouri-wine/](http://Hermannwinetrail.com/about-missouri-wine/)

<sup>159</sup> Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America*, 148.

dominated by what they considered to be superior German political, cultural, and economic tenets. They took their advice from Ottomar von Behr, who wrote the pamphlet, “Good Advice for Immigrants.”<sup>160</sup> The leadership had some excellent goals: provide jobs for the German working class immigrants, establish an association to protect these German workers, and establish a market for German crafts.<sup>161</sup> Seven thousand immigrants settled in Texas during the first three years of the association, but lack of finances and poor judgment from the leadership stalled their efforts. Ultimately, this attempt at establishing a German state also failed, although German cultural influence lingers still today, particularly around New Braunfels, Texas, where, in 1980, it was estimated that seventy percent of the descendants of the founders still married others with a German heritage.<sup>162</sup>

Another prominent group among Missouri Germans were uneducated, often illiterate peasants, who were excellent farmers and steady citizens. In fact, about half of the Germans who arrived between 1840 and 1860 were “small cultivators, handicraft workers, laborers.”<sup>163</sup> In 1835, fifty such families settled at the Gravois Settlement (about one day’s travel south of St. Louis), one hundred at Marthasville, twenty at Pinckney, and many in the Femme Osage region.<sup>164</sup> The strong presence of Germans of all backgrounds and faith along the Missouri River resulted in the area becoming the “center of the most widespread

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<sup>160</sup> Lich, *The German Texans*, 21.

<sup>161</sup> Lich, *The German Texans*, 24.

<sup>162</sup> Lich, *The German Texans*, 183.

<sup>163</sup> Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants*, 17.

<sup>164</sup> Carl E. Schneider, *The German Church on the American Frontier: A Study in the Rise of Religion among the Germans of the West* (St. Louis, MO: Eden Publishing House, 1939), 21-22.

settlement of Germans west of the Mississippi.”<sup>165</sup> Into this haven of German immigrants the Stephanites decided to settle, assured that here, and in all sections of the United States, they could worship in freedom.

Beginning in December 1837, the Stephanites began careful plans for a successful journey. Stephan hand-picked men whom he felt he could trust, or, perhaps, he simply thought he could control, to write the Emigration Codes, which were the statutes regulating those who emigrated. Whatever the motivation, the committee did an excellent job. The three men most responsible for the codes were Dr. Franz Marbach, H. F. Fischer, and Gustav Jaeckel. At the time, Marbach, who had an excellent reputation as a lawyer in Dresden, was perhaps the most trusted of Stephan’s followers. He managed the committee for his pastor and, more importantly, often successfully rescued him from legal problems. Lutheran historian Walter A. Baepler gives Marbach credit for successfully defending Stephan when he was accused of immoral conduct.<sup>166</sup> Several additional men also helped with the writing process, including Dr. Stübel, pastoral candidates Theodor Julius Broehm and K. W. Welzel, and J. G. Gube, a farmer.<sup>167</sup> The mix of laymen and clergy worked well in producing a viable framework for diminishing the dangers of travel and addressing the emotional and spiritual strains that would naturally occur during the voyage. It was also indicative of a pattern of clergy and laity partnership in handling church issues.

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<sup>165</sup> Schneider, *The German Church on the American Frontier*, 22.

<sup>166</sup> Walter A. Baepler, *A Century of Grace*, 21.

<sup>167</sup> As often happens in American immigration history, the same foreign name can be spelled several different ways. An alternate spelling of Broehm is Broehm.

Initially, Pastor Stephan requested that the preparation of the emigration plan be kept quiet. There had been so much adverse publicity about the Stephanites that he wanted to keep everything out of the public eye until the plans were approved by the leadership, but he was also concerned that the Saxon authorities might deny the emigrants the right to leave the country. After Stephan and the committee members approved the plan, it was presented to the rest of the potential emigrants. The first two paragraphs of the Codes were dedicated to the group's "Confession of Faith" and the "origin, purpose, and goal" of the emigration.<sup>168</sup> All those who wished to travel with the Stephanites had to agree with these statements and sign the document or they could not join the group. In the "Confession," the committee reiterated the basic tenets of Old Lutheran theology: "The undersigned hold wholly with upright hearts to the true Lutheran faith, as it is set forth and known in the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments and in the symbolic writings of the Lutheran Church."<sup>169</sup> The Stephanites believed in these statements "in their entirety and without alteration" and as they have been "generally and unequivocally understood and interpreted since the origin of the 16th, 17th, and first half of the 18th century."<sup>170</sup> Those who signed understood that they were pledging to abide by the beliefs of conservative, confessional Lutheranism, and were recognizing Martin Stephan as the leader of the emigration.

Divided into eight sections, the Codes underscored the priorities of the group: school and church, the communal fund, library and archives, agriculture, traveling regulations, the

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<sup>168</sup>Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 119.

<sup>169</sup>Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 119.

<sup>170</sup>Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 119.

writing and enforcement of the emigration code, ecclesiastical, and the personal care of Stephan. Practical instructions created clarity and were meant to dispel confusion. Once the emigrants were aboard their ships, regulations covered everything from school lessons to separate compartments for men and women to how the Stephanites were to treat the captain and his crew. Board members were to supervise all the steerage areas and decks on the various ships to make sure the rules were obeyed. Mature, older women were selected to supervise the compartments set aside for the women. Parents, as well as members of the board, were responsible for the children, and school lessons were to continue as usual throughout the duration of the voyage. Anyone who fell ill was to be treated by loved ones, as well as nurses assigned to the task. “Christian modesty and deference” were to guide their dealings with the captains and crews in a sincere attempt to treat them with respect in spite of the often coarse actions and speech of sailors.<sup>171</sup> In the event of a storm, the young men were to assist the “weaker members of the company” to stay out of harm’s way, plus, to the best of their ability, assist the crew.<sup>172</sup> Concerning practical details, the Codes were a model of organizational excellence, written with the intent of maintaining Christian principles as much as possible during difficult conditions.

The committee members just as carefully prepared the financial plans, which included a communal Credit Fund containing the monies to cover the costs of traveling to America and establishing a settlement. Wealthier emigrants put substantial amounts of money into the Fund, with the excess monies covering the travel expenses of poorer

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<sup>171</sup>Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 119.

<sup>172</sup>“The Emigration Codes,” as cited in Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, 1839-1841* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 574.

members who were required to repay this loan as soon as they were capable. It is probable that the Fund would have worked as intended if Stephan had not had access to the money. Except for Marbach, no one knew at this time that Pastor Stephan frequently requested monies from the Fund for his own expenses, such as the 1,500 *Thaler* he asked for and received on September 27, 1838.<sup>173</sup> Later, he surreptitiously removed monies from the Fund to provide for luxuries he should have paid for himself. The Credit Fund was meant to cover “all church and community expenditures for 5 years” and the “undersigned bind themselves for five years jointly to raise all church and community expenditures.”<sup>174</sup> In a section concerning the purchase of the land, instructions were given to buy a “tract of contiguous land” where plots for the church, school, and the community were set aside and the rest “sold to each individual according to his needs.”<sup>175</sup> The Codes did not limit the aspirations of the settlers, explicitly allowing individuals “to purchase as much land as he pleases outside the township.”<sup>176</sup> In developing the land, the Codes implored the emigrants to assist each other in “word and deed, as is proper among Christians.”<sup>177</sup> “Let it be noted,” it continued, “that no kind of joint ownership of property shall ever take place or be permitted, rather, each one is and shall remain empowered to make disposition of his private property

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<sup>173</sup> “Preparation for the Emigration,” Concordia Historical Institute, in the “Saxon Collection” “*Der Hauptgegenstand der heutigen Besprechung waren die Bestimmung einer dem Herrn, vom 27. September 1838. Dresden,*” Folder 20, Box 2.

<sup>174</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 567.

<sup>175</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 567.

<sup>176</sup> “The Emigration Codes,” as cited in Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 567.

<sup>177</sup> “The Emigration Codes,” as cited in Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 568.

as he sees fit..”<sup>178</sup> The communal plan was intended to be in operation for five years and then each family or individual would take charge of their own lands. The group committed to helping each other for these first few years so that everyone could successfully transition to life in Missouri.

One of the most interesting sections of the Codes was the one devoted to the proper care and reverence of Pastor Stephan, the man who would soon connive to elevate his position from merely pastor to bishop. This section of the Codes was written later than the rest of the plan, probably because Stephan did not want it overly scrutinized before they left. From the beginning, Protestantism emphasized the spiritual equality between clergy and laity. The belief was grounded in verses such as I Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”<sup>179</sup> The priesthood of the New Testament was entirely different from that of the Old Testament, where only men from the tribe of Levi could be priests. Instead, through salvation Christ declared everyone—male and female—priests in his kingdom. But the regulations concerning Stephan stand as an indicator of the unprecedented upsurge in Stephan’s authority, which stood in contrast to the concept of the priesthood of all believers. The section entitled “The person of the primate and access to him” said the following about the expected attitude towards Stephan: “The primate shall at all times be treated by members of the *Gesellschaft* with the reverence due his high office and great wisdom; he shall receive the title ‘Very Reverend Sir;’ offenses

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<sup>178</sup> “The Emigration Codes,” as cited in Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 568.

<sup>179</sup> I Peter 2: 9. (NIV).

against his person and disobedience against his orders shall be punished with severe civil and ecclesiastical penalties.”<sup>180</sup> In addition, Stephan stipulated that no one would be allowed to see him while aboard ship except his colleagues, members of the board, and those to whom he gave special permission. Clearly, Stephan was given extraordinary deference, which opened the way to more serious problems in the future as Stephan began to dangerously overstep his authority.

It was impossible to keep the news of the Stephanites’ departure a secret after the leaders chartered the *Olbens* on July 14, 1838. The emigration society was unprepared for the flood of requests to join the movement once the word got out. The Stephanites’ emigration created quite a stir among the general public. No large contingent of Christians had left because of religious persecution for generations. Several newspapers, such as the *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung*, reported on the Stephanite situation. Stephan had long been a subject of public interest, but now others among the Old Lutherans spoke out and urged their compatriots to join the emigration. Pastor Loeber later described the mood at the time in a report he wrote for the descendants of the Saxons. He reiterated the emigrants’ desire for the “old but pure Gospel” and their steadfast devotion to the tenets of the “Evangelical Lutheran Church.”<sup>181</sup> Years later, Loeber remained adamant that rationalism was the root cause of the decline of the authority of the Church and an increase in the denunciation of conservative believers. Pastor E. G. W. Keyl, another Stephanite, informed his congregants that if they did not leave, they were not Christians. Stephan wrote to those who had developed the

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<sup>180</sup> “The Emigration Codes,” as cited in Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 573.

<sup>181</sup> Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County*, 1.

emigration plan that “the hour to depart has struck; the time to flee from Babel has come; whoever desires to save his soul should get ready to leave.”<sup>182</sup> The pastors frequently compared the situation in Saxony to a section of Scripture in which people were called upon to take drastic measures in order to obey God, including God’s call to Abraham to “get thee out of thy [idolatrous] country,” and Matthew 19: 29 where the Lord tells his listeners that “everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name’s sake shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life.”<sup>183</sup> This well-publicized clarion call from the leaders of the emigration resulted in the increase of the group from approximately 200 to about 665 emigrants. Convinced that to stay would be spiritual suicide, the group was “readily joined by many conservatives who were stimulated by a fear of damnation if they remained.”<sup>184</sup> Many who were previously hesitant about the emigration suddenly felt compelled to make the journey in order to ensure their salvation.

The increase in numbers became a logistics nightmare for school teacher Johann Karl Zöge, who was charged with facilitating the preparations in Bremerhaven. In his letters to J. F. Winter, a fellow teacher residing near Halle, Zöge wrote of the problems facing the group: the increasing number of people desiring to join the emigration, the push to be ready to sail by September 20, the necessity of examining each ship to verify that it was

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<sup>182</sup> Baepler, *A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod*, 24.

<sup>183</sup> Genesis 12:1 and Matthew 19: 29 (King James).

<sup>184</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 2.

seaworthy, and hints of money issues.<sup>185</sup> Following Duden’s advice that the best time to leave for New Orleans was in December or January in order to avoid the threat of yellow fever, the group hastened to get underway.<sup>186</sup> Zöge wrote that because the number of travelers had increased, by that point to 350 passengers, each allowed 100 pounds of luggage, it would be necessary to secure additional ships. In the end, the Stephanites chartered five ships—the *Copernicus*, the *Johann Georg*, the *Republik*, the *Olbers*, and the *Amalia*. Zöge continued his efforts to do the very best he could to prepare the way for all the emigrants who were about to embark on five small ships heading for New Orleans.

Zöge was compelled to frantically organize all the details for a safe trip for the additional passengers as well as repeat instructions for plans that were well known among the original members. He lamented that many of the people from Dresden “don’t know how to make the journey on the Elbe from Dresden by Hamburg, take its path over Halle on the Saale and Elbe to Hamburg, and then go emigrate from Bremen.”<sup>187</sup> He was still negotiating with a ship captain who was pushing for an exact number of passengers. For the sake of the safety of the emigrants, Zöge made careful inspections of each ship’s condition to make sure it was “competent for the trip.”<sup>188</sup> He was especially concerned about verifying that each person had enough room to lie down at night without being “all together like herrings.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Joh. Karl Zöge, *Herrn Steuerrevisor Barthel in Leipzig vom J.K. Zöge, 1 Sept. 1838*, Saxon Collection, “Correspondence:1838,” Folder 81.

<sup>186</sup> Duden, *Report on a Journey*, 249.

<sup>187</sup> Joh. Karl Zöge, *Herrn Steuerrevisor Barthel in Leipzig vom J.K. Zöge, 1 Sept. 1838*, folder 81.

<sup>188</sup> Joh. Karl Zöge, *Herrn Steuerrevisor Barthel in Leipzig vom J.K. Zöge, 1 Sept. 1838*, folder 81.

<sup>189</sup> Joh. Karl Zöge, *Herrn Steuerrevisor Barthel in Leipzig vom J.K. Zöge, 1 Sept. 1838*, folder 81,

For health reasons he recommended everyone be near two fireplaces for cooking, plus a larder and what he referred to as a “cellar.” Like Duden, Zöge concluded it was best to charter an entire ship rather than haggle over individual passenger fares, which rapidly became more expensive when dealt with singularly. In a letter written on September 6, 1838, Friedrich Wilhelm Barthel, who appears to be his supervisor, he expressed concern that the poor passengers be treated with as much care as the pastors. Zöge ended his letter with his assessment of the situation in Saxony, referring to it as the “increasingly growing pressure and bitterness of the world.”<sup>190</sup> But God is in control and “He now proves that He reigns over his enemies and our redemption is near.”<sup>191</sup> Zöge believed that God had blessed the endeavor, in spite of all the hardships they faced as they prepared to board their ships.<sup>192</sup>

The Stephanites were not beyond using deception when they faced obstacles in their attempts to remove loved ones from the threat of rationalism and the deadly clutches of the Saxon government.<sup>193</sup> Convinced that spiritual disaster would strike those left behind, Stephanites took extra measures to remove them from Saxony. With their emotions in overdrive, several Stephanites would later regret putting intense spiritual pressure on other Lutherans who were less interested in emigrating. In one case, the Walther brothers decided to take with them the orphaned children of their sister, although they were not their guardians. The Walthers spirited the ten-year-old and fifteen-year-old out of Saxony and

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<sup>190</sup> Zöge to Döderlein, “Herrn. A. H. Döderlein in Leipzig vom Zöge,” September 6, 1838, “Correspondence: 1838 (September),” folder 81.

<sup>191</sup> Zöge to Döderlein, September 6, 1838, folder 81.

<sup>192</sup> Zöge to Döderlein, September 6, 1838, folder 81.

<sup>193</sup> Vehse refers to this incident as “the matter of the ‘stolen children,’” which apparently was widely known among the general public and widely disdained as an unconscionable action.

then entrusted them to the care of the Widow Buenger, mother of Candidate J. F. Buenger. They were technically under the legal guardianship of a Mr. Engel, but he had not been personally caring for them; they had been under the shelter of relatives since the death of their mother and wanted to remain with them. Mrs. Buenger was arrested in Bremerhaven on November 4, but the children were already hidden from authorities and placed under the care of Pastor Loeber and their uncle Otto Walther, who were able to slip them onto the *Olbers*, which set sail on November 18. Widow Buenger was able to join the main party only later, finally sailing on the *Constitution* to New York, where she and her son arrived on February 18, 1839.<sup>194</sup> Her part in bringing out loved ones and friends was now complete.

The Saxons who boarded the ships in Bremen primarily came as family units. More than twenty single women traveled with the group, a majority of whom listed their occupation as “maids.” When an entire family was recorded on the passenger lists, only the occupation of the male head of the household was noted. Overwhelmingly, these men were tradesmen, including joiners, millers, a brewer, two lithographers, a locksmith, engravers, tailors, coopers, saddlers, a wagon master, and even a Royal Groom and a lieutenant in the Prussian army. The largest contingents were weavers and shoemakers—about forty weavers and thirty shoemakers. Tradesmen far outnumbered the thirty farmers and four farm laborers, thus accounting for a consistently higher education congruent with a middle class background. The small number of clergy and clergy candidates and the curator of the Saxon State Archives comprised upper levels of the middle class. On the whole, they were a well-

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<sup>194</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 194-195.

educated group, with a large variety of tradesmen whose skills were much needed in Missouri.

It was one of the clergy who wrote the most dramatic expression of the intensity of purpose and strong emotions felt by the emigrants upon their departure is found in the “Exaltant Songs on the Sea” (or the “Exile Songs”). Otto Walther, pastor and brother of C. F. W. Walther, wrote the songs while awaiting departure from Bremerhaven. Seventeen hundred copies were printed, funded by the group’s treasury. The verses dripped with striking visuals that painted Stephan as the Moses of 1838. According to Gotthold Guenther, who kept a journal of his experiences with the Saxons, they were written “for the sake of their most holy faith with the faithful servant of God and witness of the truth—Martin Stephan.”<sup>195</sup> Rampant, but ultimately misguided, admiration of Stephan produced such verses as the following: “a wise servant of the Lord, a bright star leads us. Like Moses, so he goes ahead to Canaan.”<sup>196</sup> The songwriter added: “Praise God, the hour of deliverance is approaching for the Church of Christ... God wills to liberate His people.”<sup>197</sup> Another verse appears almost maudlin to the modern reader: “As Moses once lay in a tiny ship, so children are now borne to their new fatherland... From Pharaoh’s blood dripping hand in our German Egypt land, from lying and murdering and devilish teaching, the Lord is delivering our soul.”<sup>198</sup> At the point of departure, the Stephanites were clearly deluded by their leader’s

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<sup>195</sup> Gotthold Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839: The Experiences and Adventures of the Stephanites who Emigrated from Saxony, Their Journey to St. Louis, Their Stay There, and the Condition of their Colony in Perry County* (Dresden, Germany: C. Heinrich, 1839), 6.

<sup>196</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 16.

<sup>197</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 16.

<sup>198</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 16-17.

false façade. This devotion was, perhaps, most intense among men such as the Walthers, who felt deep gratitude for the teachings and counsel of the man who pulled them out of a pietism that had drifted into legalism, meaning a faith directed by religious laws made by man instead of by God.

Stephan and his group attracted as much derision as they did support. J. F. Buenger overheard a conversation between two gentlemen while in Bremerhaven. One said to the other: “Those stupid Stephanists will all perish; they are all headed for their destruction; they think Stephan is their Lord and Savior, those stupid people.”<sup>199</sup> Saxons debated whether the Stephanites were courageous Christians or misguided fanatics. That would be the consistent issue concerning the group both in Saxony and America as they sought a place where they could worship as they wished.

The ecclesiastical section of the Codes stipulated that at least one pastor should be on each ship so that they could minister to the needs of the passengers and lead worship services during the voyage. Stephan was technically the minister in charge on board the *Olbers*, which officially meant that he was to oversee the direction of all worship services, and, with the help of several subordinates, monitor the “morals, order, safety, sanitation, and health” of the *Gesellschaft*.<sup>200</sup> Building on the deference already given him, he took advantage of the sea voyage to increase his authority by manipulating the clergy and the people on board the *Olbers* to grant him the title of “bishop,” which was an unprecedented

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<sup>199</sup> Herman Ottomar Alfred Keinath, *Documents Illustrating the History of the Lutheran Church in America, with Special Emphasis on the Missouri Synod* (River Forest, IL: Concordia Teachers College, 1947), 16.

<sup>200</sup> “The Emigration Codes,” as cited in Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 572.

position for the Lutheran church. These actions were in contradiction to the original intentions of men such as the Walther brothers and numerous laity who joined the Stephanites for the purpose of acquiring religious freedom.

The Codes also required that at least one person on board each ship keep a careful account of the voyage. In the case of the *Olbers*, the details of the voyage were captured best by two very different men—Stephan’s faithful personal secretary, Theodor Julius Broehm, and Gotthold Guenther. Guenther so mistrusted Stephan that he joined the exodus to protect his father Johann Samuel Guenther, a sixty-year-old joiner who was determined to travel with the emigrants, and five other family members, including his sister Louise, who had been Stephan’s faithful “servant” for several years.<sup>201</sup> Guenther’s journal provided a wealth of information about the journey. At times he is cynical, and even disrespectful toward Stephan, but he is an important source because he had a front row seat to all that happened on board the *Olbers*. Once they reached St. Louis, Guenther lived on the first floor of the house Stephan rented so he continued to have access to first-hand information. Guenther does not attempt to hide his disdain of Stephan, but the information in his journal aligns with journals kept by others, even confirmed Stephanites such as Brohm.

On November 4, 1838, Guenther wrote, tongue in cheek, that “the shepherd of the trusting flock arrived in Bremen and everyone celebrated his good fortune to be in the presence of this demigod.”<sup>202</sup> He continued to describe, with obvious disapproval, Stephan’s “velvet and silk, lace and costly linen,” plus “church plates, crosses, crucifixes” to “adorn

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<sup>201</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, iv.

<sup>202</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, 2.

the new temple.”<sup>203</sup> He reported that throughout the journey Stephan emerged from his private cabin only to reprimand his congregants or bask in their demand that his needs be met. “He rarely left his cabin,” wrote Guenther, because of “his well-known love of comfort and his lofty arrogance.”<sup>204</sup> He selfishly required expensive wines, delicacies, excellent food, and pampered devotion. Guenther reported that Stephan and other pastors “purchased gourmet items such as wine, oysters and other delicacies.”<sup>205</sup> Complaining of seasickness, he spent most of his time in his cabin, leaving the majority of his pastoral responsibilities to Otto Walther, only to complain about the people when he did come topside.

Guenther logged daily entries describing the voyage and the first months in St. Louis. In the preface to the pamphlet printed in Saxony, the reason for printing his account of the emigration is explained: “The present communiqués were originally meant only for publication in a newspaper; this was the limited scope of the plan. However the increase in the amount of material available and the many requests by people for more detailed information have led to the release of this brochure.”<sup>206</sup> The Saxon emigration was closely followed by those back home who suspected Stephan was the leader of a cult rather than a valid church. The news of their setback would have been applauded by their opponents. Perhaps Guenther rushed home so that he could profit from the Saxons’ story. Since Guenther never approved of Stephan, he would have no compunction about reporting his downfall. He did provide a wealth of information, but it is obvious that sarcasm and

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<sup>203</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 3.

<sup>204</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 13.

<sup>205</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 25.

<sup>206</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, iii.

disapproval permeate his journal. It is also puzzling that he left Missouri so quickly after Stephan was deposed. If his reason for going to the United States was to help his family, he appears to have deserted them at a time when they could have used his help. His record of events is corroborated by other accounts, but his tone reflects his biased perspective, and this should be taken into account when reading his chronicle of the Saxon emigration.

In contrast to Guenther, Theodor Brohm, the official record keeper for the ship, wrote a dispassionate, straightforward report about Stephan during the journey. Because Stephan was Brohm's cabin mate, he had access to all the behind closed doors information about his pastor. At this point, Brohm remained blinded to his pastor's deep faults. But Brohm also provides the most compassionate record of the passengers' sufferings. These poor people, he reported, came down with seasickness within two hours of leaving the harbor, made worse by high winds violently rocking the ship. On November 21, Brohm noted that "we were awakened early by violent pitching of the ship, which continued the entire day until about evening, because the weather had again become somewhat turbulent. For this reason, the indisposition once again got the upper hand."<sup>207</sup> On November 28 they suffered through another powerful storm in the Bay of Biscay. Waves washed across the deck and broke through some of the cabin windows, including Stephan's. Apparently, in the midst of this, Brohm reported that some of the people voiced complaints, which was certainly a human response to trying and unfamiliar conditions. Stephan suddenly appeared on deck and rebuked them, followed by a longer reprimand the following day. Brohm

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<sup>207</sup>Theodor Julius Brohm, trans. Robert M. Sandfort, "Theodor Julius Brohm Journal: Saxon Lutheran Emigration, November 19, 1838 to February 14, 1839," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (Summer, 101-121), November 21, 103.

revealed here the drastic difference between Stephan's disinterest in others' needs and that of a caring pastor.

Guenther's account of the incident on November 28 provides more details than Brohm's. He wrote:

The ship's stores were not meant to accommodate so many stomachs. So It happened that a talkative woman from Dresden, Mrs. T—st—n, began to reminisce [sic] about kitchens back home and she spoke these nostalgic words: "Oh how lovely it would be to have some potato dumplings again!"—The words had scarcely left her mouth when as if from a ghost a whisper rose from many sections of the steerage compartment, "Dumplings! Dumplings!" The silence was broken by loud applause from the crowd and yearning for homemade food dominated everyone's thoughts.<sup>208</sup>

According to Guenther's narrative of this incident, instead of compassion and understanding, Stephan's words conveyed a hardness that was not evident before, especially in his dealings with the poor.<sup>209</sup> In response to the "dumpling incident," Stephan reproached them with the accusation that they were becoming too attached to worldly things, claiming that they were "not yet by any means ready" for him to lead them "into the Promised Land."<sup>210</sup>

Stephan did not give his first sermon on board the *Olbens* until December 9. In this formal message to the travelers, he elaborated on his accusations against them, telling them "I have been bitterly deceived by you."<sup>211</sup> Guenther recorded that Stephan "stated how bitterly disappointed he was in the character of his flock, how the majority of them were no longer worthy of his protection and he would withdraw it from them, how they had shown

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<sup>208</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 7.

<sup>209</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 14.

<sup>210</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 8.

<sup>211</sup> Brohm, Theodor Julius Brohm Journal, 103.

themselves to be of little courage and full of despair while he had borne and suffered so much on their behalf and had sacrificed everything for them, etc.”<sup>212</sup> Guenther wrote that tears actually ran down the pastor’s cheeks as he implored his followers to repent. But Guenther had little sympathy for the man, which is evident in the following comments:

Those tears, which always seemed to be in ready supply, did not fail in their appointed purpose of eliciting sorrow from the soft hearts of the congregation as they headed back to their berths. However in many smarter heads a spark of distrust in Stephan’s behavior might have erupted and caused these people to pay closer attention. There is no record here of any thoughts to propagate and advance suspicion.<sup>213</sup>

This event occurred at the end of a series of horrific storms that made many of the passengers, and even a few of the sailors, sick. Some of the landlubbers were, of course, terrified by the experience. Stephan had spent almost all his time in his private cabin, never once stirring to help his afflicted fellow travelers. On December 15, Stephan spoke with Brohm alone, telling him that most of the passengers “despise Christianity and God’s word; good things to eat and drink are more important to them than heavenly treasures.”<sup>214</sup> Brohm did not escape the pastor’s criticism either; he humbly records in his journal that Stephan rightfully chastised him for a “lack of spirituality.”<sup>215</sup> Forster observes that the young man “accepted the chastisement without a whimper even in the privacy of his journal, merely

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<sup>212</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 11.

<sup>213</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 11-12.

<sup>214</sup> Brohm, Theodor Julius Brohm Journal, 106.

<sup>215</sup> Brohm, Theodor Julius Brohm Journal, 107.

regretting that he could not more nearly achieve the frame of mind which Stephan desired.”<sup>216</sup> Apparently, few on board the ship escaped the “primate’s” ire.

Stephan’s sermon on December 31 was yet another catalog of the sins of the people, which is, again, ironic as he was involved in so much secret sin of his own. Comments that night included:

Do you help the (emigration) society or yourself?...I wish, however, that my evening years might be more peaceful than my days were. I don’t ask for very much for myself; of you, however, I request much...Do you want to be a congregation over which the Lord does not keep watch? No, and I don’t either...I am tired. I no longer desire to lead the congregation. I seek nothing for myself...I will do nothing against God’s will and truth.<sup>217</sup>

The irony of this situation is that while Stephan was lecturing others about their perceived sins, he was steeped in his own sins of adultery and pilfering monies from the Credit Fund. During a time of danger and stress, this should have been the time for the “shepherd” to serve, comfort, and protect his “sheep.” Over the years, the teachings of Stephan had given those who heard him hope as he preached the simplicity of the Gospel. The pastor’s advice was a lifesaver to men such as Otto and C. F. W. Walther and others, but on board the *Olbers*, he began using shame as a verbal weapon to drive his followers to do his will. This stifling of clergy and laity alike was part of his willful plan to increase his authority over the emigration group throughout the voyage to the United States. The still-trusting Brohm expressed sorrow that he had caused his pastor such distress.

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<sup>216</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 280.

<sup>217</sup> Brohm, Theodor Julius Brohm Journal, December 30, 1838, 111.

On New Year's Day, which Brohm described as the "most noteworthy day of my life," Dr. Marbach approached him to ask his advice on a personal issue.<sup>218</sup> Marbach accused himself of a great offense, and requested brotherly help. When Brohm asked Stephan later in the day about Marbach, the pastor complained that "the totality of his [Marbach's] situation is his slavery to his wife, worldly attraction, arrogance, ambition, uncharitableness."<sup>219</sup> This is an interesting critique coming from the man who left his wife and all of his children, with the exception of his eldest son, behind in Saxony and who never had any intention of seeing them again. The next day Stephan told Otto Walther, Moritz Wege, and Brohm:

Marbach is the rocky ground where the seeds of God's word were received joyfully and grew rapidly, but soon were wilted. His wife is the same way. His principal temptation, to which he himself admitted through his own sin, is his wife. I have no hope for her. While I don't want to accuse him of having a firm plan to make himself independent and to seize power over the (emigration) society to himself, I also will not completely reject that notion. I will do nothing unsuitable to him.<sup>220</sup>

Marbach's real sin was that he dared to express his doubts about spiritual leaders wielding complete command over secular issues, worried out loud about Stephan's expenditures, and complained about his "petty tyranny."<sup>221</sup> Marbach's poor wife was pregnant and grieving the death of their two-year-old son Martin, who died on board ship on November 19. She was ordered to remain in her cabin for the rest of the time, and her husband was ostracized by the rest of the leadership. Marbach was so stunned that he

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<sup>218</sup> Brohm, Theodor Julius Brohm Journal, 107.

<sup>219</sup> Brohm, Theodor Julius Brohm Journal, 107.

<sup>220</sup> Brohm, Theodor Julius Brohm Journal, December 31, 1838, 112.

<sup>221</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 282.

remained quiet for weeks, although in February he would once again gather up his courage and voice his concerns about Stephan's growing powers and his self-indulgent spending of the Credit Fund's monies. Brohm, still blinded to any of Stephan's shortcomings, actually approached Marbach several times to discuss how his wife deserved Stephan's denunciations. Nothing in the records of the emigration indicates Marbach ever sought to take over the leadership of the emigration, but he was seriously worried about the group's financial situation, which he knew was becoming worse because of Stephan's constant withdrawals.

All these incidents were but a prelude to Stephan's spiritual and secular power grab. To underscore the necessity of strict obedience, Stephan began badgering the clergy and laity to pronounce him bishop of the Saxons' fledgling church.<sup>222</sup> Masterfully employing reverse psychology, he claimed he had no desire to lead the emigration; he was too old and too weary. On New Year's Eve, 1838, Brohm recorded that Stephan made the following remarks to members of the leadership: "Would to God someone else would lead you, I should be the first to extend my hand to him—but so long as I am the one to do it, I demand obedience."<sup>223</sup> He concluded with a religious *coup de grace*: "I am telling you my sentiments. Hereafter make no more trouble for me, for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus on my body."<sup>224</sup> His object was to shame the men gathered around him into obedience based

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<sup>222</sup> The Swedish Lutheran Church has had bishops throughout their history but the German Lutheran Church has not.

<sup>223</sup> Brohm, Theodor Julius Brohm Journal, 112.

<sup>224</sup> Brohm, Theodor Julius Brohm Journal, 113.

on an obligation to him for the many years he had served as their counselor and guiding light.

Stephan pressed forward with his plan to make himself bishop, although he did everything possible to make it appear that it was the people's wish and not his own. Stephan convinced Otto Walther to present the idea of promoting the pastor to the elevated position. As a young man Walther led a wild life, for which he still had tinges of guilt. He felt he owed his restoration to Pastor Stephan who, after his conversion, played a large part in his spiritual life. This young pastor was so dedicated to Stephan that he blindly gave the man his whole-hearted obedience. It was Walther who wrote the document entitled "Stephan's Investiture," which was signed by all the members on board the *Olbers* on January 14, 1839. It described Stephan as a man "loved and honored as a spiritual father," revered for the wise "counsel and judgment in all important matters which pertained to their own welfare or that of their congregations."<sup>225</sup> After Walther read the document, Stephan disingenuously claimed that he really did not want to take this position but that he deemed it necessary for the good of the group. The plea for him to become bishop was supposedly based on his past service:

In consequence of all this, therefore, we approach you with the reverent, urgent plea: Accept, Reverend Father, also for the future the office of bishop among us, bestowed upon you by God, and grant that we many now already express with this name our unqualified confidence in your fatherly love and pastoral faithfulness toward us, and the assurance of our sincere, complete, and childlike obedience toward you.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 288-289.

<sup>226</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 289.

This was heady praise indeed for a “humble” man, but for a self-centered one it promised certain turmoil for those under his control.

Dr. Carl Eduard Vehse, former curator of the Saxon State Archives and long-time legal defendant of Stephan, spoke to Stephan briefly before the Investiture was signed. In that conversation Vehse claimed that Stephan insisted it would add to the prestige of the emigrant group to be led by a bishop instead of a mere pastor. From this comment, it appeared that Stephan had no concept of the American dislike of all forms of elitism in both secular and sacred realms. It is more likely, from the events that followed, that he wanted his authority well established before he reached America and that, precisely because he did know what type of environment they would be entering, he was preparing iron-clad written authority for ruling what he thought was a complacent Lutheran community. From beginning to end, Stephan used the respect the people had for him and all he had done for them in the past, to attain authority and indulge his own self-interests.

Stephan’s quest for power was not yet quenched. While on the steamboat trip up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, he berated the emigrants until they drew up yet another document to solidify his control. Stephan had lingered in New Orleans, apparently to take in the sights and make some extravagant personal purchases, including several bottles of fine wines. During this extended stay in New Orleans, the immigrants learned that the *Amalia* was lost at sea, probably during the heavy storm that hit the *Olbers* shortly after leaving Bremen. Along with its fifty-nine passengers, it was transporting many of the expensive ecclesiastical vestments, bells, and musical instruments for their new church, plus a sizeable sum of monies from the Credit Fund. All the other members of the group had already

traveled by steamboat to St. Louis; Stephan and his group were the last to arrive. Passengers on the steamboat *Rienzi* were the first to reach St. Louis on January 18, followed by the *Clyde*, the *Knickerbocker* and finally the *Selma*, an elegant steamboat with lavish amenities, which carried Stephan and his entourage. The *Selma* did not leave New Orleans until February 3 and, due to several mishaps on the river, did not arrive in St. Louis until February 19.<sup>227</sup> Stephan took advantage of this longer trip up the river to take an additional measure to ensure his power over the Old Lutheran emigrants. Vehse and Marbach, who was finally regaining his confidence, were growing more concerned about the amount of money Stephan was spending from the group's communal Credit Fund.<sup>228</sup> On February 9, Stephan spent hours verbally abusing Marbach and Friedrich Wilhelm Barthel, the group's tax specialist. Probably in fear of an additional threat to his leadership, Stephan required yet another declaration of unquestioned loyalty. On February 16 those aboard signed the "Pledge of Obedience of the Steamer *Selma*."<sup>229</sup> Quoted here is one of the paragraphs from that pledge:

Above all, we confess and affirm, as before the face of the omniscient God, as to the truth, that we have full and firm confidence in the wisdom, experience, faithfulness, and benevolent fatherly love of our Lord Bishop, and we renounce all mistrustful, malicious expressions and thoughts imputing to him unrighteousness, harshness, egotism, selfishness, and carelessness in administering our temporal assets.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> The most serious incident occurred on February 14 when the steamship was stuck on a sandbar. When the captain departed to find help, the crew "rolled" the boat, a dangerous procedure in which the boiler was heated to an abnormally high temperature while the passengers and baggage were "rolled" to one section of the boat.

<sup>228</sup> Marbach was not on the steamboat when the pledge of obedience was signed. He left the *Selma* on February 13.

<sup>229</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 9.

<sup>230</sup> "Pledge of Obedience, Requested of the Company by Stephan on the Steamboat *Selma* in February 1839," in Keinath, *Documents Illustrating the History of the Lutheran Church in America, With Special Emphasis on the Missouri Synod* (River Forest, IL: Concordia Teachers College, 1947), 123.

In the introduction to the “Pledge of Obedience,” Stephan gave his assessment of the condition of his followers:

The sad condition of soul in a large part of our company of emigrants, ever more openly and clearly apparent throughout our journey has filled us with deep sadness. Sins which ruled among us and have given particular concern are: Indifference to God’s Word and deep despising of the holy office of the ministry, particularly a damnable attitude of mistrust and of dissatisfaction over against our worthy Bishop.”<sup>231</sup>

Building upon the actions taken while at sea, Stephan continued a harsh rebuttal of any and all criticism. The language heightened in intensity as the Bishop spoke of “slander, rancor, envy, suspicion, hypocrisy, and recalcitrance against the ordinances of His Highness”<sup>232</sup>

This last reference to himself should have been the most alarming of all to those who signed the document. Yet every Stephanite on board the *Selma*, except for Heinrich Fischer, a Dresden merchant, complied with Stephan’s “request.” Vehse later chastised himself for signing the document. He observed: “With every sort of colonial venture some sort of dictatorial control is necessary in the beginning; that is understood, and so I took my leave and allowed myself to be deceived.”<sup>233</sup> At a time when the emigrants were moving inexorably towards freedom, Stephan was gathering signatures in an attempt to establish himself as a bishop with unprecedented spiritual and secular powers and temporarily clipping the Saxons’ freedom.

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<sup>231</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 164

<sup>232</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 164.

<sup>233</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 9.

Pastor Loeber later recorded his own assessment of these particular events in a short history he wrote about the Saxon Lutheran immigration. The pastor professed that the immigrants were “coerced” into signing the document<sup>234</sup> and he lamented: “They rushed into this carelessly in a way which they later deeply regretted.”<sup>235</sup> Loeber added that at this time:

They confessed anew their allegiance to the entire Word of God and the Symbolic Books of the Lutheran Church. Ignoring this confession, they also promised to obey their Bishop in all church and outside church arrangements. These arrangements tended more and more to bring back the old Lutheran apostolic Church in its outward form, whereas the inner reality paid too little attention to the rights of the congregation.<sup>236</sup>

Having accomplished his goal of increasing his authority, Stephan, the newly installed bishop, arrived in St. Louis. An eager crowd of St. Louis residents and Stephanites were waiting to greet him, but Stephan pleaded a sore throat and remained in the ladies anteroom of the *Selma* until most of the crowd had dispersed.<sup>237</sup> He then left for the richly furnished home he was renting in the Belle Fontaine area of the city. The St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican* and the *Daily Exchange Gazette* duly announced the arrival of the steamer *Selma* with a “group of one hundred and eighty Germany passengers” aboard plus the birth of two babies on the trip.<sup>238</sup> Thus, the much anticipated arrival of this particular

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<sup>234</sup> Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County*, 5.

<sup>235</sup> Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County*, 5.

<sup>236</sup> Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County*, 5.

<sup>237</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 9.

<sup>238</sup> St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, February 20, 1839.

group of Germans was proclaimed in the city's purveyors of news and a new chapter was about to begin in the history of the Stephanites.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE POWER AND TRAGEDY OF DECEPTION

On the one side, such discernment, such correct appreciation of the times in which we live, such high intelligence, such grandeur of the Word and of the Name of God in his sermons, such power to arouse, to comfort, to fire the faith—but on the other side; I could not find the image of God in his person.<sup>239</sup>

Carl Eduard Vehse, 1840

When Martin Stephan and the remainder of the Old Lutherans finally arrived in St. Louis on February 19, 1839, a crowd of both Germans and Americans eagerly awaited their arrival. The liberal German-American contingency did not enthusiastically greet them upon their arrival and instead assaulted them with a barrage of antagonistic newspaper articles. The *Anzeiger des Westens*, in line with their anti-ecclesiastical, rationalist position, was quick to target the Saxons' conservative faith and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Historian Steven Rowan observes that the *Anzeiger* "set the caustic, progressive style that would always mark the St. Louis German press."<sup>240</sup> Yet other German Americans and St. Louis citizens accepted the Stephanites into their community and were happy to assist them in adjusting to life in Missouri. It was well known that the Stephanites were seeking religious freedom—a right close to many Americans' hearts. But many St. Louis residents were concerned by the group's strict ecclesiastical structure and Stephan's mysterious nightly excursions from his fancy rental home into the nearby woods. When several of the Stephanite women confessed to illicit relationships with the Bishop, the resulting chain of

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<sup>239</sup> Carl Eduard Vehse, "The Stephanite Emigration to America," trans. Rudolph Fichler (1840; repr. Tucson, AZ: Marion R. Winkler, 1975), 2.

<sup>240</sup> Steven Rowan, ed. and trans., *Germans for a Free Missouri: Translations from the St. Louis Radical Press, 1857-1862* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 35.

events launched the group into two years of confusion and despair. Martin Stephan's deceptions were a betrayal of the special trust that ideally exists between clergy and congregation. In Saxony, Stephan was known for preaching pure biblical sermons, for fighting government intrusion into the church, and for his wisdom and leadership, but less than five months after their arrival in Missouri, the Stephanites discovered that Stephan no longer demonstrated any of those qualities.

The Saxons were forced to deal with the reality of Martin Stephan's secret life in addition to the practical, day-by-day adjustments they made as new immigrants in America. Their assimilation process thus began in earnest. Even as they decided the question of whether their original vision of seeking religious freedom under the banner of conservative Lutheran theology still remained valid, the Stephanites had to move forward with making a living and establishing homes in the new land. Not until the April 1841 "Altenburg Debate" between C. F. W. Walther and the long-suffering Dr. Franz Marbach quieted their shame for blindly following Martin Stephan were they convinced that they could be forgiven for their transgressions and remain a legitimate church body. This debate was their watershed moment; after this crucial deliberation they turned to the task at hand—building lives in a new country and establishing a church aligned with their own religious conscience.

By 1839, St. Louis, often called the "Metropolis of the West," was well on its way to becoming a booming manufacturing and commercial center with only a few remaining log cabins and barely visible Indian mounds standing as witness to its pioneer days. Situated on the banks of the Mississippi River a few miles south of its junction with the Missouri River, St. Louis was well situated to develop into a major western urban center. In 1763, two

Frenchmen, Pierre Laclède Liguest and Auguste Chouteau, chose this spot as the site for their trading post. The French director-general of Louisiana granted the company of Maxent, a successful merchant in New Orleans, and Laclède the sole rights to the region's Indian trade for eight years. Laclède named the settlement in honor of King Louis IX and entrusted his thirteen-year-old stepson, Chouteau, with the construction of the post, which was started in December 1763 and completed the following year.<sup>241</sup> The flourishing fur trade proved to be the backbone of this small trading community.

The year 1763 also marked Britain's victorious conclusion to the French and Indian War. Under the Treaty of Paris, lands previously owned by France were awarded to England, which triggered a full-scale flight of French settlers from Illinois territory west to the Missouri side of the Mississippi River or south to New Orleans.<sup>242</sup> But the negotiators of the Treaty of Paris were sidetracked when it was learned that King Louis XV had promised what would become the Louisiana Purchase to Spain several years earlier. Hence, in 1769 the Spanish sent a man by the name of O'Reilly to become commandant general of Louisiana from their base in New Orleans.<sup>243</sup> This situation would be a thorn in the side of Americans for many years because of Spain's control over the vital Mississippi River and the outlet to the Gulf of Mexico, which posed a threat to America's critical trade route.

Lands once owned by the French were now under both British and Spanish control, although

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<sup>241</sup> Duane G. Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri*, 3rd ed. (previous 1963 and 1970, St. Louis, MO: River City Publishers, 1982), 38-39.

<sup>242</sup> Eugene Morrow Violette, *A History of Missouri* (Cape Girardeau, MO: Ramfre Press, reprint edition, 1960), 19.

<sup>243</sup> Violette, *A History of Missouri*, 17.

the British lost their claim to the lands again at the end of the Revolutionary War. The repeated changes in imperial rule created a cosmopolitan atmosphere in colonial St. Louis.

While the question of who ruled the vast area of Louisiana shifted back and forth from the end of the French and Indian War, until United States President Thomas Jefferson purchased Louisiana from Napoleon in 1803, the region was enmeshed in periods of lawlessness. In 1769, a former Spanish commandant who visited Missouri, reported to O'Reilly that "religion was said to have been wholly neglected, and everybody did as he pleased."<sup>244</sup> From 1778 to 1790, lawlessness in St. Louis flared again because there was no clear-cut authority to enforce the peace. The situation improved after the confusion over who had jurisdiction over the region was finally settled on March 9, 1804, when United States army Captain Amos Stoddard lowered the Spanish flag, briefly flew the French flag, and then raised the American flag in its place. Although Spain had promised to return Louisiana to France in the Treaty of San Ildefonso in 1800, the transition had not legally taken place. Hence, the Captain had to raise the French flag briefly to signify the change from Spanish to French to American rule. In an amazing turn of events, the United States now owned 800,000 square miles of bountiful land west of the Mississippi River, which were wide open for American settlement. By 1804, more than half of the 10,000 residents of the future state of Missouri were Americans.<sup>245</sup>

Americans were eager to move into the area that became Missouri in the decade before the Louisiana Purchase because of the liberal Spanish land grants policy. Free land

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<sup>244</sup> Violette, *A History of Missouri*, 20.

<sup>245</sup> Violette, *A History of Missouri*, 39.

was actually given to new settlers in exchange for the surveyor and registration fees. Settlers could claim their land even before the Spanish government in New Orleans received payments. It was a great opportunity for Americans, but the ambiguity of the documentation caused problems for years to come. Americans were primarily Protestant, which the Spanish overlooked for the first generation, but after that the second generation settlers were required to be baptized in the Catholic Church.<sup>246</sup> In reality, these laws were rarely enforced as Spanish authorities routinely turned a blind eye to the situation. However, as a precaution, Protestant church services were conducted out of the public eye.

Between the time the St. Louis trading post was established and when President Thomas Jefferson negotiated the Louisiana Purchase, the town emerged as a multicultural blend of French, Spanish, English, Native Americans, and, finally, American settlers. St. Louis drew all kinds of settlers, but many were just passing through on their way west. Historian William Foley observed of the town circa 1810:

Visitors to the town could see mothers, homemakers, domestics, both black and white; their playful children; Indian braves and squaws from nearby tribes peddling freshly killed game; Kentucky hunters straight from the backwoods; cultivated French merchants and an occasional Creole businesswoman; illiterate boatmen; metis hunters and their Indian wives; black working people, some slave and others free; brash Yankee lawyers; aspiring American entrepreneurs; assorted mechanics and laborers; and a collection of ne'er-do-wells and idlers.<sup>247</sup>

This remained the case as late as the 1830s, although by this time a large number of foreign immigrants and northerners were added to the blend. A German visitor, Frederick Julius Gustorf, who wrote of his travels in America in the 1830s, remarked that you could see a

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<sup>246</sup> Violette, *A History of Missouri*, 38.

<sup>247</sup> William E. Foley, *The Genesis of Missouri: From Wilderness Outpost to Statehood* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 185-186.

variety of people in St. Louis—”French, Creoles, Negroes, Germans, and Indians.”<sup>248</sup>

Gustorf spoke of an uncivilized St. Louis in 1835 where fights were a frequent occurrence in the streets and the people were only interested in gossip.<sup>249</sup> Another observer described St. Louis as having “a quaint Old World charm and life-style,” which was one of the draws for many immigrants, particularly the Germans.<sup>250</sup> Historian Adam Arenson argues, “St. Louis’s demographic stew mirrored the nation’s regional, political, and ethnic diversity as no other city did.”<sup>251</sup>

The Americans increased their presence in the city, making changes that slowly diminished the French and Spanish flavor of the town. One example is the replacement of the original trading post built by Laclede and Chouteau in 1764 by a “large American-style municipal market” in 1841.<sup>252</sup> The names of the town’s elite citizens still reflected St. Louis’s cultural beginnings—Chouteau, Laclede, Gratoit, and Labbadie were all still prominent St. Louis families, but American newcomers also saw opportunity in the growing western city. Men such as Benton, Breckinridge, Blair, Preston, Gratz, and Crittenden, many who were educated in the East and occasionally even in Europe, arrived from Virginia,

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<sup>248</sup> Frederick Julius Gustorf, *The Uncorrupted Heart, Journal and Letters of Frederick Julius Gustorf*, ed. and trans. Fred and Gisela Gustorf (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 82.

<sup>249</sup> Foley, *The Genesis of Missouri*, 83.

<sup>250</sup> William E. Parrish, Charles T. Jones, Jr., and Lawrence O. Christensen, *Missouri: The Heart of the Nation*, 2nd ed. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1992), 25.

<sup>251</sup> Adam Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 5-6.

<sup>252</sup> Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic*, 16.

Tennessee, and Kentucky to make a new life in St. Louis.<sup>253</sup> Not all Missourians favored St. Louis's cosmopolitan atmosphere, however. Many began to see St. Louis as disconnected from residents in other parts of the state, such as those living in the Boon's Lick region of central Missouri. Missourians living in the countryside increasingly believed that the residents of St. Louis acted as if they were superior. And, in fact, the citizens of St. Louis did hold themselves in high esteem, expecting great things of their city in the future—a belief shared by many of their business connections in the East.<sup>254</sup>

The city's leadership had grand dreams for St. Louis, which included becoming the largest inland city in the United States, a cultural center, a thriving commercial city, and a hub for a country that was increasingly moving to the West. Thomas Hart Benton, who made St. Louis his home in 1817, was an ardent advocate of Manifest Destiny. To make this goal a reality, he was a strong promoter of western railroads. William Greenleaf Eliot brought a taste of the East with his emphasis on culture and education; although he always insisted his first calling was minister to the Unitarian church he founded in St. Louis in 1834. In 1853 several prominent St. Louis political and business leaders presented him the charter for the Eliot Seminary, which eventually evolved into Washington University. All of these ideas are indicative of a shared vision for St. Louis's future. "Through technical breakthroughs, artistic and educational innovations, and a unique brand of compromise

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<sup>253</sup> Christopher Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 115.

<sup>254</sup> Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic*, 47ff.

politics,” notes Arenson, “the leaders of St. Louis embraced the challenges of their moment, setting forth a dramatic new vision of American history and destiny.”<sup>255</sup>

The Saxons arrived on the cusp of St. Louis’s meteoric economic growth. The fur trade was in decline, and, in its place, the city had become a thriving river port city second only to New Orleans. Much of this growth can be attributed to the development of steamboats. Historian Christopher Phillips explains the rising importance of the steamboat as key to the growth of St. Louis: “In 1832, 532 steamboats docked at St. Louis wharves; by 1845 that number had reached two thousand, and by the 1850s St. Louis received annually more than three thousand steamboats carrying 1.5 million tons of freight.”<sup>256</sup> Transporting goods by the river instead of over land was faster, safer, and less expensive. Benefiting from the city’s superb location on the Mississippi River, the steamboat building industry and river trade became staples of the St. Louis economy. New trades flourished in the city, including the production of wagons, saddles, blankets, furniture, barrels, and clothing. Thanks to the hard work of the city’s citizens, St. Louis produced approximately two-thirds of Missouri’s manufactured goods.<sup>257</sup> It took a while for the city to become a manufacturing center, but by the 1840s and 1850s, this shift was becoming obvious. Phillips claims,

Led by flour and mill processing, sugar refining, and meat packing (and followed by such collateral industries as brewing, distilling, brick and iron manufacturing, cordwaining, and stove making), the city boasted manufactured products valued at \$27 million by 1860, ranking seventh among American cities, while being sixth nationally in the number of manufacturing firms.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic*, 6-7.

<sup>256</sup> Phillips, *Missouri’s Confederate*, 116.

<sup>257</sup> Parrish, *Missouri: The Heart of the Nation*, 152.

<sup>258</sup> Phillips, *Missouri’s Confederate*, 117.

The city promoted an image of success and growth.

In 1839, the Germans already had a strong presence in the city. In 1840, one-fourth to one-third of the population was German. By 1860, over 80,000 Germans made their home in St. Louis. As the Stephanites settled in St. Louis for what they anticipated to be a short stay, the group was continuously bombarded by an often heated public conflict between the Saxon leadership and the editors of the *Anzeiger des Westens*. Gotthold Guenther recorded some of these diatribes in his journal about the Saxon emigration.<sup>259</sup> On January 26, 1839, the *Anzeiger* commented that among the Saxons, “There were many elderly men within this group who had good lives back in their homeland but were goaded by their pastors into thinking that they could not die in the sanctity of old Europe.”<sup>260</sup> The point was evident—pastors were in control and they “have unlimited authority and absolute obedience from their sect.”<sup>261</sup> With that last word, “sect,” the newspaper heaped serious criticism on the group, implying that it was not a valid church group. On February 9, Pastor Stephan responded: “One would scarcely expect such a reception from a German in a country where the first settlers were religious refugees.”<sup>262</sup> “Responsible behavior alone should have restrained you from greeting compatriots from the old homeland in such an unfriendly manner,” he continued.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Gotthold Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839: The Experiences and Adventures of the Stephanites who Emigrated from Saxony: Their Journey to St. Louis, Their Stay There, and the Condition of their Colony in Perry County* (Dresden, Germany: C. Heinrich, 1839), 38-43.

<sup>260</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, January 26, 1839.

<sup>261</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, January 26, 1839.

<sup>262</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, February 6, 1839.

<sup>263</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, February 6, 1839.

The *Anzeiger* printed reports from Saxony about the Old Lutherans even before they left their homeland, so their St. Louis readership was aware of why the group chose to emigrate. The newspaper's editor protested on February 16, 1839 that he in no way meant to insult the Saxons but "we only disapprove of the ways and methods used to start up the emigration movement in the first place, the community's total reliance on its clergy and the dangerous, unlimited power of the ministers."<sup>264</sup> In contrast, other German Americans attempted to buffer the onslaught from the *Anzeiger*. Dr. Gempp, who treated Stephan's throat ailment, suggested that the Saxons sue the newspaper, telling the *Anzeiger* that "it's just possible these people, who were unjustly persecuted in Germany by those in civil and religious authority, may be advised to bring suit in the courts for libel and slander."<sup>265</sup> Dr. Gempp made little impression on the strident editors of the German newspapers, however.

The vital difference between the opposition the Stephanites encountered in Saxony and what they faced in St. Louis was that, although their critics were loud, liberal Germans did not have the power to impair the Saxons' religious freedoms, whereas in Saxony liberal authorities could impede the practice of their faith. Still, the Saxons must have been startled to face such strong antagonism in their new home. The German-American press, which was already a part of the St. Louis cultural and political landscape, regarded the Saxons with disdain because of the group's overbearing ecclesiastical hierarchy. The *Anzeiger*, a perpetual thorn in their side, advertised books on rationalism, the very philosophy Saxon

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<sup>264</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, February 6, 1839.

<sup>265</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, March 13, 1839.

Lutherans opposed so vehemently in Saxony, thus placing the Saxons yet again on the defensive.

The discordant, anti-Christian tone of the *Anzeiger* and other German papers offended native-born Americans as well, which is one of the reasons Americans in St. Louis were not inclined to think the worst of the Stephanites. In fact, many non-German citizens were very gracious and helpful when the group first arrived. The only German church in the city was “an American counterpart of the German Union,” which the Saxons so stridently opposed in Saxony, so there would be no association with this group of Germans.<sup>266</sup>

Luckily, soon after their arrival, the Episcopalians in town generously allowed the Saxons to use Christ Church Cathedral on Sunday afternoons from two in the afternoon until sunset. Although, originally, this was to be a short-term arrangement, the Saxons retained the use of the building for three and one-half years. The Episcopalians continued their generosity, despite inconveniences on their own part, until the Lutherans acquired a permanent building on December 4, 1842, when they completed construction of Trinity Lutheran Church. The Episcopalians remained faithful allies for the Saxons despite the traumatic situation during those first few years in St. Louis.

Although most did not discriminate against the Stephanites on the basis of their faith, the Americans were quickly offended by the occupants of the bishop’s house, into which more and more young women were seen entering at all hours of the day and night.<sup>267</sup>

St. Louis residents grew increasingly disturbed by rumors that Stephan was committing

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<sup>266</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi, The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, 1839-1841* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 307.

<sup>267</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 11.

immoral acts. Word leaked out that a growing number of “maids” were living in Stephan’s home.<sup>268</sup> After Stephan’s sore throat finally healed, he reverted to his nocturnal wanderings, which also alarmed his American neighbors. Although St. Louis’s citizens were prepared to see Stephan as “a second Moses,” as Otto Walther’s songs proclaimed, it quickly became clear that his actions were not above reproach. Americans more and more saw signs of the same behavior that concerned the authorities in Saxony. Now it was not Saxon officials but unbiased American citizens who reported something was amiss with Stephan.

Stephan also offended the Americans’ anti-aristocratic sensibilities with his ostentatious airs and apparent lack of humility. After all the advanced reports about his spiritual charisma, his first sermon in St. Louis on March 3 also proved an abject disappointment to many.<sup>269</sup> It was reported that his preaching was “a rather dismal failure.”<sup>270</sup> Heinrich Koch, a watchmaker and jeweler, sent a letter to the editor of the *Anzeiger* on March 9 to give his evaluation of Stephan’s sermon. According to Koch, the sermon was “less than inspired rhetoric,” the bishop “made a laughing stock of himself by comparing himself to Abraham,” and “in the opinion of the undersigned, he considered the speaker an inconsiderate man for his insults about our German fatherland.”<sup>271</sup> The congregation also was under awed by the bishop’s ostentatious attire, which included a mitre, a shepherd’s crook, a cross hanging from a chain of pure gold, and elaborate lacework

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<sup>268</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 11.

<sup>269</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, 32.

<sup>270</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 323.

<sup>271</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, 50.

worn over the top of his robe.<sup>272</sup> Vehse observed that the chain “was inappropriately heavy,” due to all the gold it contained.<sup>273</sup> After a second Catholic church was dedicated in St. Louis, Stephan instructed his clergy and candidates “to observe [the priest’s regalia] closely, so that whatever might be appropriate could be used in the dedication of our own church.”<sup>274</sup> What could be more disconcerting than an immigrant Lutheran pastor deciding he must have the richness of the Catholic leadership’s traditional garb? It was becoming increasingly clear, at least to the people of St. Louis, that something was amiss with the Lutheran bishop.

And yet, as late as March 1839, the people of St. Louis, minus the German press, were still willing to put the best construction on things. The *Daily Evening Gazette* was polite in its March 5 account of Stephan’s sermon and was complimentary of the congregation.<sup>275</sup> The paper mentioned the attendance of the “Bishop and several Priests,” which is a description of the pastors, which would have horrified Martin Luther.<sup>276</sup> This paragraph followed:

Having left their native land for conscience’s sake—being persecuted by the Government, on account of their religious opinions—they have come among us; and it is well that they should be allowed the privilege of worshipping God agreeably to the dictates of their own consciences.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 11.

<sup>273</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 11.

<sup>274</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 12.

<sup>275</sup> St. Louis *Daily Evening Gazette*, March 5, 1839.

<sup>276</sup> St. Louis *Daily Evening Gazette*, March 5, 1839.

<sup>277</sup> St. Louis *Daily Evening Gazette*, March 5, 1839.

However, the pontifical actions of the Lutheran Bishop were looking more and more like authoritarianism rather than a church structure based on a partnership between the laity and the clergy.

From a practical perspective, life was very difficult for the Saxons during these first few months in the United States. Housing in the city had been in short supply for years because “St. Louis builders still could not keep pace with the demand created by the steady stream of newcomers.”<sup>278</sup> This was still a problem in 1839, ultimately leading to a high cost of living. People lived in cellars, barns, inns, or whatever rooms they could find. To rent a room in a boardinghouse cost about \$5 to \$7 per week, a high sum for the times.<sup>279</sup> Because the Saxons originally planned to remain in St. Louis only a short time, no one secured long-term work, and short-term jobs brought in only about 25 cents per day. Most of these meager earnings were turned over to the pastors to put into the Credit Fund. This was a tremendous hardship for the immigrants because purchasing the necessities of life was very costly. A bushel of corn, for instance, cost \$1.10, wheat \$1.33, and \$1.00 to \$1.50 for a bushel of potatoes.<sup>280</sup> Even the fuel needed to keep renters warm throughout the winter months was scarce and expensive. Clothing was costly and poorly made.<sup>281</sup> Several Saxons became ill and a few died.

The desperate circumstances faced by many of the congregants contrasted sharply with the lifestyle of the bishop, who was supposed to nurture and protect them as their

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<sup>278</sup> Foley, *The Genesis of Missouri*, 244.

<sup>279</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 327.

<sup>280</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, 24.

<sup>281</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, 34.

spiritual leader. While the laity lived in cramped quarters with insufficient food and heat, the Bishop enjoyed housing at the home of Dr. White, located “outside the city between Second and Third Streets on Indian Hill”—a home elaborately furnished, pleasantly situated, and paid for by money from the Credit Fund.<sup>282</sup> In addition to the \$20 per month rental charge, additional monies were spent for another new carriage for the Bishop, books for his library, an organ, and several other items totaling over 8,000 thaler.<sup>283</sup> Gotthold Guenther, along with two others, lived in one of the rooms on the first floor of the house and reported that only Otto Walther saw Stephan consistently. During the first few weeks after his arrival, Stephan used his throat problem as an excuse to see only a select few. A room on the first floor was set aside for the clergy. On the second floor, women came and went as they ostensibly worked to attend to the Bishop’s needs. The five most frequent visitors were Louise Volker, single and age 21; Louise Guenther, age 30 and listed as a “maid”; Mrs. Schneider; Pauline Weidlich, also listed as a 30-year-old maid; and Maria Schubert, age 15.<sup>284</sup> The situation was becoming alarmingly similar to that in Dresden.

In the midst of all the strain and worries, members of the Society were actively pursuing the search for suitable acreage in Missouri. Appointed by Stephan, J. G. Gube, Christian Schlimpert, and Johann Palisch headed up the committee to purchase a site for the settlement. During the selection process, Missourians offered to sell several valuable tracts of land to the Lutherans, the most appealing of which was the Gratoit Estate on the Meramec

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<sup>282</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 32.

<sup>283</sup> A Thaler was worth about 70 cents in American currency.

<sup>284</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 36.

River not far from St. Louis. At Stephan's insistence, the men declined the offer. Carl Vehse and C. F. W. Walther later surmised that Stephan refused to purchase the estate because, from the beginning, he wanted an exclusive, isolated community. The acreage finally chosen in Perry County appealed to him much more than a property within easy reach of St. Louis. Vehse wrote, "Stephan's mind was fixed on the wilderness."<sup>285</sup> There he could preserve greater authority with little likelihood of interference from those outside of the community.

The purchase of 4,472.66 acres in Perry County, Missouri at the cost of \$9,234.25 was finalized on April 8.<sup>286</sup> The price included a hefty sum of \$1,000 for a river landing site, where the Saxons later established the little town of Wittenberg.<sup>287</sup> For the time being, all the land was put under Johann Georg Gube's name on behalf of the entire community. The land was primarily government, or "Congress land," with only a small amount of developed acreage. On April 26, 1839, after appointing E. G. W. Keyl as the interim pastor in charge of the members remaining in St. Louis, Stephan set out for Perry County, 110 miles south of St. Louis, accompanied primarily by a contingent of men and women who frequented his house. About 120 Saxons, who were primarily "professional men, artisans, merchants, and laborers," remained in St. Louis. Initially, this was just a temporary measure, but worsening conditions in Perry County would later make their residence in St. Louis a necessity so that at least part of the Saxons were earning a living to support themselves, as well as assist their

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<sup>285</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 376.

<sup>286</sup> Another source reports 4475.88 acres total for the land purchased in Perry County.

<sup>287</sup> Walter A. Baepler, *A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847-1947* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 29.

Lutheran brethren in rural Missouri.<sup>288</sup> A farm previously owned by a family named Martin boasted a few buildings and improvements, which were set aside for the Bishop's temporary residence. Stephan had a roof over his head, unlike much of his flock, yet he still pushed ahead with his grandiose plan for building a large home atop a hill close to the river where he envisioned a small town to be called Stephanisburg.<sup>289</sup> The settlers had little time to work on permanent housing for their own families because Stephan demanded that his house be built first. The Bishop had by now so extended his authority that he insisted that the people kiss his hand in reverence to his holy office, and it was clear that he considered all this special treatment as rightfully due to him. Stephan's privileges and revered treatment was short term, however, and the end was coming quickly.

Shocking events in St. Louis soon would shake the Saxons' world and weaken their strength and resolve. On May 5, 1839, Pastor Loeber preached a sermon to the settlers remaining in St. Louis, which so stirred the consciences of several women attending that they later spoke to him privately and confessed to illicit relationships with Stephan. It does not appear that the sermon was unusual in any way; it just happened to strike a chord in the hearts of certain of the young women in the congregation. Some of the women were recognizable as those who frequented Stephan's rental home—Louise Völker, Sophie Henschel, Wilhelmina Hohn, and Auguste Poetzsch admitted that they had “eaten of fruit of

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<sup>288</sup> Theo. Buenger, “The Saxon Immigrants of 1839,” in *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century*, ed. W.H.T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 13.

<sup>289</sup> There is a small sign outside of Altenburg, Missouri pointing to the hill where Stephan's house was to be built. The roads are narrow and rough that lead up to the proposed site of the house, where there is an expansive view of the river and farmlands below. No one lived up there until recently, when one new home was built on this lovely spot.

the forbidden tree.”<sup>290</sup> It is not clear why the women chose this time to confess, and none left a record of their motivations. Perhaps they came forward because Stephan was out of town and could not apply any immediate pressure on them. Those who frequented Stephan’s house also may have compared notes and complained to each other about how Stephan treated them. Although there is often strength in numbers, the women came in separately and not as a group. Pastor Loeber was well known for his compassionate heart, and, perhaps his temporary position of leadership in St. Louis provided them the window of opportunity to confess their sins.

“Their statements,” Guenther reported, “furnished startling proof that the servant of religion had applied the lowest and basest means to satisfy his ever present lust.”<sup>291</sup> It also was learned later that just before he disembarked from the steamboat in St. Louis, Stephan’s son told a friend that “my father will come to a bad end, as you will soon find out.”<sup>292</sup> The bishop reportedly used his role of spiritual leader as a means to lure the women and then required them to take oaths that they would not tell anyone. The confessions given to Loeber were so distressing that no record remains of exactly what was said. However, Louise Guenther, Stephan’s longtime housekeeper and, as the settlers would soon find out, Stephan’s longtime mistress, provided a full confession of Stephan’s transgressions. What the congregation had assumed was persecution in Dresden, now turned out to be true. They were distressed to learn that they had allowed themselves to be led to a new country by a

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<sup>290</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, 53.

<sup>291</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, 53.

<sup>292</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 13.

man who was guilty of the transgressions of which he had been accused in their former country and, therefore, was no longer worthy of their trust.

One day before Pastor Loeber preached his fateful sermon, members of the laity unfortunately put an advertisement in the *Anzeiger des Westens* in response to accusations spreading across St. Louis that Stephan and the leadership were taking unfair advantage of Saxon congregants and confiscating their wages for the clergy's own benefit. Prominent leaders of the laity, including Carl Vehse, Franz Marbach, and Gustav Jaeckel signed the following letter, which was sent to the newspaper:

We feel we owe this explanation to those who love the truth. We owe it to our own conscience. We owe it to God, just because it is in the interest of truth. We owe it to our clergy (who, we wish to state emphatically, have not asked us to write this), we say, we owe it to our clergy because they are honest, honorable men, worthy of love. We owe it finally to our new countrymen because they do not know the facts and might easily be misled by undenied accusations. There is no domination of the clergy among us. Our congregation joined itself together of its own free will and accord, without any persuasion or urging on the part of the clergy. Voluntarily, we have held together on our journey from Europe to America. Voluntarily, we hold together at this time.<sup>293</sup>

A few weeks later they would feel entirely different, although, in time, the group would once again "hold together."

In spite of increasing signs that things were amiss, the clergymen were stunned by Stephan's transgressions. Guenther aptly described the shock of discovering that "Stephan had carried on in a manner much more befitting a Turkish pasha than a Christian bishop."<sup>294</sup> When the first two women spoke to Loeber hours after he gave his sermon, the pastor

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<sup>293</sup> "A Protest," *Anzeiger des Westens* May 4, 1839, quoted in Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839: The Experiences and Adventures of the Stephanites, Who Emigrated from Saxony* (Dresden, Germany: C. Heinrich, 1839), 48-49.

<sup>294</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, 53.

hesitated to do anything, as he feared they simply wanted to slander the bishop's name. But on Wednesday, two more women approached Loeber with the same allegations.<sup>295</sup> At this point, Loeber discussed the situation with pastors Keyl, Walther, and Buerger, and they then devised a plan for confronting Stephan. Thus began a spiritual tragedy for both clergy and laity. The one action on which all agreed was that they must remove Stephan from office as quickly as possible. Dr. Vehse reported that the leadership in St. Louis carried the facts of the case to one of the elders of the Episcopal Church for his counsel. After Vehse commented on how catastrophic the situation was, the man replied: "Not only for you, Sir, it's a misfortune for us all, for all Christianity!"<sup>296</sup> Many believed that Stephan should be brought before civil authorities and tried in a court of law. In point of fact, the pastors discussed this option with civil leaders in St. Louis as well as the leadership from the Episcopal Church. Civil authorities advised church leaders to remove Stephan from the settlement with dispatch in order to avoid a worse scandal.<sup>297</sup> The Stephanites were now confronted with the most difficult ordeal of their first two years in Missouri.

The Stephanite leadership sent C. F. W. Walther ahead of the others to Perry County in order to gently inform the settlers of the situation. On Sunday, May 19, Walther exhorted the people to attend his church service in Altenburg rather than the one Stephan was conducting in Wittenberg. Rumors had already drifted down the Mississippi before Walther arrived. Only two or three people attended Stephan's Sunday worship service. After

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<sup>295</sup> Bob Schmidt, "Lutheran Heritage Center and Museum" (Altenburg, MO: Perry County Lutheran Historical Society), 4.

<sup>296</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 18

<sup>297</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 13.

informing the congregants, Walther returned briefly to St. Louis and then hurried back to Perry County on May 29 with 400 additional immigrants.<sup>298</sup> It is not certain why Walther brought such a large number of the immigrants with him the second time. Perhaps it was to impress upon the bishop the gravity of the situation or to have the immigrants help prepare the land for habitation and give the current settlers some much needed help. It also was a matter of making it clear that whatever decision was made was a corporate action. The fact that more people came to listen to Walther than Stephan indicated they understood that important matters would be discussed.

The process of removing Stephan from leadership began late that same evening of May 29 when Ernst Keyl and Gotthold Loeber knocked on Stephan's cabin door and presented him with the charges leveled against him. A "Council" of the community's key leaders, both clergy and laity, was already organized. If Stephan knew what was happening, he was in full denial. Stephan was ordered to meet with this group on the following day, but he denounced the "Council" and refused to bow to their authority. Agitated by two days of negotiations, the Saxons were beginning to take on the characteristics of a mob. The threat of violence was what eventually convinced Stephan to submit to his fate. Vehse and Bimpage managed to retrieve a confession of sorts after they promised to protect Stephan from the people, but Stephan always maintained that he only signed it under duress and continued to proclaim his innocence until his dying day. But the die was cast, and even his tenacious adherence to his story was unconvincing.

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<sup>298</sup> Some sources say May 29 and others say May 30.

The laity was included in all the decisions being made throughout this entire process. On May 30, a formal “Sentence of Deposition Pronounced upon Stephan” was drawn up and signed by several of the pastors plus Dr. Vehse, Johann Georg Gube, Christian Gottfried Schlimpert, Johann Gottlieb Palisch, and Johann Friedrich Sproede. They read the statement to the remaining members of the congregation, who agreed with the accusations of adultery and embezzlement of communal funds and gave their approval to eject the bishop from the group. Dr. Vehse was a lawyer and former curator of the Saxon State Archives, while Gube, Palisch, and Schlimpert were farmers. Sproede arrived just two days before the conviction of Stephan with a group of 95 to 100 Lutherans from New York, who had been planning on joining the Stephanites since 1836.

The first paragraph of the deposition states:

Whereas you, Martin Stephan, while Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran congregation emigrated from Saxony to North America, have been attained by the undersigned Council of variously committed sins of fornication and adultery, as well as of profligate malfeasance with alien properties, and also have made yourself guilty of false teaching... you have forfeited your privileges as Bishop.”<sup>299</sup>

Stephan demanded a formal release and compensation for his services but he received neither.

Although he continued to espouse his innocence, Stephan’s actions belied his words. With characteristic deceit and selfishness, Stephan managed to escape with some monies hidden in his belongings, although a search before he left uncovered some of his treasure. About \$1,800 of Credit Fund monies was discovered in his home. Stephan was allowed to

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<sup>299</sup> *Stephan’s Verzicht* in the Buenger Family Collection, Folder 34, Box 3, Concordia Historical Institute, May 30, 1839.

keep \$100 of it after he signed the deposition. In signing the document, Stephan gave up the right to lay future claims against the *Gesellschaft* or even to return to the community, plus he agreed to immediately go into exile. On the evening of May 30 they gave Stephan a tent to sleep in, his Bible, and little else. The following morning Bimpage and Mueller rowed Stephan across the river, where he was unceremoniously deposited at a spot called the Devil's Bakeoven, a rather appropriately named location, considering the situation. Vehse late recalled how he felt throughout all the turmoil of these days: "I cannot deny that this parting roused painful, uncontrollable feelings in me as I recalled all the good, besides much that was bad, for which I am indebted to him."<sup>300</sup>

With Stephan gone, the Saxons questioned how they could have allowed this to happen. Why were they so blind? The question of "why?" would haunt and basically immobilize them for the following two years. The immigrants continued earning a living, working the land, and trying to put food on the table, but their original vision was obliterated, and a lack of direction took a tremendous toll on them. As they examined the past, they acknowledged that the brilliance of Stephan's sermons and his counseling skills at the height of his pastorate had not been an illusion. Many who sought a vibrant Christianity were personally indebted to Stephan for his encouragement. Grateful to him for pulling them out of "dead" churches, where the Scriptures were not central to sermon texts, Stephanites by and large closed their eyes to the gradual changes that overcame the man. Nevertheless, pride and self-centeredness, unfaithfulness, and deception slowly and inexorably led to his demise.

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<sup>300</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 17.

Vehse reported that “all is lost, save the good cause of the Lutheran Church.”<sup>301</sup> Vehse observed in a booklet he wrote about the Stephanites that Stephan was a “psychological enigma,” “the more abandoned he was, the more clever he was.”<sup>302</sup> He had an “exceptional and sure understanding of human nature, and he had cultivated such perceptive tact in dealing with various characters that the dominance he gained over others was at first hardly noticed.”<sup>303</sup> Vehse then quoted an unnamed friend of the pastor who observed: “On the one side, such discernment, such correct appreciation of the times in which we live, such high intelligence, such grandeur of the Word and of the Name of God in his sermons, such power to arouse, to comfort, to fire the faith—but on the other side; I could not find the image of God in his person.”<sup>304</sup> Stephan fooled even the most intelligent of his followers with deceptions that were intricately and carefully woven into his spiritual language.

As the resentment subsided, confusion and disappointment set in. Many congregants blamed themselves for being so blind to Stephan’s faults. Pastor Loeber reflected on a time when Stephan inspired so many Lutherans while they were still lived in their beloved Sachsenland. Wanting to hear unadulterated Lutheran teachings, they often traveled long distances to hear Old Lutheran preachers, who were few in numbers. Everywhere they looked they saw “the unholy spirit of the false Evangelical Church,” which attacked the

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<sup>301</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 1.

<sup>302</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 1.

<sup>303</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 1.

<sup>304</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 2.

Lutheran Confessions and preached rationalism and unionism.<sup>305</sup> For twenty years, Pastor Loeber wrote, Stephan preached the “old, evangelical confessions.”<sup>306</sup> Following is Pastor Loeber’s assessment of Stephan’s pastoral capabilities in the years before they emigrated:

Stephan showed them from the Word of God how they could in faith and in life quiet their conscience. In this way he received the love and trust of his followers from near and far. But he did not walk righteously before God, living in secret sins which he covered with all kinds of outward goodness. He also ruled with loveless coercion of all kinds over the conscience of his followers. Even though his life caused numerous offences, they were overlooked by us and he was not punished because of our unbelievable blindness and our subjugation to him. However, when he was questioned by the government and they could not find him guilty of any specific offence, we were then convinced, as he had claimed, that it was mainly the Lutheran Church itself that was the target and not Stephan personally.<sup>307</sup>

Stephan was not entirely abandoned by his former followers in the months and years after he was deposed. Members who had been under his leadership were not devoid of Christian compassion. Later that summer, Stephan sent word to the settlers that he was dying. It was true that his health had been very poor since departing Perry County but he was not dying; whether he simply wanted attention or really believed he was dying is unclear. Out of compassion, Pastor Loeber agreed to give the former bishop communion, but he also intended to encourage Stephan, for the sake of his own spiritual health, to finally give a full confession of his sins. Stephan still stubbornly refused to admit that he had done anything wrong. In a letter dated January 2, 1845, C. F. W. Walther reported that: “In a hardened and arrogant manner [Stephan] denies everything of which he was convicted very

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<sup>305</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, 55.

<sup>306</sup> Gotthold Heinrich Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County, Missouri in 1839*, trans. Vernon R. Meyr (St. Louis, MO: Center for Regional History and Cultural Heritage, 1984), 3.

<sup>307</sup> Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County*, 3.

clearly. He continues to declare himself a martyr.”<sup>308</sup> After several years of destitution Stephan became pastor of a congregation in Horse Prairie, Illinois. He died there on February 26, 1846, and was interred in the cemetery next to the church, where his headstone can still be viewed.<sup>309</sup> The *Anzeiger des Westens* was more than happy to publish the news of the Saxon crisis. After all, it proved the liberal stance that ecclesiastical hierarchies were dangerous. Four of the pastors quickly published their own explanation of what had occurred:

Unfortunately, we have had an experience during the last weeks which convinces us of shameful deception, that fills our hearts with repugnance and horror. Stephan is really guilty of secret lust of the flesh, of disloyalty and hypocrisy. While we previously, due to lack of information and because of voluntary attachment, have defended this man, we now renounce the deeply fallen one, since God has graciously opened our eyes.<sup>310</sup>

Loeber concluded that the attribute that saved the Saxons was that the members were “still a church depending solely on faith in God.”<sup>311</sup>

By agreeing to make Stephan a bishop and allowing him to reign over the community with dictatorial powers, the people opposed the very precepts of their own Lutheran confessions and gave up individual and spiritual rights that should have remained entirely their own. They chose the United States so that they could enjoy personal and religious freedom, but if they had continued on the path Stephan carved out for them, real

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<sup>308</sup> “Roy A. Suelflow, ed., *Correspondence of C. F. W. Walther*, trans. Roy A. Suelflow (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary, 1980), 38.

<sup>309</sup> Baepler, *A Century of Grace*, 33.

<sup>310</sup> “A Declaration,” *St. Louis Anzeiger des Westens*, 4 May 1839, quoted in Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839: The Experiences and Adventures of the Stephanites*, 55.

<sup>311</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839*, 7.

freedom would have eluded them. Loeber wrote that “the largest part of us...really had not emigrated because of Stephan, but rather because of God’s Word and the Church”<sup>312</sup>

Because of this, Loeber believed that the people “were rescued from great danger, yes, from the hellish snares of the devil.”<sup>313</sup> When the women confessed to Pastor Loeber, the blinders were totally removed.

Back home, the people of Saxony were anxious to hear about the emigration. Many sincerely hoped the Stephanites would self-destruct. Gotthold Guenther was one of the first emigrants to return to Saxony, and people were so interested in reading his personal account of the emigration that his pamphlet was printed immediately after his arrival. Soon after he returned home, his observations were published by a Mr. C. Heinrich of Dresden; this small booklet was entitled “The Experiences and Adventures of the Stephanites Who Emigrated From Saxony.”<sup>314</sup> He apparently returned to Germany so that he could earn money to send back to his family in Perry County. Unable to raise the funds for the trip from any of his fellow emigrants, he ironically received part of the necessary monies from Father Lutz, a Catholic priest at the nearby Jesuit College and a friend of Lutz’s in New York, the Rt. Rev. Dr. J. Hughes. Lutz supplemented these donations by taking short-term jobs along the way. After Guenther finally reached Saxony and published his booklet, many an enemy of the Stephanites felt vindicated by his rendition of the emigration.

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<sup>312</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 5.

<sup>313</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 5.

<sup>314</sup> Guenther, *The Stephanites*, 1839, 53.

Articles from the *Anzeiger* also were widely circulated in Saxony, as were letters written by the immigrants to friends and family. In addition, Ferdinand von Warner, of Leipzig, published his tirade against the Stephanites and updated Saxony on the latest experiences of the emigration group.<sup>315</sup> As far as von Warner was concerned, Stephan should have been exposed before he left Saxony and subjected the people to the trials and tribulations of moving so far from home. He spoke of women giving their favors to Stephan and of the Stephanites being “separated into the deeper midnight” of their lives since they had subjected themselves to their bishop.<sup>316</sup> When Dr. Vehse also penned a pamphlet on the Saxon emigration a few months later, it also was quickly published.

On June 1, 1839, the Saxons made a more formal announcement of their separation from Stephan in the *Anzeiger des Westens*, but the dark days were just beginning. The community’s struggle to survive after the catastrophe of Stephan’s exile was two-pronged: how were they to survive physically; and could they survive as a religious community now that their mission was undermined? The most flammable issue became the scope of the clergy’s authority. After Stephan was removed from office, the laity naturally worried that the other clergymen were also hiding secret lives of sin. Many reasoned that Stephan had masterfully deceived the laity, but it should have been much harder to deceive the clergy, who spent more time with him. The pastors eventually were acquitted of any wrongdoing, but for a long time the laity remained cautious and even resentful. The clergy did not alleviate the laity’s concerns when they insisted that although Stephan had sinned, control of

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<sup>315</sup> Ferdinand von Warner, *Die Neueste Sachsischen Auswanderer nach Amerika: Charaktergemalde der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Bertag von c.b. Polet, 1839).

<sup>316</sup> von Warner, *Die Neueste Sachsischen Auswanderer*, 14.

the clergy over spiritual and secular issues should continue. As they later admitted, several of the pastors believed that some sort of hierarchical order was needed to maintain stability in the community. Time would prove them wrong on this as well.

An Administrative Board, or governing committee, consisting of key leaders from both the laity and the clergy, was created shortly after the Bishop's exile to deal with the ponderous questions at hand. After three weeks, three of the lay leaders on the committee resigned—Dr. Vehse, Gustav Jaeckel, and Heinrich Fischer. A set of well-written, thoughtful documents recorded what occurred between the laity and the clergy in the initial months after Stephan's removal. On June 22, Dr. Vehse, along with Fischer and Jaeckel, signed a "Declaration of Separation from the Governing Committee Constituted after Stephan's Deposition."<sup>317</sup> Frustrated by a stubborn clergy who, according to the laity, would not resolve such issues as the "distribution of the land," the "redemption of Credit Fund certificates," the establishment of a budget, and a clear definition of authority, Vehse and his compatriots resigned, and several returned to Saxony.<sup>318</sup> They complained that an unnamed "President [a member of the clergy] wishes to represent himself as indispensable, to shout down or remove all persons contradicting him, and to exercise uninhibited rulership, and indeed under guise of authority of the clergy."<sup>319</sup> This was exactly what the laity opposed.

On August 5, 1839, Vehse presented a detailed written protest to Otto Walther, who had remained in St. Louis as the pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church. Vehse, well schooled in

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<sup>317</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 126.

<sup>318</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 126.

<sup>319</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 126. The president might have been Pastor Loeber, although this type of behavior would be unusual for him. In general, he had a reputation as a kind, compassionate man.

the Bible, argued that the concept of the priesthood of all believers, which was amply supported by Martin Luther's teachings, should be the defining model of the laity and clergy's roles in the church. According to scripture, God viewed the laity and the clergy as equals in the Kingdom of God.<sup>320</sup> Vehse stated in this treatise that "the office of the ministry is no more than a public service, when something is enjoined upon a person by the whole congregation."<sup>321</sup> The pastors, still under the influence of Stephan's teachings, avoided answering Vehse's questions and undercut him subtly in other ways. The result was a second, more pointed written protest presented to the pastors on September 19, 1839, in which H. F. Fischer and Jaeckel again supported Vehse. When the clergy remained silent for over a month, the three men supplemented their original protest with other concerns. They asked why Stephan was so quickly deposed. They argued that even his removal left in its wake an overemphasis on the importance of the pastoral office. The whole Stephanite system, they felt, tasted of papist and Episcopal tendencies.

The protestors conjectured that the emigration probably had not been necessary, but, if they remained in the United States, the structure of the community must be changed. The authoritative rule of Martin Stephan had led them all into disaster, and the pattern of that type of leadership must be broken. The responsibilities of the pastoral office should be biblical teaching, administration of the Sacraments, and the exercise of the "office of the

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<sup>320</sup> This doctrine of the priesthood of all believers comes from verses such as I Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." The Apostle Paul wrote this to new believers in Asia Minor. Each believer is now a "priest" who is to carry the message of Christianity to the world.

<sup>321</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 105.

keys” (i.e., the church’s authority to vocalize forgiveness for repentant believers).<sup>322</sup> This limited the authority of the clergy to spiritual concerns only. If the emigration was a mistake, it was a correctable error if all claims of “false rule of the clergy” could be discharged immediately.<sup>323</sup> Everyone had fallen into the assumption that the clergy should make the final decisions in all matters. Opponents declared this practice an “oppressive temporal despotism.”<sup>324</sup> “The principal error,” Vehse felt, “in which they persisted was that they conceived of their office as being of Old Testament dispensation and sought to exert it against us with levitical rigor.”<sup>325</sup>

The importance of the protest was not fully recognized by the clergy for another two years, but it proved to be a watershed moment for the immigrants. It was a clear departure from a hierarchy that was, in fact, always technically opposed to the Lutheran foundations of egalitarianism. Dr. Carl Vehse, and the other laity who worked with him, were the first to significantly address the issue of the role of the pastors. Vehse wrote the following about the initial reaction of the clergy:

To such necessary revision others of the clergy who took his [Stephan’s] place were at first inclined. But when lay members of the congregation, voluntarily coming forward, actually took part in the discussion, desiring to participate in the general conduct of affairs, the clergy became of another mind and opposition developed. They explained: “Not everything about Stephan was wrong; in many matters he acted rightly; it is regrettable that the clerical office is so slightly honored, a misfortune that there is no one who has such authority as Stephan had—a second Stephan is needed.”<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 467.

<sup>323</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 27.

<sup>324</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 28.

<sup>325</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 29.

<sup>326</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 18-19.

In effect, this was an egalitarian, and thoroughly Protestant, attempt to place pastors and members of the congregation on an equal footing. Pastors were “called” to the ministry, but this did not diminish the role of the laity in the church or in the world. Each was “called,” in a sense, to carry out God’s will, whether that was from the pulpit or in the marketplace.

Frustrated by the clergy’s stubborn adherence to Stephan’s power structure, Vehse sailed for home on December 16, 1839, having attained the monies to do so by inheriting a large sum from a relative in London. He wrote his account of the recent history of the Saxons while on board ship. The fact that he had been a colleague of the bishop for many years gave credence to his rendition of the downfall of Stephan—calling his deceit an “unparalleled deception.”<sup>327</sup> The goal of his writing was to discourage those in Germany who were still considering joining the Stephanites in Missouri. “The testimony which we shall adduce may persuade them that true Lutheranism is no mere charlatanism but rather is sound doctrine, with spirit, power, and vitality.”<sup>328</sup> Vehse advised them not to throw the baby out with the bath water but to learn from the tyranny of Stephan and to accept the fact that the immigrants had made serious mistakes yet had also accomplished much when they allowed faith and wisdom to guide them. Vehse believed that the hierarchical system remained the greatest obstacle to the success of the immigrants.

For about a year the pastors persevered in the belief that both secular and spiritual issues concerning the settlement were under their domain. Finally, one by one, the pastors began to deal with the persistent questions of their parishioners about their role. After

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<sup>327</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 19.

<sup>328</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 20.

Stephan's enforced departure, Loeber continued to believe they had done the right thing by emigrating. By April 29, 1840, he was no longer sure. On December 16, 1840, he wrote a formal confession, "Lossagung von Stephanismus," in which he admitted his personal guilt in following Stephan and asked forgiveness from his former German congregation and his brother, who had strongly opposed the emigration to America. But Loeber chose to remain in Altenburg, Missouri, where he faithfully served his congregation. Vehse hoped that Loeber would help the immigrants get back on track, but that did not happen immediately and the apologies continued.

Pastor Ernst Buerger apologized several times. In November 1840, he offered to resign as pastor of his church in Seelitz, but the congregation would not let him. In February 1841, he renounced Stephan in front of his church members and repented again. In August of 1841, E. G. W. Keyl of Frohna, likewise wrote a short article, "Berkenntnise," which was his public confession of sin. He became so burdened with a sense of guilt that he no longer considered himself worthy of being a pastor. Pastor C. F. W. Walther turned out to be the one who directed his repentance into a rejuvenated vision for the Saxons. He eventually opened the way for a revitalization of the original Saxon vision, finally bringing them out of their spiritual wilderness.

Along with the others who left Saxony, Walther questioned the authenticity of their movement. Had their devotion to Stephan negated their status as a true church? Riddled by accusations from two of his most active critics, F. Sproede and Franz Marbach, that he was as guilty as Stephan, Walther fought off depression. Sproede had spent several years planning the joint settlement venture with Stephan and his New York followers, so when

Stephan was deposed, Sproede was not only angry, he was very bitter. Walther was occupying a small cabin belonging to Sproede when, in a fit of rage, Sproede literally threw him out into the cold. Attempting to get to a nearby Saxon settlement, Walther almost drowned while crossing a creek and became extremely ill. His illness became so serious that he was not able to attend the funeral of his brother Otto, whose untimely death has been attributed to how seriously Otto blamed himself for blindly following Stephan. As Otto's funeral took place in St. Louis, Walther began fighting for his own life.<sup>329</sup> Both men were affected physically and spiritually because they blamed themselves for their unquestioning obedience to the former bishop.

Describing himself as “crushed by my many wounds sustained by my emotions through the Stephanite association,” Walther devoted the many hours of his confinement to studying Luther's works and the Bible.<sup>330</sup> After months of examining the issues that were weighing so heavily upon the immigrants, Walther emerged with increased clarity, new humility, and answers to the community's spiritual questions. Ultimately, he accepted a debate with Dr. Marbach, who was urging the Saxons to return to Germany. Marbach argued that the Saxons ceased to be an authentic church when they left Saxony; now they were only a sect. The Saxons must go home in order to resolve the situation. Walther argued for remaining in Missouri and moving forward together as a church body, although under a different form of ecclesiastical government.

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<sup>329</sup> Otto died suddenly on January 21, 1841. He was worn down by a desperate need to serve his congregation wholeheartedly, partly because of the guilt he felt for blindly following Stephan. Rumor was that he died of a broken heart. C. F. W. Walther was called to replace his brother at Trinity Lutheran in St. Louis but did not do so until after the Altenburg Debate.

<sup>330</sup> C. F. W. Walther quoted in Roy A. Suelflow, ed., trans. *Correspondence of C. F. W. Walther*, 56.

The turning point for the Saxons came between April 15 and April 20, 1841, when Walther and Marbach met in a small log school for what became known as the “Altenburg Debate.” A confident, peaceful Walther entered that debate a changed man. The precepts he presented before the people during almost a week of debate were the ones that ultimately became the foundation of the church the Saxons founded, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Walther sought to answer four questions: “Can the blessing of God rest upon our undertaking?”<sup>331</sup> “Do our pastors really have authority to minister to us?” “Did we sin by leaving Germany?” “Are we a church at all?”<sup>332</sup>

Publicly acknowledging his obligation to the writings of Vehse, a layman, Walther asserted his belief in the sovereignty of the individual congregation. Wherever believers gathered in the name of Jesus Christ, there the Church resided also. Thus, the Saxons’ original vision for leaving Saxony was not negated by Stephan’s downfall. The Church still resided in those who wanted to serve the Lord. Seeking to unite them in a common understanding of the Saxon mission, he identified seven major precepts: the true Church is made up of all believers and is not defined by denomination or other divisions; the true Church teaches the Word with clarity and practices the Sacraments; false churches do exist but theirs was not a false church; there is no salvation without the Church; the separation of a supposedly heterodox church from an orthodox one need not result in their separation from the universal Christian Church; unorthodox groups also have Church power; and the latter

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<sup>331</sup> W. G. Polack, *The Story of C. F. W. Walther* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1935), 42.

<sup>332</sup> Polack, *The Story of C. F. W. Walther*, 42.

groups should be reformed, not destroyed.<sup>333</sup> In this manner, the Stephanites shook off the remnants of the ecclesiastical hierarchy that became overtly dictatorial in 1839 and established individual, autonomous church congregations.

Walther provided justification for the continued existence of the Saxon religious community. Though not all were convinced, Walther's explanation provided a clear basis for continuing as an authentic church. Walther's arguments were more convincing than Marbach's because his precepts aligned with those of the original "Old Lutherans." The Saxons decided to remain in Missouri. They determined that the original aspiration to worship in a pure church was not solely the vision of Stephan. People were attached to him because he was preaching and counseling what they were intentionally seeking. They wanted a return to the original confessional Lutheran church, with the Gospel clearly preached. And now they would continue to pursue that goal. Following in Vehse's footsteps, Marbach and his family returned to Saxony. After this, however, the majority of the Saxons remained in Missouri, either in Perry County or St. Louis.

The emotional and spiritual struggles that consumed the Stephanites from 1839 to 1841 were now resolved to the extent that they felt confident in remaining in the United States. When they left Saxony they were positive that they were the *only* church, that all others were only shadows of the true thing. Thus, the exposure of the sins of their pastor on American ground shook them to the core. Because of Pastor Stephan's multiple deceptions, they doubted whether the reasons they came to America were still valid. After two years of

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<sup>333</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther; Essays in Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Carl Walther's Death* (Mankato, MN: Walther Press, 1987), 71.

disquiet and a feeling of great shame, they finally resolved this question of whether or not they were a viable church body.

The Saxons were able to turn their situation around for two main reasons. The first was best explained by Pastor Loeber, who observed that they were saved by the fact that the members were “still a church depending solely on faith in God.”<sup>334</sup> In many ways the authority they allowed Stephan was an aberration. At St. John’s in Dresden, congregants had the unusual authorization to choose their own pastors and elders. In most churches leadership was chosen by the government and imposed on the congregation. But St. John’s was organized as an autonomous religious entity. Stephan’s actions actually went against the grain of what they had valued in Dresden.

The other main reason was the strength of democratic system in the American churches surrounding them. Historian Nathan O. Hatch writes about this in his study of the democratization of American Christianity during the early republic. Hatch argues that “democratization is central to understanding the development of American Christianity, and that the years of the early republic are the most crucial in revealing that process.”<sup>335</sup> All of the major Christian movements of the period “offered common people, especially the poor, compelling visions of individual self-respect and collective self-confidence.”<sup>336</sup> Speaking about the American view on clergy, historian Bryan LeBeau writes that Americans were “not so much anti-intellectual as intent on destroying a monopoly of classically educated

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<sup>334</sup> Loeber, *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County*, 7.

<sup>335</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>336</sup> Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 4.

clergy”; they believed that people’s common sense was more important.<sup>337</sup> In this atmosphere and with the past experience of St. John’s to inspire them, the Saxons broke up their ecclesiastical hierarchy and gave each congregation its independence.

The restoration of the Saxon vision for freedom could not have happened without the wisdom of the laity. Eventually, C. F. W. Walther gave full credit to the importance of Vehse’s protest. Years later, Walther wrote of the protest: “without this writing we, perhaps, would still have gone many a false way, which we now have happily avoided.”<sup>338</sup> By then Vehse had long before returned to Germany. Vehse and Marbach were educated men who at last found the courage to stand up to an overbearing clerical leadership. Marbach, who was scorned on the *Olbers* by Stephan and publicly humiliated, regained his resolve and stood up against the tyrannical leadership of Stephan. As long as the men believed their leader was wrongly accused of transgressions, they swallowed their doubts and attempted to be dutiful. But when Stephan’s wanderings in the wilderness were fully exposed, they quickly removed him from leadership.

For a short while, the Saxons forgot the foundational beliefs of their Lutheran faith and lost sight of the reason they relocated to the United States. Martin Luther helped free the laity from an overbearing clergy, yet the Saxons handed over too much power to one man. For over a decade in Saxony, the Old Lutherans sought to return the Church to the heart of the Reformation era. But for a short time they lost sight of their goal. The Altenburg Debate set them back on the right spiritual foundation. Vehse expressed the sentiment that drew

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<sup>337</sup> Bryan LeBeau, *Religion in America to 1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 103.

<sup>338</sup> Dau, ed., *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 145.

them to Missouri, the hope “for a quiet, peaceful life in a Christian community with our brethren in the faith, whom we knew to be true, upright people.”<sup>339</sup> The Saxons were now determined to fulfill that dream.

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<sup>339</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 26.

## CHAPTER 5

### TRIALS, TEARS, AND PERSEVERANCE

Although, for our purification and cleansing, we have been led by God's hand through many afflictions, namely, sad experiences of tares in the congregation, diseases, deaths, and the loss of the *Amalia*, which is now established without doubt, I do repeat that we are not despairing of the good cause of the Lutheran Church.<sup>340</sup>

Pastor G. H. Loeber

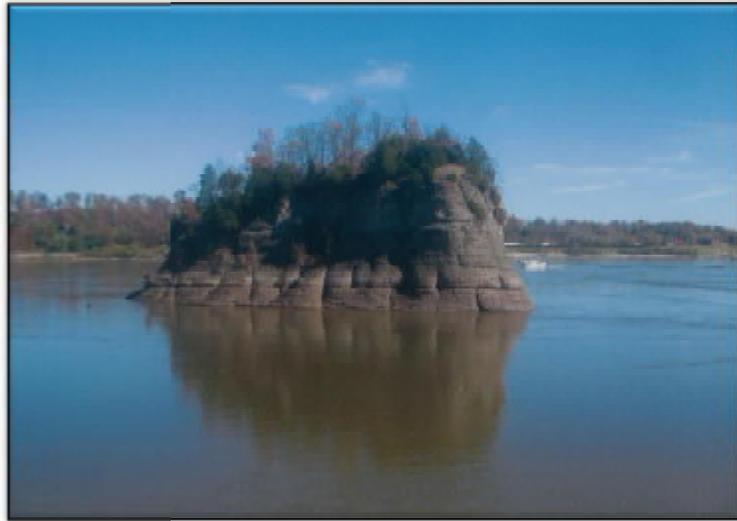
Slightly downstream from the landing site where Martin Stephan and the settlers first set foot in Perry County is a massive, jagged islet rising out of the Mississippi River, which has been called "Tower Rock" since the time the Native Americans inhabited the area. The rock terrified the natives, who shared tales of the treacherous currents surrounding it sweeping canoes into a whirlpool and drowning the occupants. Stories were told of a high-pitched screeching sound that carried for miles and persuaded the inhabitants that an evil spirit of some sort lived there.

Three Catholic priests from Quebec arrived at the Rock on December 12, 1698 and determined to use this fear of an evil presence to prove that God was almighty and could conquer fear. They climbed the rock and planted a cross on the very top, followed by three shots from their muskets. Jean Francois Bouisson de St. Cosme, one of the priests, wrote in his journal: "God grant that the Cross which has never been known in these regions may triumph there and our Lord pour forth abundantly on them the merits of his holy passion,

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<sup>340</sup> W. H. T. Dau, ed., *Ebenezer, Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 16.

that all the Indians may know and serve him.”<sup>341</sup> In honor of the Cross now standing high above the river, they renamed the islet the “Rock of the Cross,” which is a fitting symbol for the place where the Saxons would settle and the spot from which Martin Stephan was rowed across the river to exile in Illinois.



*Figure 2.* Tower Rock, close to the landing site of the Saxons in 1839.

With Martin Stephan deposed and hope slowly seeping back into the Saxons about their purpose as a church, life in Perry County settled down to the basics of survival, church, education, and family. Woven throughout all aspects of their lives was the role of the German language, not only because it was a barrier to conversing with their neighbors, but also because the Saxons depended on it as a means of strengthening their faith and preserving valued remnants of their culture. Incorporating all these elements, the Saxons were intent on creating a community based solidly on family and faith. But they also had to face the practical aspects of life—health, death, shelter, and putting food on the table. For

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<sup>341</sup> Jess E. Thilenies and Felix E. Snyder, “Tower Rock (la Roche de la Croix)” (Perryville, MO: Perry County Historical Society, 1968), 9.

this they needed strength and perseverance and the “help thy neighbor” attitude of the residents of Perry County.

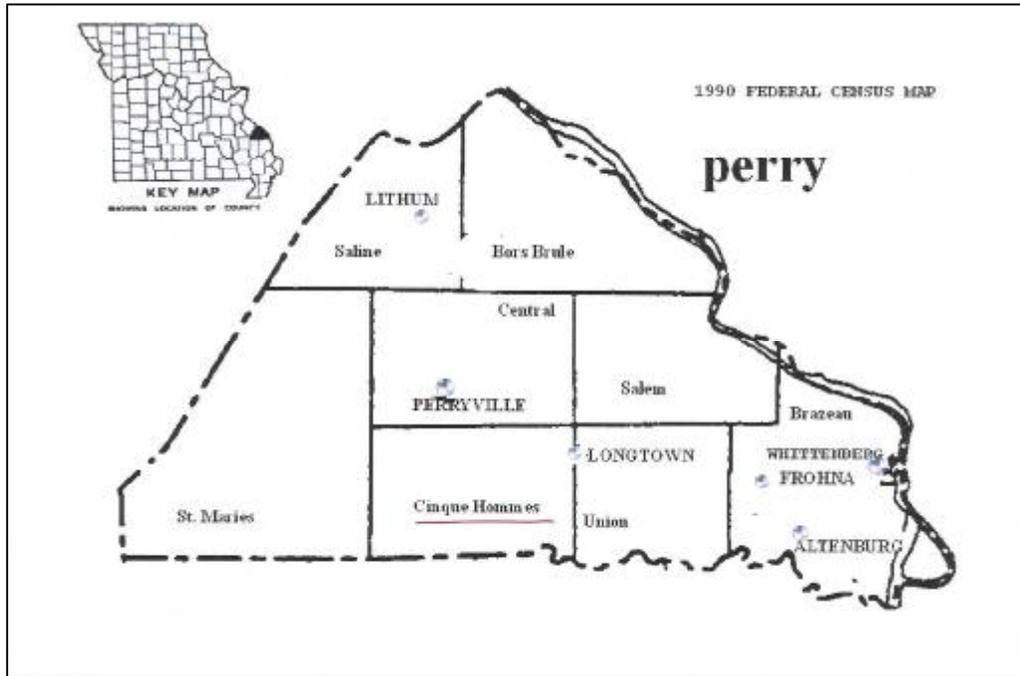


Figure 3. 1990 Federal Census Map of Perry County.

Although the Saxons came from both rural and urban areas, they intended to build a rural *Gemeinde* in Missouri where they would divide up into small village-type communities based on where they originated in Saxony. Immigrants naturally gravitate toward those from their home country as a source of security during the early stressful years. Historian John Mack Faragher’s study of what he refers to as “kinship communities” in Sugar Creek, Illinois, is much like the Saxons’ ideal community.<sup>342</sup> The “kinship communities” of Sugar Creek were populated by settlers who remained behind while other frontiersmen answered the siren’s call of the West. For them, “the family and the household were the building

<sup>342</sup> John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986).

blocks of society,” which is why the Saxons traveled to Missouri in family groups. To retain family solidity, they relied on “religion and the local church,” which they considered “of overwhelming importance for the way people thought and acted”<sup>343</sup> Those in Sugar Creek and those who settled in Perry County had the common characteristic of purposely putting down deep roots and nurturing relationship based on family and church. Sugar Creek is located just northeast of Perry County, not far from Springfield, Illinois, so the two areas are also geographically close. The Saxons did not face opponents such as the Kickapoo Indians for control of the land as the original settlers of Sugar Creek did during the War of 1812; however, they contended with their own set of problems. Kinship communities, rather than stand-alone log cabins on the frontier, enabled them to survive difficult times and form more permanent settlements based on family units and friends and neighbors who grew up in the same areas back home. Much as other ethnic groups were drawn to enclaves or neighborhoods (e.g., Italian, Jewish, or Irish) bonded together by a common culture and language, the Saxons settled on their Perry County land surrounded by those they had known for years. This allowed them to face the unfamiliarities of their new country with the aid of those who already knew and loved them.

Those German immigrants who settled in the colonies in the 1700s faced challenges similar to those of the Saxons in the 1830s. The difference in language was an immediate barrier, made worse because Germans clung to their native tongue longer than any other immigrant group. Yet, the Saxons forged an American identity as successfully as the Pennsylvania Germans in historian Steven M. Nolt’s study had during the days of the early

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<sup>343</sup> Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, xv.

republic, when they managed to attain “the creation and formation of American identity.”<sup>344</sup> Developing an “ethnic identity and becoming American,” Nolt argues, “are integrally related processes,” as well as healthy processes they aided the immigrants in conversing with culture: “the learned patterns of behavior, intellectual assumptions, and reflexive social responses with which people make sense of their world” and religion and its institutions are an integral part of that process.<sup>345</sup> He further elaborates on the impact of religion: “Religion played a central role in the process because it provided intellectual resources, structural identity, and an arena sanctified by republican principles of disestablishment and noninterference. It was a realm within and about which particularity could be construed as properly American.”<sup>346</sup> This was how the Saxons viewed the importance of religion in their lives. As immigrants grateful for the freedoms America accorded them, they did not consider it un-American to retain valued components of their culture, type of worship, and language, and still be “properly American.”

The testing ground for this process of assimilation was Perry County, which they now called home. The county is shaped like a camel’s hump comprising 471 square miles wedged between the confluence of Apple Creek and the Mississippi River. It is divided into lowlands and uplands, the former encompassing one-eighth of the county which runs alongside the Mississippi River. The Bois Brule Bottom, or Burnt Wood area, is the largest section of lowland country, running about 15 miles long and 3 to 5 miles wide. It contains

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<sup>344</sup> Steven M. Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land: Pennsylvania Germans in the Early Republic* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>345</sup> Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land*, 3-4.

<sup>346</sup> Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land*, 8.

the richest farmland in the county. Second to it is the Brazeau Bottom, which is also on the Mississippi, located below Cape Cinque Hommes and situated near the mouth of Apple Creek. The Uplands is the largest part of the county with the most varied topography. In the center of the county, the soil is fairly good, and the terrain is almost level or gently rolling. Hilly uplands surround this central section and are bounded by the Saline Hills to the west and the Mississippi River Hills and Buffs to the east and northeast. *The Republican* ran a copy of an item from the *Cape Girardeau Patriot* on May 30, 1839, which announced the arrival of the Saxons in Perry County:

We understand that a company of Germans, amounting to 700, have lately settled in Perry county, Missouri, and purchased, in a body, 10,000 acres of land, in what is called Brazoo Bottom, the best part of the county. They are of the Lutheran persuasion, and have a library of 20,000 volumes, and intend shortly to establish a college. The Germans are an honest and industrious people, and a desirable population.<sup>347</sup>

Actually, the land the Saxons purchased was not of very good quality. In his memoirs, Gustave Koerner, a local lawyer as well as a German immigrant himself, noted that “the land on the hills was never very rich and not easily cultivated on account of its unevenness.”<sup>348</sup>

Perry County in 1839 was an “amalgam” of Anglo-American, French, German, African-American, and Scotch-Irish settlers with their own customs and religious inclinations.<sup>349</sup> In many ways it was “typical backwoods America,” “a border county within

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<sup>347</sup> *The St. Louis Republican*, May 30, 1839.

<sup>348</sup> Gustave Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896: Life Sketches Written at the Suggestion of His Children*, vol. I, ed. Thomas J. McCormack (Cedar Rapids, IA: The Torch Press, 1909), 470.

<sup>349</sup> Stafford Poole and Douglas J. Slawson, *Church and Slave in Perry County, Missouri, 1818-1865 (Studies in American Religion)* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), xv.

a Border state.”<sup>350</sup> Perry Countians’ religious affiliations were likewise diverse but consisted mainly of Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists. In 1764 the French rule of Louisiana ended, and the area came under the jurisdiction of the Spanish. The Spanish decreed that only Catholics were allowed to settle in Louisiana, of which the future Perry County was a part. If Protestants wanted to settle there, they were required to be baptized into the Catholic faith. But the Spaniards were disorganized and lax in upholding the law. As a result, Protestants began slipping into Perry County to settle and practice their faith long before the Saxons purchased their land. Historian Timothy O’Rourke calls Perry County the “religious haven in the Trans-Mississippi West,” in reference to the large variety of faiths represented there in the years after Louisiana was transferred to American rule.<sup>351</sup>

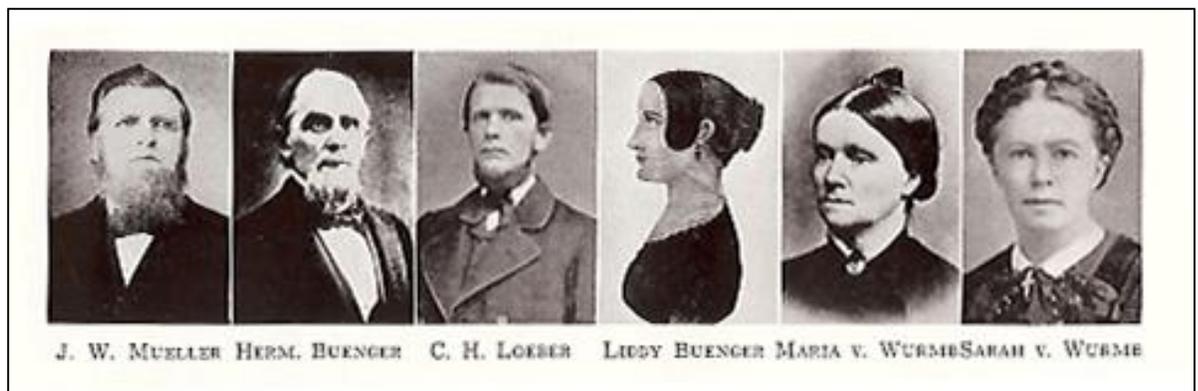


Figure 4. Concordia Seminary teachers and wives.

In 1818 priests of the Venetian Order purchased 640 acres in the “Bonnes” section of the county. They built several log cabins, the largest one of which became St. Mary’s Seminary. The seminary steadily grew in numbers and prominence as the years passed. The

<sup>350</sup> Poole and Slawson, *Church and Slave in Perry County, Missouri*, 17-18.

<sup>351</sup> Timothy J. O’Rourke, *Perry County, Missouri: Religious Haven in the Trans-Mississippi West* (Parsons, KS: Brefney Press, 1979).

forty Catholic families already settled in the county finally had a place to worship together, and as many more people began to attend, they were able to become a diocese in 1844. The Methodists arrived in 1839 and built a church five miles southeast of Perryville, which they called the York Chapel. Annual “camp meetings” were held in Perry County in the spring and fall. Camp meetings, comparable to current “revival” meetings, were popular all over America during the nineteenth century. People would travel long distances to listen to “hell fire and brimstone” sermons of preachers that aimed for the repentance and salvation of those attending.

The Saxons never approved of the emotionalism of the typical camp meeting, let alone the theology preached there, but as a time for revival, as well as social time with neighbors, it was one of the highlights of the year for other Perry County residents. In contrast, German historian Carl Schneider observes of the Old Lutherans that “above all, the legalistic puritanic preacher and the emotional revivalist, so common on the frontier, did not find easy entrance into German circles.”<sup>352</sup>

While still in Saxony, the Stephanites worried about the possible threat from Native Americans in Missouri or wherever they chose to settle. They were misinformed, however, because the Shawnee Indians, whose largest village was close to present Uniontown, were no longer in the area in 1839. In 1825 the United States government forced the Shawnee to leave the Cape Girardeau area for southeastern Kansas, so there were few Indians remaining in Perry County when the Saxons arrived.

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<sup>352</sup> Carl E. Schneider, *The German Church on the American Frontier: A Study in the Rise of Religion Among the Germans of the West* (St. Louis, MO: Eden Publishing House, 1939), 40.

The Saxons' other major concern was the institution of slavery, which remained a vital part of Perry County life. Missouri was a state of small slaveholdings rather than the large plantations of the South. Stafford Poole and Douglas Slawson's study of church and slavery in Perry County found that 126 slaveholders had from one to five slaves in 1840, with the numbers increasing to 151 in 1860.<sup>353</sup> Twenty-three families owned six to nine slaves in 1840, and 26 owned that number in 1860.

The 1850 Census reported that the total number of slaves in Perry County was 794, of which 396 were males and 398 females.<sup>354</sup> Only 26 free African-Americans lived in the area. The total white population at the time was 6,395. Poole and Clawson reported only one German slaveholder in 1830, six in 1840 and 1850, and seven in 1860, none of whom was Saxon.<sup>355</sup> Their study also included information comparing the economic growth of non-slaveholding and slave-holding households from 1850 to 1860. Farm values of non-slaveholders went from \$239,960 to \$1,072,069; the farm values of slaveholders also increased but only from \$208,195 to 425,379. The dramatic increase in farm values for non-slaveholders during this period shows the burgeoning economy of the county, although slaveholders were clearly falling behind in achievement. Among the slaveholding families in the county were Joseph Abernathy, William Allen, William Cox, Miles Farrar, and Henry Caldwell.<sup>356</sup> Most of these men were located in the Bois Brule Bottom area, but Abernathy

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<sup>353</sup> Poole and Slawson, *Church and Slave in Perry County, Missouri*, 21.

<sup>354</sup> United States Census Office, *The Seventh Census of the United States 1850* (Washington, DC: Arno Press, 1976), Statistics of Missouri, Table I – Population by Counties – Ages, Color, and Condition – Aggregates, 655.

<sup>355</sup> Poole and Slawson, *Church and Slave in Perry County, Missouri*, 21.

<sup>356</sup> Poole and Slawson, *Church and Slave in Perry County, Missouri*, 42.

lived in Cinques Hommes. Catholics were among the slaveholders in Perry County during the antebellum period. In 1860 an amazing 72 of 190 slaveholders in Perry County were Catholics, which included the priests at the seminary and represented 41% of the county's slave owners.

The agricultural economy of Perry County was tied to the institution of slavery, although not to the extent of Missouri's "Little Dixie," which was located along the Missouri River in the central-western part of the state. Wheat gradually became the premier crop for Perry County later in the 19th century, eventually winning awards in venues such as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904 in St. Louis. As late as 1850, however, the main crop was "Indian corn." The Seventh Census of the United States reported in 1850 that the three largest crops in Perry County were Indian corn, which yielded 349,280 bushels, followed by 65,395 bushels of wheat and 42,916 bushels of oats.<sup>357</sup> Much smaller amounts are listed for crops such as Irish potatoes, tobacco, wool, and peas.<sup>358</sup> A large quantity of butter, 76,845 pounds, was produced in 1850, which was a precursor of the importance of dairy products later in the county's history. Additional crops raised on local farms included watermelons, turnips, apples, and peaches. The primary livestock raised were swine, sheep, horses, and then cattle.

Archibald Little Hager, who lived on a farm in the Cinque Hommes area of Perry County, kept a journal of his life from 1844 to 1887. His terse daily entries provide

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<sup>357</sup> United States Census Office, *The Seventh Census of the United States 1850* (Washington, DC: Arno Press, 1976).

<sup>358</sup> The Census reports 14,226 bushels of Irish potatoes, 5,009 bushels of sweet potatoes, 3,700 pounds of tobacco, and 141 bushels of peas.

snapshots of life in Perry County at the time the Saxons settled there. Hager, whose parents traveled to Missouri from North Carolina in 1826, was one of the many native-born Americans who moved in from other states, such as Kentucky, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Georgia.<sup>359</sup> Kentuckians were drawn to the “Barrens,” which reminded them of land back home of the same name. The Barrens was second only to the Bois Brules area in the quality of its soil.

A close-knit group of settlers frequently came together to help with the larger chores or building projects and then relaxed with dancing, games, or music, a custom referred to as “frolicks.” Settlers helped each other with raising houses, woodchopping, “a grubing” [digging out tree trunks], quilting, wool picking, and rail making. The list went on, but they did the work before they allowed themselves the luxury of having fun. That fun still cost the slaves among them hours of labor.

Not all of life in the county was so neighborly or a time of frolick. The hazards of life at midcentury in Perry County were many; some were caused by human beings and others by nature. In August 1846, Sidney Abernathy “was cut openn [sic] by Moses Harris.”<sup>360</sup> William Scott and Anselem Kelley left Perry County in August 1855 “on the account of shooting Joseph Johnson.”<sup>361</sup> The most bizarre act of violence was when a mother and daughter killed their husband and father and then burned the house down around his body. Aside from the occasional human dangers, life on the farm could be hazardous,

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<sup>359</sup> The 1850 Census of Perry County, Perry County Historical Society, Perryville, MO. No date of publication given.

<sup>360</sup> Archibald Little Hager, *Diary in Hand of Archibald Hager, 1814-1887*, State Historical Society of Missouri Collection, Kansas City, MO, August 1846.

<sup>361</sup> Hager, August 1855.

even for those who were accustomed to American rural life. Through the years, Hager recorded the stories of men such as Hessa Cotner's son, who "cut a tree down on himself and was killed" and others who were killed or maimed when trees fell in the wrong direction.<sup>362</sup> Some drowned in the river or in ponds, such as Jackson Taylor in June 1851 and Mr. Pheninger in July 1858. Augustine Marsh was "hooked by an oxen" that same year. Others met their demise during horse races or caught on fire while cooking or were struck by lightning and killed. Accidents with wagons were common, and some deaths occurred when a person was crushed beneath one or thrown out of one. The natives knew and understood the common hazards of life in rural Missouri, but these were obstacles and dangers the Saxons had to recognize and learn to negotiate as they cleared their land and began to build permanent shelter.

Unlike most German immigrant groups who bought land and settled in rural areas of America, the Saxons did not have many farmers among them. The Saxons were professionals and tradesmen; several were members of the clergy, but few were farmers. By reputation, German immigrants were known as hard workers and excellent farmers. The Saxons certainly were diligent workers, but it would take a while to develop their farming skills under conditions different from those in Saxony. The newcomers eventually managed to adapt and survive, but several years of difficult work were ahead of them.

The land chosen by Stephan proved one of the most enduring hardships for the group. Choosing isolation over attaining quality acreage, Stephan set the settlers up for extra years of hard work. Right across the river were fertile lands, excellent for agriculture, but the

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<sup>362</sup> Hager, May 1851.

topography of the land in Perry County was rough, hilly, and mainly undeveloped. Only the small area purchased on the river's shore could boast of rich, floodplain soil. From Koerner's memoirs, we know that the land was "not very rich or easily cultivated but with hard work" the Saxons eventually developed it.<sup>363</sup> Russel Gerlach, an ethnic and immigration geographer, wrote that "their choice of rough hill land was most unfortunate."<sup>364</sup> He highlighted the fact that their poor choice was due to their desire to have an "isolated spot to keep nonbelievers out."<sup>365</sup> Dr. Vehse called the purchase of this land "the first great mistake."<sup>366</sup> Theodor Graebner, a descendant of one of the original immigrants, wrote: "So great was the influence which Stephan wielded over the immigrants that his wish prevailed, and a committee was sent to Perry County for the purchase of about 4,440 acres."<sup>367</sup> "In quality," he wrote, "this tract was not equal to the Gratoit Farm."<sup>368</sup>

For \$9,234.25 they purchased 4,475.88 acres of land, which included an extra \$1,000 for a piece of land on the river, which they originally christened "Stephan's Landing."<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Gustave Koerner, "The Old Lutherans and Bishop Stephan," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (October 1960): 81.

<sup>364</sup> Russel L. Gerlach, *Immigrants in the Ozarks: A Study in Ethnic Geography* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976), 41.

<sup>365</sup> Gerlach, *Immigrants in the Ozarks*, 41.

<sup>366</sup> Th. Graebner, *Lutheran Pioneers I: Our Pilgrim Fathers; The Story of the Saxon Emigration of 1838, Retold Mainly in the Words of the Emigrants, and Illustrated from Original Documents Related to the Emigration* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), 15.

<sup>367</sup> Graebner, *Lutheran Pioneers I*, 16.

<sup>368</sup> Graebner, *Lutheran Pioneers I*, 16.

<sup>369</sup> Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, 1839-1841* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 399.

Most of the land, wrote Gotthold Guenther, was undeveloped “Congress land.”<sup>370</sup> With such a small amount of developed land, a tremendous amount of work needed to be done.<sup>371</sup> Of the over 4,000 acres purchased, only 110 acres were developed, including the Martin farm, which was expressly intended as a temporary home for Bishop Stephan. Heavily wooded areas naturally required the extra labor of cutting down trees and their roots. The settlers had few tools and “worked without draft animals” as they labored to prepare the land for crops.<sup>372</sup> Without any draught animals, they had to cut the trees and roll them by hand to the desired location. The settler had to become accustomed to the planting and harvesting cycles of southeastern Missouri before they could produce crops. For many years the Saxon community remained in humble conditions, which is verified by Poole’s study of Perry County in which they noted that the ninety-one Saxon families of Perry County were very poor.<sup>373</sup>

In the beginning, however, they prepared detailed plans for a vibrant community. An article in the *Anzeiger des Westens* gave an early view of the original grandiose plans for the community, as well as a vivid picture of the land they purchased along the river.

The contemplated city of the Lutheran congregation in Perry County is laid out according to the following plan: At the angle which is formed by the Brazeau [Creek] and the Mississippi [River], several hundred building sites are laid out for two rows of houses along the banks of the Mississippi and along the banks of the

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<sup>370</sup> Gotthold Guenther, *The Stephanites, 1839: The Experiences and Adventures of the Stephanites Who Emigrated from Saxony* (Dresden, Germany: C. Heinrich, 1839), 42.

<sup>371</sup> Conevery Bolton Valençius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 191-192.

<sup>372</sup> S. R. Hueber, *The Centennial History of Perry County, Missouri, 1821-1921* (Perryville, MO: Perry County Historical Society, 1921).

<sup>373</sup> Poole and Slawson, 6.

Brazeau, which are intended for commercial enterprises. The outer row of houses will front the two streams. The inner row will face a rectangular market place, two sides of which will be occupied by buildings. This part of the town, situated in the bottom land, consists of about eleven acres. Behind this tract, between a ravine and the bluffs, the houses for the workmen will be erected. The intelligencia will occupy the bluff, about 200 feet high. Here will be placed the official and church buildings of the congregation. Such is the plan.<sup>374</sup>

The Saxons had high hopes for the economic future of this little piece of riverfront land close to the banks of the Brazeau, which they named Wittenberg. In the heyday of the steamboat, a landing site was a valuable asset.<sup>375</sup> It provided quick access to transport passengers and freight, and it potentially offered extra cash from the sale of firewood to riverboat captains. Details of the plan included building a wharf, a bridge over the Brazeau, waterworks, a church and public school, a manufactory, hospital, and an asylum for orphans. Inexplicably, Heinrich Bimpage, the founder of the *Anzeiger des Westens* and an unabashed critic of the Saxons, surveyed the Wittenberg area and was in charge of selling plots of land there. At this point he had sold his share of the newspaper and was specializing in land deals, but the choice still seems curious considering the continuing opposition of the newspaper he once owned. Nevertheless, Bimpage did much of the initial work and was granted Lot 51 for his efforts. Perhaps he believed the Saxons' dream of a town that would have international prominence due to excellent schools and churches and its position as a worldwide leader in trade.<sup>376</sup> But the low-lying area proved unhealthy, and repetitive flooding eventually proved the demise of the community, although not until the middle of

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<sup>374</sup> *Anzeiger des Westens*, 29 June, 1839, quoted in Gotthold Guenther, *The Stephanites: The Experiences and Adventures of the Stephanites Who Emigrated From Saxony*, 71.

<sup>375</sup> Koerner, "The Old Lutherans and Bishop Stephan," 81.

<sup>376</sup> "Wittenberg, Perry County, Missouri" (Perryville, MO: Perry County Historical Society), 7.

the twentieth century. “The low-lying areas near the creeks and the river were more unhealthy than the hills,” observed a Wittenberg historian.<sup>377</sup> Today it is remembered as the landing site for the first Saxon settlers, often referred to as the “Lutheran Plymouth Rock” because of their identification with the Pilgrims’ search for a place where they could enjoy religious freedom.<sup>378</sup>



Figure 5. Saxon Landing Place plaque.

If Stephan had not depleted the monies in the Credit Fund, the settlers would have had substantial funds to help them through these first few years and fulfill some of their development plans. Instead, they endured years of poverty. There was no money; Stephan had drained their resources and threw them ill-prepared onto the new land. The original common fund contained 120,000 to 125,000 Prussian thaler or about \$80,604.81.<sup>379</sup> When he checked the St. Louis account shortly after the expulsion of Stephan, C. F. W. Walther

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<sup>377</sup> “Wittenberg,” 3.

<sup>378</sup> *One Hundred Twenty-five Years of God’s Blessing: An Anniversary History of the Saxon Immigration to Perry County, Missouri, 1839-1964*. Jointly produced by Trinity Lutheran Church, Altenburg; Concordia Lutheran Church, Frohna; Grace Lutheran Church, Uniontown; St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Wittenberg.

<sup>379</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 162, 164.

found that only \$523.00 remained after the purchase of the land.<sup>380</sup> Expenditures in St. Louis were considerable. Stephan spent 4,000 thaler<sup>381</sup> on his rental house alone, plus other luxury items.<sup>382</sup> The loss of the *Amalia* compounded these problems. The ship carried an inordinate portion of the immigrants' goods, along with the bishop's rich church furnishings, and some of the Credit Fund's cash. Church supplies alone on the *Amalia* amounted to 8,000 thaler.<sup>383</sup> Suddenly, poverty was more than a threat; it was a reality.

The financial crisis hastened the break-up of a temporary communal system which originally was to be financed by the Fund, allowing the settlers to establish their own farmsteads and businesses with additional financing from the Fund if needed. Distributing the land was complicated by the fact that the land had been purchased in the name of one man—Johann G. Gube—and he had passed away before he could arrange for another executor to replace him. Consequently, 39 members of the Credit Fund filed a suit for ownership on November 29, 1839, at the Circuit Court of Perry County on behalf of all the members of the immigrant society. But it appears that the Saxons moved ahead with dividing up the land before the court case was settled. Historian Walter Forster claimed the land was divided up among individuals by 1841, but Pastor Loeber indicated that much of the land was divided up before that time.<sup>384</sup> Loeber wrote that the original system “wouldn't

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<sup>380</sup> Centennial: Saxon Immigration 1838—Wyneken 1838—Concordia Seminary 1839.” *Lutheran Witness on Saxon Emigration* 57, no. 26 (December 27, 1938): 16.

<sup>381</sup> A Thaler was worth about 70 cents in American currency.

<sup>382</sup> Carl Edward Vehse, “The Stephanite Emigration to America,” trans. Rudolph Fichler (1840; repr. Tucson, AZ: Marion R. Winkler, 1975), 12.

<sup>383</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 368.

<sup>384</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 491.

be dependable in the long run” and, hence, was eliminated.<sup>385</sup> His other concern was that they had a “communistic administration.”<sup>386</sup> He explained the process briefly in his “Report to Our Descendants Who at Some Time Might Come Across These Pages.”<sup>387</sup> Instead of temporarily using communal funds, which no longer existed, the acreage was distributed within a month’s time to members according to their credit amount in the treasury.<sup>388</sup>

The area was divided into five villages, based on the areas they had come from in the Old World, each with a congregation of its own: Wittenberg, Dresden, Seelitz, Altenburg, and Nieder-Frohna (later shortened to Frohna). Pastor Loeber pastored and lived in the little town of Altenburg, which was at the time—and remains today—the largest community. The majority of the residents were from Saxe-Altenburg, Prussia, Dresden, and New York. Pastor Ernst Gerhard Wilhelm Keyl was in charge of Wittenberg and Frohna. Rev. Moritz Burger led the town of Seelitz, while C. F. W. Walther was in charge of both Dresden and Johannesberg, the latter of which was abandoned because of poor health conditions there. Dresden consisted of immigrants from Dresden, Saxony, where St. John’s Church was located.

An additional church was established at Paitzdorf, which was later changed to Uniontown during the Civil War as a sign of the residents’ allegiance to the Union; it was

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<sup>385</sup> Gotthold Loeber, “Report to Our Descendants Who at Some Time Might Come across These Pages,” quoted in *History of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to East Perry County, Missouri in 1839*, trans. Vernon R. Meyr (St. Louis, MO: Center for Regional History and Cultural Heritage, 1984), 6. This document was written on March 11, 1844 and placed in the cornerstone of Trinity Lutheran Church in Altenburg, Missouri during the construction of that building, 6.

<sup>386</sup> Loeber, “Report to Our Descendants,” 73.

<sup>387</sup> Loeber, “Report to Our Descendants,” 6.

<sup>388</sup> Loeber, “Report to Our Descendants,” 6.

pastored by Carl Friedrich Grüber, who came from the Dukedom of Altenburg. The first congregation in Paitzdorf was founded on February 2, 1840 by Germans who arrived separately from the original immigration group of 1838. The founding of their towns and church congregations followed the kinship communities model already established in the villages they left behind in the Kingdom of Saxony, such that they settled down next to friends and family members they had already known for years so that at least this aspect of their lives somewhat resembled life back in Saxony.

Before they could hope to establish community, however, they had to stay alive. A short history on Wittenberg, published by the Perry County Historical Society described what they faced: the “reality” was that “town dwellers” were “turned loose in a wilderness to survive” and this “slowed down progress as the colonists fought the wilderness for two basic needs: food and shelter.”<sup>389</sup> Adapting to conditions in Perry County was difficult on many levels, and one of the most difficult hurdles encountered was dealing with the change in the environment. In the nineteenth century, this situation alone could be a matter of life and death.

Historian Conevery Bolton Valençius has written extensively on what she calls the “geography of health.”<sup>390</sup> “Good or bad, harmful or improving,” she writes, “terrain possessed health in the same language and for the same reasons that human beings did.”<sup>391</sup> Descriptions of the so-called healthfulness of the land are everywhere in the writings of

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<sup>389</sup> “Wittenberg,” 3.

<sup>390</sup> Valençius, *The Health of the Country*, 3.

<sup>391</sup> Valençius, *The Health of the Country*, 3.

nineteenth-century Americans and immigrants and were an ever-present concern. Valençius notes that: “Health was dynamic and always precarious.”<sup>392</sup>

American settlers in Perry County understood and grudgingly acknowledged the unseen threats in the weather and the environment. For immigrants such as the Saxons, the learning curve could be deadly. Saxons began dying at a distressing rate in Perry County. In Altenburg alone, five children and six adults died between June and December.<sup>393</sup> During the winter of 1839, several settlers died, even though the weather was milder than usual that year. Valençius describes this period of acclimating to the environment as the “period of gradual seasoning.”<sup>394</sup> She spoke of the “dangerous southern heat” which could create serious health problems and was extremely difficult for the Saxons to adjust to during the first few years. Adapting to the American climate would prove a deadly business for the new immigrants.

Although his stay in Missouri was short, Carl Edvard Vehse reported that the climate in Missouri was downright dangerous. “No other state in the Union,” he wrote, “as American geographers themselves attest, has so capricious a climate as Missouri.”<sup>395</sup> He specifically complained about the mosquitoes and the lack of a pleasant and lengthy spring. Unfortunately, his assessment, though exaggerated, contained much truth. The lack of a long spring and the experience in 1839 of one of the hottest August temperatures on record in

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<sup>392</sup> Valençius, *The Health of the Country*, 53.

<sup>393</sup> *Trinity Lutheran Church: Altenburg, Missouri* (Perryville, MO: Perry County Historical Society, 2002), 3-4.

<sup>394</sup> Valençius, *The Health of the Country*, 22.

<sup>395</sup> Vehse, *The Stephanite Emigration to America*, 23-24.

Perry County wreaked havoc on the Saxons. At first, the Saxons were unaware of the dangers of the burning Missouri sun and tried to ignore the warnings of American settlers that they must adapt their work ethic to the new environment. The Saxons found themselves so behind in establishing food and shelter for their community that they often disregarded the advice given them by the locals and did not pay enough attention to the climate and thus made themselves more vulnerable to pestilence and plague. Exhausted at the end of the day by the heat and humidity, they became easy prey for malaria and various forms of the fever.



*Figure 6.* Site of communal shelters: “the camp.”

Unaccustomed to Missouri's climate and environment, they succumbed to the "fevers." Fevers caused "terrible ravages" and frequently resulted in death.<sup>396</sup> There were a variety of types: "cold fevers," "intermittent fevers" (the ague), "fever of the nerves" (or typhoid), and recurrent malaria. Valençius gave this description of the ague: "The ague, or 'an ager' pursued early Americans like a feared frontier beast, its ferocity that of a bear or 'painter' (panther), its malevolence and persistence almost willful. The alternation of chills and fever typified the experience of ague."<sup>397</sup> Some died quickly of such ailments, and others suffered from the illness for weeks or months. Hager also mentioned small pox, measles, bilious fever, mumps, whooping cough, the flux, and cholera.

At first the Saxons lived in "makeshift huts" at the landing place.<sup>398</sup> Pastor Loeber commented on a similar "camp": "Opposite our house," he reported, "many families live together in a much larger shack of flimsy build (called camp)." This is where they held "common services and give schooling."<sup>399</sup> Torrential rains initially hindered construction of more permanent homes and lengthened the time settlers had to live in tents. Lack of suitable shelter was a serious issue by the autumn of 1839; precious time had been wasted because of Stephan's insistence that his needs were the primary concern of the community. In addition, Christiane Loeber, sister of Pastor Loeber, reported that no carpenters were available during

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<sup>396</sup> Walter A Baepler, *A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847-1947* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 36.

<sup>397</sup> Valençius, *The Health of the Country*, 81.

<sup>398</sup> Loeber, "Report to Our Descendants," 6.

<sup>399</sup> Dau, *Ebenezer, Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod*, 17.

these early months to assist them in building suitable shelter.<sup>400</sup> Because of these problems, the immigrants were housed in inadequate lean-tos with insufficient food and poor facilities for a year or more. Some had only a roughly assembled lean-to braced against a tree. Soon the “fevers” began to attack the weaker members. Unaware of the repercussions of the nasty mosquito and plagued with the limited availability of pure water, the settlers were easy targets for the fevers. Theodor Graebner quoted Pastor Koesterling, who survived those early days, in the following description of the conditions in Perry County:

Even shelter was lacking for so many people; there were only a few large barns, called “camps,” in which the families dwelt together as well as circumstances permitted, even during the following winter. Land had been purchased, but no one held title to any part of the tract so that he could call it his own. Even those who had been possessed of some wealth were exposed to the sorrows of poverty. Climatic fevers, the unaccustomed hard work, the lack of proper shelter, the want of common comforts and necessities, and the hot climate brought intense suffering. Death claimed a heavy toll among the strongest and ablest of the little host, others lay without proper care in the delirium of fever, since those who would have gladly nursed them were themselves prostrate with disease. I well remember the days when in a frame structure, on the banks of the Mississippi, not only the lower floor, but also the hot attic filled with fever-patients. I remember that in the season of autumn there was not one of the log-houses, hurriedly constructed, which did not contain one or more colonists down with the dreadful fever. The settlement was one large hospital, and even the most necessary care for the patients was wanting.<sup>401</sup>

Inadequate shelter and the additional factor that they could not locate good water on their land, was no small issue for the settlers and certainly increased their vulnerability to local health problems and contributed to the death toll.

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<sup>400</sup> Heinrich Loeber-Eichenberger, Christiane Loeber letter, *Von Altenburg (Sachsen/Altenburg) nach Alenburg in Nordamerika (Mo): Ein briefwechsel aus den Jahren 1838-1844* (Kahla, Germany: T. Bed., 1912), 28.

<sup>401</sup> Th. Graebner, *Lutheran Pioneers I*, 18-19.

The bright spot of the summer of 1839 was the goodwill of the Saxons' American neighbors, who occupied twenty farms nearby their settlement. Many of these God-fearing folks graciously supplied the Saxons with apples, flour, and other basic needs. Some farmers allowed the Stephanites to follow behind their wagons as the crops were harvested and gather the surplus from the fields and orchards. Such kindnesses enabled many of the immigrants to survive the long winter months. Christiane Loeber wrote to her brother Gottwert Friedemann that the Americans were "so gentle to us" and gladly gave the Saxons a share of the unusually bountiful harvest for that year, which, she reported, "puzzled" the Americans, because the high crop production was so unusual for Perry County. In response to their generosity, Christiane knitted and sewed for them, although she considered this not enough thanks in light of what they had done.<sup>402</sup> Several neighbors allowed their new German acquaintances to stay with them as long as they liked to glean what they could for winter supplies. They taught the Saxons about "victuals" and even employed some of the Saxon men, doing whatever they could to help the newly-arrived settlers survive.

The Americans actually wanted to marry some of the Saxon women, but there were fewer women than men within the Saxon community. Due to these demographic limitations, the settlers determined to keep marriage within the bounds of the Saxon community. Historian Linda Schelbitzki Pickle, who wrote several of the few articles about the Saxon women during this period, noted that only 274 women or 44.8% of the group were female.<sup>403</sup> The median age was just 25, which meant the Americans would have had several

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<sup>402</sup> Loeber-Eichenberger, Christiane Loeber letter, 29.

<sup>403</sup> Linda Schelbitzki Pickle, "Women of the Saxon Immigration and Their Church," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 146.

likely choices among the group, if allowed to intermarry. By mutual consent, the Saxons realized that it was best for the community if they married among themselves, and that trend has persisted in German communities for over a hundred years.

Despite the shock of the illicit relationships several Saxon women had with the bishop, the model Saxon Lutheran woman was quiet, submissive, devout, and hard-working. The Saxons firmly believed that a woman's place was in the home. Yet, among these quiet, unobtrusive women was Christiane Loeber, who appears to break the mold but without threatening the male hierarchical system of the Saxon community. She shared her opinions freely, owned her own farm and a little cabin closer to the town of Altenburg where her brother was pastor, dedicated herself to education, and was popular among the Saxon immigrants.



*Figure 7.* Christiane Loeber's Log Cabin and College, 2013.

It is the intelligent, engaging Christiane who provided the most insightful reporting of those first months in Perry County through letters she wrote to family members still in

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Saxony. Christiane's letters provide precious snapshots of Perry County life in 1839 and 1840 and paint a picture of an energetic, optimistic, and benevolent woman. Here, among a people she loved and cheerfully served, she wrote of her efforts to improve the life of the community. Her letters give us a sense of the ingenuity and hope that the settlers exuded as she reassured friends and family back home that they were not defeated and they were pushing forward. She also wrote her own opinion of Stephan, showing that she was politically astute in church matters and unafraid to make known her own personal thoughts:

Since the fall of Stephan, the thoughts of the emigrants and of those who remained behind have been revealed. Here some of his best followers were so disgusted that they either turned to malice or to pessimism, as though no one in this world could be trusted anymore, and as though the old scoundrel had been treated too harshly. Their reports to Germany reflect all this. Some who no longer can play the leading roles are returning to Germany. What gossip they will spread! Well, God will bring liars to judgment... Although we have suffered enough of shame and loss, we can thank God that we are rid of this tyrant and deceiver.<sup>404</sup>

Christiane was also extremely enterprising, even creative in her endeavors to earn a living and help the settlement's economy. Although she was unable to implement the plan, she seriously considered an innovative project to raise silkworms. In one letter, she asked her family back in Saxony to ship over a spinning wheel, which she then used to make yarn, a product quite expensive in Missouri. She hoped to raise the cotton right there on her own lands, which would also have decreased the cost of cloth for those in the area.

Christiane purchased two small parcels of land, one of which was close to the parsonage her brother and family occupied and where church services were held on the second floor. On this piece of land in Altenburg, she built a small log home which she

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<sup>404</sup> Christiane Loeber, quoted in Keinath, *Documents Illustrating the History of the Lutheran Church in America, With Special Emphasis on the Missouri Synod* (River Forest, IL: Concordia Teachers College, 1947), 18.

shared with Wilhelmine Hänschen. The building is still extant and was recently placed next to the community's original log cabin school, which is located in a small park in Altenburg. Here she served the fledgling scholars of Perry County, who often did not have time to return to their own homes for lunch or, worse, simply did not have enough food at home. Christiane opened up her tiny home to provide for them. Most of her own belongings were lost when the *Amalia* went down, but she still had more than others around her, and she chose to focus a large percentage of her resources on the students.

With characteristic optimism and candor, Christiane wrote at the end of 1839 about the trials and tribulations of the first few months in Perry County: "Although our success has been limited, we have not really suffered want. We suffered a few days from a cold spell when we had no house for the winter and were still living in the summer hut; this was built of boards such as all the settlers built in the hurry of settling, and those were quite comfortable in summer."<sup>405</sup> But, in the winter, log cabins were not very warm. Gaps between the logs were a common problem, allowing cold winter winds to chill the inhabitants. A short history of Perry County describes how uncomfortable log cabins could be: "During the first winters, as the cabin was badly built, and still worse roofed, the rain and snow would penetrate through the innumerable openings of the roof, and some mornings buffalo robes and blankets under which the inmates [in this case, the priests at the seminary] were peacefully slumbering would be found covered with snow."<sup>406</sup> Early settlers

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<sup>405</sup> Christiane Loeber, quoted in Keinath, *Documents Illustrating the History of the Lutheran Church in America*, 17.

<sup>406</sup> *A Modern Eden: A History of Perry County, Missouri* (Republican Print, 1895; Repr. Perryville, MO: Perry County Historical Society, 1991), 21.

such as the Saxons could not afford glass for the windows, so the inhabitants frequently covered them with paper or muslin. That first winter in Perry County was a very cold, uncomfortable one for the Old Lutherans.

Pastor Loeber, who used his own money to build the parsonage, had the rare luxury of owning a stove, which naturally enticed several people to live in the parsonage during the colder months. He set aside a special place for his sister Christiane in his home, but she did not want to intrude on her brother's family so she chose to remain in her own tiny log cabin. Although Missouri had an unseasonably warm winter in 1839-1840, the Saxons were still more prone than their neighbors to contract local illnesses, and, as mentioned before, this was the "seasoning period" for them and hence it was common for immigrants to have a difficult time acclimating and remaining healthy. Christiane described the dreadful fevers in her letters home. One of her friends suffered from a fever for two months but Christiane, who succumbed to the "intermittent fever" in April 1840, did not survive. Her illness began with high fevers, which atrophied into deep and dangerous sleeps. Apparently, she realized that she was not going to survive and, after expressing her "reliance on God," she died in her sleep on April 7 at the age of 44.<sup>407</sup> Greatly loved by those she served, a large crowd attended her funeral to mourn the loss. With her death was lost one of the most detailed testimonies of day-to-day living in the community.

Christiane was not married, but there are some sources that give insight into married life among the Saxons. As was typical under conditions on the western fringe of society, marriages were not always based on attraction but more frequently on logical assessments of

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<sup>407</sup> Stella Wuerffel, "Women in the Saxon Immigration," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (October 1962): 92.

need. A widow might have to remarry quickly so that her children could be protected and provided with food and shelter, for example. Saxon pastors tended to pick their wives based on whether the woman under consideration was particularly devout, selfless, and willing and able to survive on a pastor's meager earnings. Such women were often the difference between successful pastorates and those which failed because the men could not maintain the pace and stress of ministering to congregations without the untiring support of a dedicated Christian woman.

The private letters of Agnes Buenger Walther to her fiancée, Pastor Ottomar Fuerbringer, are a rare find among the Saxon sources. She was the recent widow of the highly respected Otto Walther, the first pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis. Otto died on January 21, 1841, leaving his wife and their son Johannes. She needed a husband to help support her family, and she was already accustomed to being a pastor's wife. In spite of these practical concerns, her letters to her soon-to-be second husband were not emotionally detached. By early 1842 she was engaged to Fuerbringer, a friend of her deceased husband since the University of Leipzig days when they were both attending Pastor Kuehn's meetings. At the end of 1841, when he and Agnes became engaged, he was a pastor in Elkhorn Prairie (now Venedy), Illinois. In a short biography of him, it is said that "he knew no compromise and no yielding, and this gave him an unshakable steadfastness."<sup>408</sup> Dr. A. L. Graebner described him as "the profoundest thinker among the fathers of the Missouri Synod."<sup>409</sup> If his assessment is anywhere near the truth, then Fuerbringer must have been a

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<sup>408</sup> L. Lochner, "Ottomar Fuerbringer, 1810-1892," *Der Lutheraner* 49 and 50, 1-2.

<sup>409</sup> Lochner, "Ottomar Fuerbringer," 2.

remarkable person, particularly since he was a compatriot of Dr. Walther, who was well known for his intellectual and theological capabilities. It would also explain why Agnes's letters to him are very personal but also express serious concerns about how she would compare to him in matters of faith.

In the first letter Agnes wrote to her fiancé on January 19, 1842, she spoke of receiving his letter with “much, much joy,” but she also mentioned the many things which concerned her: “But don't expect too much good from me. You have no idea how poor and wretched I am, and because of this I look forward all the more to our companionship.”<sup>410</sup> She is a bit more emotional in her second letter of February 2, 1824, which she addressed to her “dearly beloved Fuerbringer,” and in the first sentence wrote that “with great longing and trembling I opened your dear letter this evening.”<sup>411</sup> Again she worried about how he would perceive her, telling him that “I don't see such a good person in myself, rather I sometimes despise myself.”<sup>412</sup> It was obvious that she was determined to be a submissive wife and an aid to her husband, and that she depended on her faith to accomplish these goals. Although she was apprehensive that he would regret marrying her, she also placed a lot of trust in God: “Isn't it true that, as long as our glorious Lord Jesus holds first place in our hearts, then also our love for each other will be permanent, pure and deep?”<sup>413</sup> From just these two letters we can see in Agnes, the depth of her newly found love for another, her fears that she would not measure up, and yet her assurance that God would help them both

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<sup>410</sup> Fuerbringer Collection, 1837-1843, folder 15, box 1 at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, 1.

<sup>411</sup> Fuerbringer Collection, folder 15, box 1, 2.

<sup>412</sup> Fuerbringer Collection, 2.

<sup>413</sup> Fuerbringer Collection, 1.

to have a successful marriage. Through Agnes's letters we see a very human image of the Saxon women, who, although devout, could express very natural relationship worries. Concerning submission, her adherence to it mirrored Protestant American thought during the nineteenth century and was a prevalent marriage perspective at the time.<sup>414</sup>

Becoming a pastor's wife often meant continuing poverty even past those initial years in establishing a home together. Agnes and her husband "experienced a full share of the hardships and privations of pioneer life" while they were in Elkhorn Prairie and then, later, in Frankenmuth, Michigan.<sup>415</sup> The Saxons worried about Lutherans across the United States but particularly in the West, who did not have pastors to minister to them. Hence, the original pastors and candidates were often called to minister in other areas of the country. When Fuerbringer brought Agnes to Elkhorn Prairie, they lived in a log cabin with "loosely laid, uneven, warped" flooring.<sup>416</sup> The story was told that "on winter mornings the neighbors would look over to the parsonage to see whether smoke was issuing from its chimney or whether the pastor had frozen to death during the night."<sup>417</sup> When he traveled to minister to other congregations, he had to travel by foot as he could not afford a horse. This was the type of life Agnes had embraced, and, for pastors' wives, it was not unusual.

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<sup>414</sup> For information on women in the nineteenth century in the United States see Kathryn K. Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*, 90-104; and Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*, 68-70.

<sup>415</sup> Fuerbringer Collection, "Ottomar Fuerbringer, 1810-1892," Concordia Historical Institute, 10.

<sup>416</sup> Fuerbringer Collection, 11.

<sup>417</sup> Fuerbringer Collection, 11-12.

Pastor Ernst Buerger was initially in charge of Seelitz, where he ministered to members who had traveled with him from his home town in Saxony of the same name.

Pastor Buerger described his “heavy domestic cross” in 1839:

I, my wife and two sons lay sick with fever. There was lack of even the most necessary things, even of water. My wife gave birth to a daughter, who was strangled at birth, because we lacked the aid of a midwife. My wife died 14 days later as a true Christian, certain of her salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”<sup>418</sup>

Later he married “a quiet, pious and domestically well-reared virgin, the daughter of a school teacher, by name of Ernestine Salome Meissner, with whom I lived practically thirty years in a blessed union.”<sup>419</sup> This good woman gave birth to eleven more children, which meant a total of thirteen with the two from his first marriage. Out of those eleven, only four survived into late adulthood. In Buffalo, New York, where he was called to pastor several small churches, he lost his 16-year-old son to typhoid fever, a daughter of six years to “quinsy,” and a baby, Benjamin, who lived only fourteen days.<sup>420</sup> All of this tragedy occurred in the midst of church squabbles and “curses and maledictions” hurled against him and threats against his life.<sup>421</sup> According to her husband, Ernestine bore all this with grace and piety.

Pastor Loeber, who remained in Altenburg the rest of his life, praised his wife Wilhelmina: “especially I thank Thee for the faithful devotion of my beloved Wilhelmina”

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<sup>418</sup> Ernst Moritz Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, trans. Edgar Joachim Buerger (Lincoln, MA: Martin Julian Buerger, 1953), 49.

<sup>419</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 59.

<sup>420</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 69.

<sup>421</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 68.

who gave him two boys and a girl.<sup>422</sup> As proof of Wilhelmina's integrity and faith, we have only her husband's description. We do know that she was from an aristocratic family and that she witnessed Napoleon's soldiers looting the parsonage in the town where she lived at the time. She married Loeber on September 22, 1825, and, from his written appraisals, it appeared to be a blessed marriage. Her younger sister Johanna followed in her footsteps and also married a pastor—Theobald von Wurmb.<sup>423</sup>

C. F. W. Walther's wife, Emilie Buenger, was so devoted to her husband that when she was in the last days of her life, rather than resting in bed, she remained in her rocking chair in case her husband needed her for anything.<sup>424</sup> She replied to a concerned friend that if Walther did not find her there, he would feel "abandoned."<sup>425</sup>

Clementine Buenger was not a pastor's wife, but the description of her by a member of her family is another testimony to those characteristics admired in Saxon women. A year after Clementine arrived in Perry County, she married Gottlob J. Newmueller at the age of eighteen; together they had eleven children, only seven of whom survived. Following is a depiction of her life.

She was poor all her life; her husband mended shoes in the winter and dug cellars and cisterns in the summer. Yet she took her difficulties in stride and pulled the family through by her hard work and managing skills. She was remembered for her sense of humor, her generosity with what little she had, her concern for her grandchildren's good manners, her love of flowers and music (hymns) and her constant piety.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> Wuerffel, "Women in the Saxon Immigration," 81.

<sup>423</sup> Wuerffel, "Women in the Saxon Immigration," 83.

<sup>424</sup> Pickle, "Women of the Saxon Immigration and Their Church," 150-151.

<sup>425</sup> Pickle, "Women of the Saxon Immigration and Their Church," 151.

<sup>426</sup> Pickle, "Women of the Saxon Immigration," 149.

Women were not treated equally in the church. They could not vote in church meetings, and during services, men sat on one side and women on the other. Yet, the education of women was already a developed practice among the Saxons. As a child, Ernst Buerger studied in the classroom at home with his brother and two sisters, often for six hours at a time.<sup>427</sup> Christiane Loeber's devotion to education was so strong that after her death, her house was given to the congregation to be used for the school.<sup>428</sup> A deep dedication to education was shared by the rest of the Saxons, who considered education, faith, and language to be intimately connected.

On the whole the Saxons were a well-educated group. Among them were seven pastors or candidates in theology, six teachers, two doctors, two lawyers, and an unusual number (61%) of tradesmen. Only 14% were farmers, but Germans who listed their occupation as weavers usually grew up on farms. By tradition, farms were passed along to the eldest son and, when possible, the rest of the children were given money for their inheritance. In general, the Saxons were middle class tradesmen who valued a strong education for their children.

C. F. W. Walther fought the battle for Christian education before he left Saxony when, as mentioned earlier, he opposed the textbooks chosen by his superintendent and the schoolmaster.<sup>429</sup> Now free to choose their own curriculum, the settlers underscored the value

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<sup>427</sup> Buerger, *Memoirs of Ernst Moritz Buerger*, 12.

<sup>428</sup> Friedrich Muench, *The State of Missouri: An Account with Special Reference to German Immigration, 1818-1848* (New York, NY: Farmers and Vinegrowers Society, 1859), 92.

<sup>429</sup> Arthur H. Drevlow, John M. Drickamer, Glenn E. Reichwald, eds., *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther; Essays in Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Carl Walther's Death* (Mankato, MN: Walther Press, 1987), 25.

they placed on education by building a little log school in 1839 as their first permanent building. Through the contribution of \$35.50 from members of the society who had decided to remain in St. Louis, three candidates of theology—Theodor Broehm, O. Fuerbringer (Agnes Walther’s second husband), J. F. Buenger—were able to complete the first permanent building for the community on December 9, 1839. This tiny structure was “approximately 16x21 feet, with four windows and a door, situated on a five-acre plot at Dresden.”<sup>430</sup> For furniture it had “two long benches” placed on “a floor of tamped clay.”<sup>431</sup>

The school was founded partly upon the concept of German high schools, and its curriculum included religion, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, English, history, geography, math, physics, music, drawing, philosophy, and natural history. C. F. W. Walther, Fuerbringer, Broehm, and Buenger proudly announced this ambitious scholastic undertaking in none other than an advertisement in the *Anzeiger des Westens* in the summer of 1839.

At this time, Missouri students whose families could afford private education had the benefit of a rigorous primary and secondary coursework at the state’s subscription schools and academies. An example of the type of education American teachers were offering at the same time is seen in an advertisement placed in the *Missouri Republican* on March 19, 1839 by Thomas McMahon for a school he was beginning in St. Louis. His curriculum was as daunting as that of the Saxons; it included reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, bookkeeping, geometry and

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<sup>430</sup> Walter G. Herrling, “Concordia College: Altenburg, St. Louis, Fort Wayne,” *The Lutheran Witness* 57, no. 26 (December 27, 1938): 448.

<sup>431</sup> Herrling, “Concordia College,” 448.

also to Diophantine and . . . problems, Mensuration, Navigation, Surveying by theory and practice, Gauging, Steryographic Orthographic, and Gnomonic projections of the sphere, the construction of Maps and Chart, the use of the Globes, Trigonometry both plane and spherical, Conic Sections, Astronomy and Fluxions, etc., etc.”<sup>432</sup>

Following this formidable list, he proclaimed that “the above course of Education and Science will be taught with an efficacy and a brilliancy of demonstration, that will eradicate all doubts from the mind.”<sup>433</sup> This is quite an aggressive program as was that of the Saxon school, but his school added some skills which were handy on the frontier, such as surveying. The classic school program, however, remained the main fare of private schools at this time.

The Saxon school began with eleven students, consisting of seven boys and, soon after, four girls. In October of 1847, J. A. F. Wilhelm Mueller was the first to graduate. With the departure of the original teachers and founders, the task of maintaining the institution fell to Pastor Loeber. He managed to help the school progress even as he faced continuous bouts of illness and the daily regimen of his pastoral duties. By 1844 the little school in Altenburg had fifty-three students. Eventually, the focus of the school was narrowed to preparing students for the ministry. Throughout the following years, the descendants of the Saxon Lutherans developed a reputation for their dedication to providing a thorough education for their children. Walther’s dream was that eventually each congregation would have a parochial school of its own.<sup>434</sup> Considering the drought of educational facilities available in the United States for pastors in the 1830s, this small beginning brought forth abundant fruit.

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<sup>432</sup> St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, March 19, 1839.

<sup>433</sup> St. Louis *Missouri Republican*, March 19, 1839.

<sup>434</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 176.

Christiane Loeber did not live to see the accomplishments of these bright young students, but she would have been proud of the strides in education the Saxons made in such a short amount of time.

Five of the men who graduated from that little log school, later known as the “Pilgrims,” went on to serve as esteemed leaders in the church. Wilhelm Mueller served his church for fifty-three years. Franz Julius Blitz established St. Paul’s College in Concordia, Missouri, for pastoral preparation in 1884. Heinrich Loeber became the director of Concordia College in Milwaukee. Rudolf Lange used his talents and influence in St. Charles, Missouri, where he encouraged the use of the English language in the Lutheran seminaries. And Heinrich Wunder, described as a “pillar of the Missouri Synod,” was the pastor of St. Paul’s Church in Chicago for sixty-two years. In 1919, Th. Graebner wrote a small booklet entitled *Lutheran Pioneers I, Our Pilgrim Fathers: The Story of the Saxon Emigration of 1838* about men such as the Walther brothers, Pastor Loeber, J. F. Buenger, and about the misadventures of Martin Stephan.<sup>435</sup>

In the *Concordian Centennial Edition*, the writer observed that “from the composition of the first student body it is apparent that co-education and a general secular education were accepted principles of the new school.”<sup>436</sup> He adds that “all early announcements as to the purpose stress the fact that the school was founded to safeguard the youth against un-Christian education and to prepare them for university training.”<sup>437</sup> The

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<sup>435</sup> Graebner, *Lutheran Pioneers I*.

<sup>436</sup> *The Concordian Centennial Edition, 1839-1939* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia College, 1939), 8.

<sup>437</sup> *Concordian Centennial*, 8.

students either roomed with settlers close to the school or went home at night if they lived nearby. Brohm and Fuerbringer, who were teaching *gratis*, slept in the tiny attic above the schoolroom. After Fuerbringer accepted a call in 1840 and Brohm suffered from a “lingering fever,” Pastor Loeber taught the students in his home when he was ill or when his schedule was particularly busy.<sup>438</sup> Brohm recovered enough to help again, but he accepted a call to New York in 1843, marrying the widow von Wurmb before he left and, of course, taking her children with them. The enrollment of the school was now only five, as many of the children were needed in the fields to help their families. With Pastor Loeber’s unending support, the little school survived.

On June 22, 1843, the more affluent congregation at Trinity Lutheran in St. Louis recognized Pastor Loeber’s sacrifices and supplied the monies to hire a full-time teacher for the school. Johann Jakob Goenner was approved by both the Trinity and Perry County congregations and given lodging close to the school.<sup>439</sup> Professor Goenner organized the class into two groups, the first consisting of students from ages 16 to 20 and the second of students from 11 to 14. With Professor Goenner as a paid teacher, aided by Pastors Loeber and Keyl, with Mr. Winter teaching music and Carl Julius Nietzsche, a store owner, teaching English, arithmetic, and geography, the school moved onto more solid academic grounding. The Saxons quickly provided their children with a thorough education.

The Saxons’ “ardent love of liberty and education” emanated from their belief in the responsibility of every person, male or female, to be able to read and study the Bible on their

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<sup>438</sup> *Concordian Centennial*, 8.

<sup>439</sup> *Concordian Centennial*, 9.

own.<sup>440</sup> The adherence to this precept, more than any other factor, saved them from disintegration after Stephan's removal, because so many had a personal longing to be able to practice their faith freely. To provide a proper education for their children was one of the main reasons they emigrated. Therefore, church and school were intricately connected so that their children would have a solid Christian education. This goal resulted in the growth of Missouri Synod parochial schools. The Saxons and their descendants became known for the quality of their schools.<sup>441</sup> The pastors were an integral part of the educational process. Walther believed it was the pastors' responsibility to oversee the schools and "take part in the work."<sup>442</sup> On the importance of high school education, he wrote that "the very best means that we have to spread our Lutheran doctrine to the mass of the people of this land" was through education.<sup>443</sup> For the Saxons, after public ministry, education "was the chief means for our preservation and continuation."<sup>444</sup>

Education was one of the reasons the Lutherans decided to form a synod of like-minded church congregations. Carl S. Meyer argued that "the school was one of the voices which called the Synod into existence" and, referring to the log cabin school, that the "character and objectives of the school made a synod the better way to operate."<sup>445</sup> The

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<sup>440</sup> Dau, *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod*, 19.

<sup>441</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 176.

<sup>442</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 180.

<sup>443</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther The American Luther*, 184.

<sup>444</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 184.

<sup>445</sup> Carl S. Meyer, *Log Cabin to Luther Tower: Concordia Seminary During One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years toward a More Excellent Ministry, 1839-1964* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 14-15.

synod was formed on April 26, 1847, at St. Paul's Church in Chicago and named the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. Initially, the twelve congregations who met in Chicago agreed to abide by three main principles: the belief that all confessions of the Evangelical Lutherans were in line with Scripture; recognition that the Bible was the rule and guide for one's life; and agreement that congregations were democratic units who held premier authority while the synod only served in an advisory capacity.<sup>446</sup> The group corporately accepted the Apostle's, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds in addition to the Smalcald Articles, the Formula of Concord, and Martin Luther's Large and Small Catechisms. This was a distinct advancement toward the Saxons' goal to establish conservative, confessional Lutheranism in the United States.

Two years after the synod was formed, the leadership decided that the Log Cabin College should be moved to St. Louis, where the fledgling Concordia Seminary was located, but it was not moved without a fight from Pastor Loeber, who only reluctantly agreed to the change a few weeks before he died. The agreement stipulated that the school would perpetually serve the Lutheran Church and would continue to use the German language.<sup>447</sup>

The Saxons recognized an urgent need for quality education and the training of Lutheran pastors. Finding the American frontier devoid of what they considered well-trained, competent clergy, the Saxons were anxious to fill the void, although, at first, they preferred pastors trained in Germany. Unlike the Baptists, for example, who preferred itinerant preachers "trained" only by their personal knowledge of the Bible and their

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<sup>446</sup> William J. Schmelder, "A Synod is Born," *The Lutheran Witness* 116, no. 4 (April 1997): 14.

<sup>447</sup> Meyer, *Log Cabin to Luther Tower*, 18.

enthusiasm for evangelism, the Saxons required a full-fledged classical education for their pastors. Therefore, the seminary's regimen for its students was rigorous, with strict rules concerning behavior as well as curriculum. They were forbidden to read newspapers or to attend theater, and they spent much of their free time cultivating individual vegetable gardens to help with the food supply on campus. Academic pursuits filled the lion's share of their time. Proficiency in both Hebrew and Greek was obligatory. Bible study was supplemented by extensive lessons on the early church fathers. In an article on German traditions in Missouri, Adolph E. Schroeder observed that the "Stephan-led Alt-Lutheraner's" "energetic educational and publication program has had a profound and lasting influence on the state [Missouri]."<sup>448</sup>

To ensure that educational materials used for both the seminary and parochial schools complied with the confessions of the church, the Synod created an editorial committee to evaluate the curriculum, which was the beginning of a flourishing publishing branch of the Missouri Synod that became the Concordia Publishing House. In 1850 they printed copies of Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* and a *Deutsch* primer teaching the German language for elementary schools.<sup>449</sup> In 1861, the Synod published its own *Reader*, adapted for the particular needs and standards of its students. Adult educational materials were also published by the Synod, often under guidance from C. F. W. Walther, who was still the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Louis, the mother church of the Missouri

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<sup>448</sup> Adolph E. Schroeder, "The Survival of German Traditions in Missouri," in *The German Contribution to the Building of the Americas, Studies in Honor of Karl J.R. Arndt*, Gerhard K. Friesau and Walter Schatzburg, eds. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1977), 296.

<sup>449</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 177.

Synod, and the oldest Lutheran Church west of the Mississippi. Trinity was essentially the same congregation that originally met in the basement of the Episcopalian church, starting early in 1839. By 1844, Trinity had 1,600 members.<sup>450</sup> Walther, known as Mr. Law and Gospel, became the “voice of confessional Lutheran theology.”<sup>451</sup> From September 7, 1844 to 1887 he wrote a great deal for *Der Lutheraner*, which was established to “make known the pure doctrines of the Lutheran church,” and after 1855 he wrote articles for *Lehre and Wehre*, a theological journal whose purpose was to give continuing training to pastors.<sup>452</sup> The preeminent goal of these two publications was to “furnish proof that the Lutheran Church is indeed the ancient true Church of Christ on earth, not merely one of the Christian sects.”<sup>453</sup> Apparently, the accusations against them in 1838 and 1839 still stung, because Saxon church leaders felt they must firmly establish that they were a valid church body, not a sect or cult.

Walther lent his expertise to many different aspects of Lutheran teachings. At the seminary, he endorsed the Synod’s stance on the inerrancy of Scripture by focusing on Luther’s Scripture standards, in which he argued that the “form of writing had to conform to Hebrew/Aramaic in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament,” that the “material content needed to show the markings of God,” and that “the attestation of the early church

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<sup>450</sup> August R. Suelflow, *The Heart of Missouri, A History of the Western District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1854-1954* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), 32.

<sup>451</sup> Eugene Klug, “Walther and Luther” in *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther; Essays in Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Carl Walther’s Death*, eds. Arthur H. Drevlow, John M. Drickamer, and Glenn E. Reichwald (Mankato, MN: Walther Press, 1987), 2.

<sup>452</sup> Dau, *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod*, 30.

<sup>453</sup> Dau, *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod*, 43.

was necessary to indicate” if the writer was a “true apostle or prophet of Christ.”<sup>454</sup> In addition to articles he wrote for *Der Lutheraner* and *Lehre und Wehre*, he wrote several books, including *The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Office*, *The Correct Form of a Local Congregation Independent of the State*, and *The Evangelical Lutheran Church, The True Visible Church on Earth*.<sup>455</sup> Doctrinal clarity was extremely important to the Saxons because it was a bulwark against deception. They had been fooled once by the slowly encroaching mistruths Stephan imposed on them, and they did not want it to happen again.

During his lifetime, Walther filled a number of important roles in the church; he was president of the Synod from 1864 to 1878, president of Concordia Seminary, and professor of theology. He published a hymnal he devised for the Synod, and he wrote for theological journals. It is no wonder he is called the “Luther of the West.” His influence on the early years of the Missouri Synod is extensive. In spite of Walther’s crucial role, the laity had learned important lessons from the Stephan debacle and diligently maintained the power of the laity. Walther’s church, Trinity Lutheran in St. Louis, ensured their autonomy when the Synod was formed by adding a statement to their constitution clarifying that the Synod was only to be an advisory board to the church. Even with C. F. W. Walther as their pastor, church congregants were determined to maintain the independence of the church body from a takeover by any ecclesiastical hierarchy. Trinity’s position of authority among Lutheran churches in the Synod certainly formed a precedence that other Lutheran churches could

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<sup>454</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 116.

<sup>455</sup> Dau, *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod*, 27.

comfortably follow, and it again emphasized that individual congregations did not again want a man such as Martin Stephan to wield such great power among them.

In a study of German immigration, it was noted that the connection between education and church was a common strand among Germans. That is, for those Germans who actively practiced their faith, church was a “major part of everyday life.”<sup>456</sup> Church bells were used as indicators of each phase of the day; they rang at dawn and at twilight. On Sundays, they rang when church services were beginning. Milestones in children’s lives were measured by baptism, confirmation at age fourteen, and marriage. Family life was the backbone of the community. Mothers were expected to be purveyors of the culture of family, education, and church, and they were strongly depended upon to influence the lives of the children. Family, church, and education were embedded in Saxon life, as well as one other element—the German language.

Language naturally affected every aspect of the Saxons’ adjustment to life in America. Historically, German immigrants were known for retaining their native language much longer than other immigrant groups. In Pennsylvania before the Revolutionary War, Anglicized Lutheran Churches and Reformed Churches attempted to eliminate the German language in their congregations. Pastor Muhlenberg balked at the notion of not using his native tongue. Responding to pressure from Anglicized Lutherans and Reformed churches to speak only English, Muhlenberg replied that German was “the language in which the eternal truths of their faith were better expressed.”<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Glen E. Lich, *The German Texans* (San Antonio: The University of Texas, Institute of Texan Cultures, 1981), 124.

<sup>457</sup> Ralph Wood, ed. *The Pennsylvania Germans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1942), 91.

The Saxons' position on the German language mirrored that of Muhlenberg. They held to the belief that German was a blessed language because Martin Luther pioneered the Reformation in the German language, and it was the first vernacular language into which the New Testament was translated. German Lutherans in particular believed "it was the language in which the eternal truths of their faith were better expressed."<sup>458</sup> There was a "close bond in the German soul between the practice of faith and traditional customs."<sup>459</sup> A much repeated motto was that "Language Saves Faith."<sup>460</sup> Russell Kazal comments on the connection between faith and language in his book on Germantown, Pennsylvania: "German Lutheran churches," he writes, "would, by and large, remain German preserves."<sup>461</sup> He adds that "Many Lutherans and Catholics, moreover, made German language use an intrinsic part of their religious identities, transforming language maintenance into a spiritual imperative."<sup>462</sup> LaVern Rippley observes that ministers, particularly those of the Missouri Synod, believed their people could not "receive proper religious training" unless it was in the German language.<sup>463</sup>

The logical conclusion for many German ministers was that Germans were more apt to go to church if the services were in their own language. Naturally, pastors used that

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<sup>458</sup> Wood, *The Pennsylvania Germans*, 91.

<sup>459</sup> Colman J. Barry, *The Catholic Church and German Americans* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing, 1953), 10.

<sup>460</sup> Barry, *The Catholic Church*, 10.

<sup>461</sup> Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 206.

<sup>462</sup> Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*, 83.

<sup>463</sup> LaVern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), 125.

preference as leverage for church attendance. As a result, German language services in German Lutheran churches could still be found in America, but particularly in Missouri and the Midwest, into the 1950s, a record which far surpasses any other immigration group to the United States.

The reasons for maintaining the language were as diverse as the many members of the German immigrant community. Among secular Germans, retention of the language was considered important for cultural reasons. As late as October 22, 1860 the *Anzeiger des Westens* declared that their newspaper had “always striven to place the German language here [in Missouri] on a level with the modern literature of the Fatherland” and that one of their most important duties was to “preserve” the German language.<sup>464</sup> Ernst Moritz Arndt, a German nationalist and philosopher living during the time the Saxons emigrated, believed that “abandoning the native language” would be a disaster.<sup>465</sup> Arndt’s main intent was to support German as the only pure language in Europe as part of his push towards nationalization of the German states. In Missouri, the German language became so prevalent that towards the middle of the century there was a chance that the state would become bilingual. Five different dialects of German were spoken in the early days of the little town of Hermann, Missouri.<sup>466</sup> At the time, Missouri was known as the “most favored German spot” in America.<sup>467</sup> For a short while, St. Louis added the German language to their schools’

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<sup>464</sup> Steven Rowan, ed. and trans., *Germans for a Free Missouri: Translations from the St. Louis Radical Press, 1857-1862* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 133.

<sup>465</sup> Hans Kohn, *The Mind of Germany: The Education of a Nation* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960), 77.

<sup>466</sup> Gerlach, *Immigrants in the Ozarks*, 124.

<sup>467</sup> Schneider, *The German Church on the American Frontier*, 19.

curriculum until students got to the second readers, partly because so many Germans lived in St. Louis, but primarily because they wanted to lure Germans into the public education system to encourage them to adapt more quickly to life in America.<sup>468</sup> But Germans in Missouri continued to be slow in giving up their language.

Liberal German newspapers, such as the *Anzeiger des Westens*, promoted the German language for different reasons than the Saxons, although the Saxons did speak of cultural advantages at times in addition to the spiritual advantages of the German language. When the push for nationalism began to develop early in the nineteenth century among the German states, there was an emphasis on the German language as a unifying force among them. In one study of the “soul of Germany,” the German language was described as the “life blood of national thought and motive.”<sup>469</sup> Communities such as those in Texas or any spokesperson promoting a New Germany identified with this belief much more than the Saxons did, probably because the Saxons in large measure emigrated in response to government intervention in their personal and religious lives and never envisioned forming a German nation-state. The Saxons fit best with Frederick Luebke’s assessment of why German Americans valued their language to such a degree: “Convinced that their maintenance of German language and culture was not incompatible with being thoroughly American in outlook, they epitomized their sentiments in the expression ‘Germania our Mother, Columbia our Bride.’”<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 120.

<sup>469</sup> Thomas F. A. Smith, *The Soul of Germany: A Twelve Year Study of the People from within, 1902-1914* (New York: Grosset and Dunlop Publishers, 1915), viii.

<sup>470</sup> Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in the New World, Essays in the History of Immigration* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 20.

A few scholars have claimed that the German language was used “as a weapon to ward off Americanization,” because of a German disdain for American culture.”<sup>471</sup> John Hawgood argues that “because the Germans were unable to respect, or, sometimes, to understand the social habits and standards of the culture of their American neighbors, particularly in the newly developed regions, they sought to preserve as much as possible of their old world habits and culture.”<sup>472</sup> In essence, Germans believed their culture was superior to America’s, and the German language was an important aspect of that *Kultur*, as the Germans identified it. The Saxons do not fit this model. In Perry County, they were physically isolated because of the topography of their land and the lack of good roads in the area for many years, but they were not intentionally isolating themselves in the way a religious cult might. As seen in C. F. W. Walther’s actions and that of the Missouri Synod, they were reaching out to other Christians through their publications, engaging in discussions with German newspapers, working in the St. Louis community and Perry County, and generally living normal lives. Pastor Loeber and others from Perry County traveled to St. Louis and other areas of the country whenever possible. Language was a religious issue rather than a cultural issue for the Saxons, and it was predominantly for spiritual reasons that they retained the German language.

When Germans did appear to retain this attitude of warding off the American culture with the German language, Americans were not impressed. As far back as the times of Benjamin Franklin, Americans were concerned about Germans not learning English. In an

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<sup>471</sup> John A. Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America: The Germans in the United States of America During the Nineteenth Century – and After* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1940), 39.

<sup>472</sup> Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America*, 41.

essay entitled “America as a Land of Opportunity,” written in 1751, Franklin wrote the following:

And since Detachments of English from Britain sent to America, will have their Places at Home so soon supply'd and increase so largely here; why should the Palatine Boors [Germans] be suffered to swarm into our Settlements, and by herding together establish their Language and Manners to the Exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion.<sup>473</sup>

Even Missourians were aggravated when Germans kept their customs but did not strive to learn the English language and the American culture.<sup>474</sup> That is one reason why, on September 1, 1844, Walther publicly encouraged the transition from the German language to English in everyday discourse, although not in the practice of their faith. As W. H. T. Dau expressed it years later, they wanted to become Americans, but they also wanted to “remain strictly Lutheran, Lutheran of the Missouri type.”<sup>475</sup> For the Saxons, remaining Lutheran and maintaining the German language in the spiritual and educational aspects of their lives did not negate their appreciation of the religious and political freedoms of the United States. They believed that in maintaining their faith and their culture, they were simply exercising the freedoms they believed the American republic promised them. A Perry County pamphlet on the history of the area laid out the reasons the Saxons came to Missouri, arguing that they emigrated because they were “becoming tired of the domination of mother church in the

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<sup>473</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Observations Concerning the Increasing of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, &c* (Boston: Printed by S. Kneeland, 1755), [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=85](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=85)

<sup>474</sup> Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, 257.

<sup>475</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, September 1, 1844 quoted in *Lutheran Witness on Saxon Emigration*, December 27, 1938, 11.

Fatherland.”<sup>476</sup> These “sturdy yeoman” of a “hardy race” withstood life in a “strange land and unaccustomed to the climate, but they suffered and persevered as heroically as the Pilgrims on the rock bound coast of New England had done more than two hundred years before.”<sup>477</sup>

After the Altenburg Debate, the Saxons maintained a strong kinship community in Perry County where they centered their lives on family, church, and school. Families intermarried in communities roughly comprised of the same groups of people they knew from home. Many of the farms in Perry County are still owned by descendants of the original settlers. As late as 1976, 60% of the original surnames of the Saxons remained in Perry County.<sup>478</sup> Friends and family members died because of poor shelter, a lack of food, and a vulnerability to American illnesses. Land was cleared with difficulty because of the lack of skills requisite to the area and the lack of tools because of the impoverished condition of the Saxons. Yet, their dream for religious freedom and education for their children based upon their faith principles did become a reality. Language and cultural differences made them “foreigners in their own land,” as Germans before them had also been, but they did not make them any less proud to be American citizens.

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<sup>476</sup> *A Modern Eden*, 3.

<sup>477</sup> *A Modern Eden*, 3, 12.

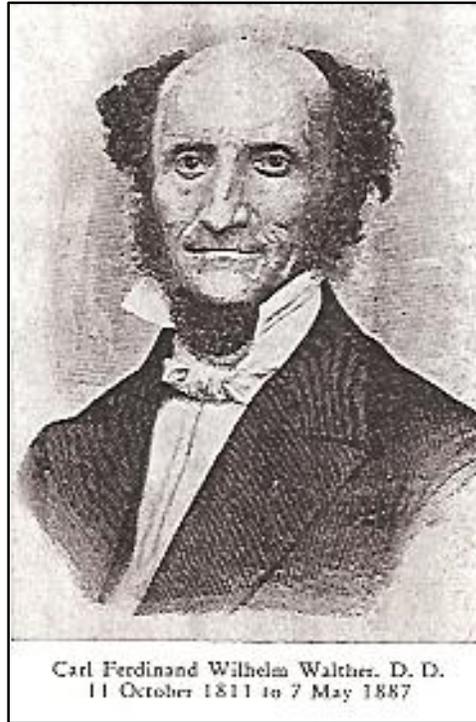
<sup>478</sup> Gerlach, *Immigrants in the Ozarks*, 60.

CHAPTER 6  
AMERICAN POLITICS AND THE COMPLEXITIES  
OF THE GERMAN IMMIGRANT RESPONSE

The political philosophies of conservative Saxons and liberal German immigrants in Missouri were never so glaringly disparate as on the eve of the Civil War when Heinrich Boernstein, publisher of the *Anzeiger des Westens*, accused the students and teachers of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis of being Southern sympathizers and thus justified aiming a cannon at the campus. C. F. W. Walther wrote of this incident in a letter sent to Jacob Matthias Buehler on May 21, 1861. Commander Henry Boernstein, reported Walther, was “lying in the Marine Hospital, putting his hands on a cannon” and “swore to shoot up this secessionist nest, as he loved to call our college.”<sup>479</sup> The action, Walther said, did not make sense, as most members of his congregation were Republicans. The confrontation reflected the intensity of emotions as the war began and the danger of misunderstandings among Missourians, even among Germans. By the spring of 1861 the Saxons had been in Missouri for 22 years, during which time they rapidly became United States citizens and openly expressed their gratefulness for the liberties they enjoyed. However, how the Saxons viewed politics is a complex issue, especially in light of the immense disagreements among German immigrants and the intense political situation in Missouri as the state’s citizens debated whether or not to remain in the Union.

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<sup>479</sup> Arthur H. Drevlow, John M. Drickamer, and Glenn E. Reichwald, eds., *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther; Essays in Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Carl Walther’s Death* (Mankato, MN: Walther Press, 1987), 23.



*Figure 8.* Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (1811-1887).

Even during this colossal upheaval, the Saxons' faith remained the central force in their lives, driving the decisions they made about their politics and their actions. But their reaction to the American political catastrophes was profoundly influenced by elements of their past lives in the Fatherland. There were rumblings of nationalism in the years preceding the Saxon immigration, but the German states did not officially become a nation until 1871 under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck. For older Saxon settlers, such as C. F. W. Walther, nationalism was not always seen in the same light as it was by second-generation Saxons who grew up in America and who better understood the country's historical and political history. As Boernstein explained it: "Germans had learned the bitter lesson of *Kleinstaaterei* [*"small statism"*] in Germany and had no desire to transform the splendid, dignified union of the United States into a mass of independent, petty state

sovereignties.”<sup>480</sup> Many German immigrants, therefore, viewed the Southern states’ attempt to establish a separate country as ill conceived and even dangerous. A vast majority of St. Louis and Perry County German Lutherans enlisted in the Union army in an attempt to protect the integrity of the Union. As Walther himself commented, Lutherans made their own decisions about whether they supported the Union or the Confederate governments.

At the time the Saxons arrived in Missouri, the American people faced a myriad of new challenges, raising fears about the survival of the nation’s constitutional Republic. Particularly in the East, the people found themselves launched into dramatic changes in society and the economy by the Industrial Revolution. As the economic system evolved into one increasingly dictated by market forces, Americans worried about its dehumanizing tendencies and its capacity to disrupt community and home life. It was a period, historian Robert Kelley notes, that was “filled with an anguished outcry of the loss of quietude, secure family lives and status and social confidence.”<sup>481</sup> No longer did workers labor and live with their employers. A “facelessness” seemed to be developing. While the East struggled with this much more than the West, people such as Andrew Jackson worried that government would similarly be taken over by elitist officials and that republicanism would be damaged. That is one reason why he fought so tenaciously for the destruction of the Bank of the United States. The “Common Man” believed that his voice in politics had diminished—what historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., describes as a “profound frustration of thriving and vigorous classes who felt the central government to be hostile to their needs and

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<sup>480</sup> Henry Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody: The Missouri Years of an Austrian Radical, 1849-1866*, trans. and ed. Steven Rowan (St. Louis, MO: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), 262.

<sup>481</sup> Robert Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 144.

interests.”<sup>482</sup> Part of this angst was directed at immigrant groups, particularly the Germans and the Irish, by followers of the nativist movements, who stoked fear that these new immigrants would destroy the republic. Before the Civil War, it was the Democratic Party that continued to support the immigrants, but, as the war approached, these foreign-born citizens would have to decide whether to endorse the fledgling Republican Party or continue their loyalty to the Democrats.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, two political philosophies were in contention: the agrarian republicanism promoted in the writings and politics of Thomas Jefferson, which Andrew Jackson would later support, and the belief in federal power as promoted by men such as George Washington and Alexander Hamilton. The essence of these different views of the federal government’s relationship to the states is revealed in a quote from each of the leaders. Thomas Jefferson wrote an “Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank” on February 15, 1791, in which he contended that the powers of the federal government were entirely confined to the Tenth Amendment: “To take a single step beyond the boundaries thus specially drawn around the powers of Congress, is to take possession of a boundless field of power, no longer susceptible of any definition.”<sup>483</sup> On federalist powers, Hamilton wrote the following in the “Objections and Answers respecting the Administration of the Government,” on August 18, 1792: “There are some things which the General Government has clearly a right to do—there are others which it has clearly no right to meddle with, and there is a good deal of middle ground, about which honest and well-

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<sup>482</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (1945; repr., Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), 30.

<sup>483</sup> William G. Chrystal, ed., *Thomas Jefferson versus Alexander Hamilton: In Their Own Words* (Reno, NV: Empire for Liberty, 2013), Loc 34.

disposed men may differ.”<sup>484</sup> Both men were patriots who loved their country, but each envisioned a different path for attaining that goal. Hamilton and his Federalist cronies did not entirely trust the American people to maintain a republic. Jefferson’s and Jackson’s shared tenets included a belief in limited government, a suspicion of banks, confidence in the “innate good sense” of the common man, faith that “natural harmony” would produce a united nation, and a desire for simplicity and economy.<sup>485</sup>

The changes that occurred in America during the Jacksonian Era were important to the Saxons for two reasons: first, because Jackson, who was known as the hero of the common man, encouraged the Democratic Party to open the voting “booth” to more American citizens; and second, when the Democratic leadership chose to welcome the common man into American politics, they also chose to represent the interests of those emigrating into the United States. The definition of republicanism was important to this debate because it influenced the nation’s development and was at the core of American politics. Early in the nineteenth century, Americans faced a conundrum of sorts. While they wanted to retain the communal, home industries of their early history, they recognized that the onslaught of the Industrial Revolution and the market revolution was redefining the work space. The ideal of the yeoman farmer was more difficult to define within the changing spheres of industrialization, especially since the privilege of owning property and/or land was considered central to a sound republic. Many Americans were afraid of losing the central tenets of the revolution. They were especially concerned about the increasing number

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<sup>484</sup> Chrystal, *Thomas Jefferson versus Alexander Hamilton*, Loc 40.

<sup>485</sup> John Mayfield, *The New Nation*, rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), 39.

of German and Irish immigrants in the 1830s, who many believed would not understand republicanism.

To maintain a republic, liberty must be protected from power, which is one of the reasons the colonists rebelled against King George III, but, more importantly, against monarchy in favor of an egalitarian government. Hence, Americans deplored concepts of royalty or nobility and depended throughout the years on the division of powers as expressed in the Constitution. All of this was threatened by the actions of the British after the Revolution when they impressed American sailors into their navy, encouraged Native American unrest on the frontier, disrupted American trade, and generally snubbed their noses at the young nation. Historian Robert Remini believed America's driving force behind declaring war on Britain in 1812 was "the urgent need to prove its inalienable right to liberty and independence" and to defy Britain's continued denial of American sovereignty."<sup>486</sup> Although they lost the war, they won back a great deal of confidence when Andrew Jackson soundly defeated the British in New Orleans on January 3, 1815. Historian Bernard Bailyn expresses the American attitude as "the belief that what lay behind every political scene, the ultimate explanation of every political controversy, was the disposition of power," and that it was vital that liberty was victorious.<sup>487</sup>

The rise of Jackson's political star, along with his military victories, challenged the nation's political waters in the 1820s and 1830s. After years of presidents from Virginia and the latest from Massachusetts, the desire for a new order was palpable during the 1828

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<sup>486</sup> Robert V. Remini, *The Jacksonian Era* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1989), 61.

<sup>487</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Enlarged ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 55.

election between Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams, when more Americans than ever were allowed to vote. It was also the first American presidential election that was an all-out, “bring out the vote” political campaign. This new political system “largely ousted [Adams] from political leadership by professional politicians and new-style parties that had arisen as the institutional embodiments of the Jacksonian democratic revolution.”<sup>488</sup> By 1828, all but two states chose their electors through the direct vote of the people, property requirements were being removed, and the length of residency required for voting was being determined. The foreign-born were benefactors of these changes in voting laws at the same time the Democratic Party clearly embraced immigrants as valued citizens. Times were changing, and more opportunities were being given to the people to participate in government. All of this affected not only the native-born but also the foreign-born, who would inundate America in increasing numbers in the 1830s and 1840s. A predominant confidence in the capabilities of the American people bespoke an open-arms attitude toward those who cherished freedom and the opportunity to improve their lives. As immigration historian Oscar Handlin observed: “The belief in progress nurtured a sense of confidence that there was room for all in the new world.”<sup>489</sup> Politically, immigrants saw this optimism reflected in the Democratic Party, whereas they considered the Whig Party, which developed out of the former Democrat-Republican Party, to be dominated by “money-bound aristocrats,” in spite of the fact that the Whigs had appropriated their name from the British

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<sup>488</sup> Charles Grier Sellers, Jr., “Andrew Jackson versus the Historians,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44, no. 4 (March 1958): 618.

<sup>489</sup> Oscar Handlin, “The American Scene,” in *The Forty-Eighters*, ed. A. E. Zucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 42.

Whig party, which was known for fighting tyranny.<sup>490</sup> Notwithstanding the reasons for choosing “Whig” as the name of the party, the vast majority of immigrants gave their support to the Democrats.

In Missouri, Jacksonians were strongly represented by Thomas Hart Benton, who carried on the ideals of the Jacksonians. As a young man, he was a compatriot of Andrew Jackson in Tennessee until the two had a serious falling out and Benton determined to start over in Missouri in 1815. Once in St. Louis, Charles Gratoit and other St. Louis “bluebloods,” such as the Chouteaus and William Clark, introduced him into St. Louis society, where he used his skills as a lawyer to deal with the Spanish land grant fiasco. The group shared a dislike of land speculators and of the Bank of Missouri, which made large loans to speculators. On a national level, President Jackson opposed the Second Bank of the United States because of similar practices, including printing excess paper currency. Small farmers, such as the Saxons, and businessmen in Missouri, who depended on agriculture and sound money, relied on the support of the Democratic Party.

During these years, the Saxons in Perry County were acclimating to American life and taking the necessary steps to become American citizens. Several Saxons attained citizenship quickly, while others waited a bit longer. Farmers Johan Georg Gube, Christian Godfried Schlimpert, and Johann Gottlieb Palitzsch were naturalized in 1839 along with blacksmith Johann Schmidt. Friedrich Wilhelm Barthel waited until 1841, and several did not become citizens until 1846, at which time William Blitz and weaver Wilhelm Adolf Bergt completed the process of naturalization. Professor Theodor Buenger, a descendant of

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<sup>490</sup> Lawrence S. Thompson and Frank X. Braun, “The Forty-Eighters in Politics,” in *The Forty-Eighters*, ed. A.E. Zucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 112.

original settler Theodor Buenger, wrote in the 1920s that “their congregational church government, their principles of Christian life and morality, their patriotism for conscience’ sake, still exert an influence upon more than a million of people in the United States.”<sup>491</sup> He noted that many of the immigrants gave up opportunities in Germany that they could not possibly duplicate in the United States, but their quest for freedom of religion was stronger than these ties. C. F. W. Walther often said that the decision to move to America was a wise choice. In a letter to his wife written from Europe where he was traveling in 1851 and 1852, he told her, “as much as God has done here [in Germany] toward improvement, yet I have to say after observing many things in Germany that induce me to praise God; the greatest thing God has done for us is America.”<sup>492</sup> On July 4, 1853, Walther gave a speech to a young people’s society in which he said: “But, may the Lord of the nations, who has clearly watched and ruled over this nation, let His face graciously shine over our North American free states; may He confound all attacks which the enemies of this Union of States may make upon its freedom”—America, he believed, was “the greatest miracle of the century,” which was made great by the contributions of peoples from all across the globe.<sup>493</sup> Yet, according to Walther’s understanding of the separation of church and state, he also did not believe that “theologians should express themselves on politics.”<sup>494</sup> Yet, at this point in time, politically, “Germans on the whole,” writes historian John A. Hawgood, “had a surprising

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<sup>491</sup> Theo. Buenger, “The Saxon Immigrants of 1839,” in *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century*, ed. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 1.

<sup>492</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 19.

<sup>493</sup> Buenger, *The Saxon Immigrants of 1839*, 20.

<sup>494</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther: The American Luther*, 74.

loyalty to the Democrats.”<sup>495</sup> The Saxons appreciated the Jeffersonian ideal of the virtuous, hard-working farmer as the backbone of the nation.

A flood of Irish and German immigrants in the 1830s and 1840s triggered a wave of fear among native-born Americans concerning foreign ideas and foreign faiths and how these would affect the nation. A predominantly Protestant America feared the increasing numbers of Irish and German Catholics would vote according to the Pope’s direction rather than aligning with the premises of the United States Constitution. In spite of the pro-immigrant influence of the Democratic Party, at mid-nineteenth century, a contingent of primarily Eastern Americans and Southerners became disgruntled with the “invasion of their country by Catholics and foreigners.”<sup>496</sup> Even renowned New England preacher Lyman Beecher spoke of his disapproval of “demon rum, dueling, religious complacency, Unitarians, and Catholics.”<sup>497</sup> For these reasons he was particularly worried about the West: “Either Protestant faithful would evangelize the west and the world, or the area would be captured by an institution that destroyed freedom of thought, cloaked its true atheism behind specious symbols of religiosity, generated revolution wherever it appeared, and knew no limit in its quest for riches and power.”<sup>498</sup> Samuel F. B. Morse, of telegraph fame, wrote a series of articles entitled “A Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States,”

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<sup>495</sup> John A. Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America: The Germans of the United States of America during the Nineteenth Century – and After*. (New York, London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1940), 50.

<sup>496</sup> Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), 200.

<sup>497</sup> “Nativism: The Mid Nineteenth Century,” *Encyclopedia of the New American Nation*, last modified 2014, <http://www.americanforeignrelations.com/E-N/Nativism-The-mid-nineteenth-century.html#ixzz2NN7IoAKD>.

<sup>498</sup> “Nativism: The Mid Nineteenth Century.”

which was printed in the New York *Observer* in 1834.<sup>499</sup> In these he argued that immigration and Catholicism were connected to an attempt to undermine the republic. Jacksonians feared Catholics would dilute the Revolution's ideology by giving their allegiance to the Pope instead of to the United States.

Native-born Americans were sincerely worried about the survival of their republic with so many groups coming to America that did not share their British roots, who spoke different languages (or the heavy, difficult-to-understand brogue of the Irish), celebrated different cultures, and worshipped in Catholic churches rather than Protestant. Americans questioned whether the newcomers would be able to understand the foundational precepts of the Constitution and give their loyalty to their new home. The Whig Party was nativist at heart but had taken no firm political action on the issue. Out of frustration, a group of New Yorkers founded the short-lived American Republican Party in June of 1843. Many nativist groups became prominent on the public stage about the time the Saxons arrived in the United States. The year 1844 was very successful for them as several of their candidates were elected in New York. Philadelphia was also a center for the nativist movement, which posted placards "throughout the city calling on the Protestant churches to array themselves against Popery by supporting Clay and the local nativistic candidates."<sup>500</sup> In spite of all these political strategies, Clay lost the presidential election, but the nativists continued to make it more difficult for immigrants to participate in politics by attempting to lengthen the years required for naturalization from five to twenty-one years and thereby attempting to thwart

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<sup>499</sup> Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 124.

<sup>500</sup> Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 202.

potential immigrant political power. However, in the end, they never succeeded in elongating the naturalization process.

The movement became ugly in 1844 during the bloody Philadelphia riots between nativists and the Irish. Unfortunately, fiery sermons issuing from Philadelphia pulpits warned of an imminent Catholic threat to American faith and freedom and stirred the already growing tensions. On May 6 an American Republican meeting was intentionally held in the heart of the Irish community in the suburb of Kensington; riots broke out and an American named George Schiffler was killed.<sup>501</sup> The *Native American* newspaper fanned the flames by calling for revenge: “We now call on our fellow-citizens, who regard free institutions, whether they be native or adopted, to arm. Our liberties are now to be fought for; let us not be slack in our preparations.”<sup>502</sup> Hungry for a fight, nativists marched again into Kensington the following day, at which point a terrible day of fighting began. Thirty Irish homes were burned that day, and the following day Saint Michael’s Catholic Church was destroyed. Citizens across the rest of America quickly expressed their horror over these actions, and public opposition of radical nativism grew deafening. Violence such as this against immigrants underlined the reasons the foreign-born preferred the trusted acceptance of the Democratic Party.

Historian Ray Allen Billington noted that nativist parties had three primary goals: “(1) to change the naturalization laws in such a way that foreigners would have to dwell in the United States twenty-one years before being naturalized, (2) to restrict authority over

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<sup>501</sup> Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 223.

<sup>502</sup> *Native American*, May 7, 1844, cited in Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 225.

naturalization to the federal courts, and (3) to reform the gross abuses arising from party connection.”<sup>503</sup> While the Mexican War was in progress, the nativist movement went dormant, but immigration came under attack once more when Charles B. Allen of New York established the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner in 1849, which quickly attained the name of the American Party or the Know Nothings due to members of the party frequently claiming they knew nothing about the groups. Prospective participants were required to have Protestant parents, not be married to a Roman Catholic, and to vote only for native-born American candidates. They were surprisingly successful in the fall elections of 1854 when they managed to elect 75 congressmen who promised to oppose Catholic and immigrant political rights. The Whigs, on the other hand, had been so soundly beaten in the presidential election of 1852 that they turned to the Know Nothings for help in defeating the immigrant vote. Even with this coalition, the Know Nothings evaporated in the face of rising tensions between slave and non-slave states as the nativists split over the issue. Eventually, anti-slavery remnants of the Know Nothings joined in 1860 with remnants of the Whig party to form the also short-lived Constitutional Union Party, which nominated John Bell of Tennessee for president. When the Whigs publicly aligned with the Know Nothings, they ensured the loss of the immigrant vote, which helped put Bell dead last of the four candidates for the presidency. In Missouri, the Democratic candidate, Stephen A. Douglas, won the national election, while Abraham Lincoln came in last. In Perry County, where the Saxons adamantly remained Democrats, Douglas won in a landslide.

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<sup>503</sup> Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 203.

Within the German immigrant community, the political status quo was disrupted by a vocal group of newly-arrived German revolutionaries. The already established tension between German liberals and German conservatives intensified with the arrival of the Forty-Eighters, who flooded America shortly after the failed revolutions of 1848 in Europe. Revolutionaries who took to the streets in Prussia initially appeared to have won their revolution for nationalism and democracy when King Frederick William IV promised them a constitution written by representatives of the people. On May 13, 1848, the Reichstag was instituted, and on May 18 an elected assembly met at Frankfurt with the intention of establishing a provisional government. But the dominant Prussian military mindset proved to be too pervasive, and it became apparent that many of the citizens were more afraid of disorder from the revolutionaries than the potential decrease of personal liberty. Political theorist Carl J. Friedrich believes, “the dual task of unity and freedom proved too much” for Prussians to handle.<sup>504</sup> Ultimately, the military leaders in Berlin suppressed this attempt at constitutional democracy and instead chose to govern with an authoritarian constitution. The Forty-Eighters fought for “liberty, democracy, and national unity.”<sup>505</sup> While the revolutionaries of 1848 elected a provisional democratic government in Frankfurt, Germany, reactionary rulers in Berlin and Vienna successfully suppressed them, partly because German citizens did little to support the idealistic revolutionaries.<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> Carl J. Friedrich, “The European Background,” in *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848*, ed. A. E. Zucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 6.

<sup>505</sup> Friedrich, “The European Background,” 9.

<sup>506</sup> LaVern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), 50.

Defeated in their own country, they carried their disappointments and their ideals directly to the United States and other countries. Unlike the Saxons, who remained relatively silent on politics, the Forty-Eighters quickly made their voices heard. “Intellectually intolerant,” LaVern Rippley observes, “the Forty-Eighters were gifted and wealthy enough to make their opinions felt.”<sup>507</sup> An American nativist complained that “they bring forward all the exploded European heresies,” referring to their socialism and atheism.<sup>508</sup>

The Forty-Eighters were more radical versions of earlier German liberals, men such as the founder and editors of the *Anzeiger des Westens*. Both groups consistently believed that they embodied a higher degree of intelligence and culture than Americans. They perceived themselves as freethinkers, the *avante garde* of society, and the pursuers of true liberty. For them, that included liberation from organized religion. Ironically, part of the reason German radicals opposed religion was based on their encounters with the state-controlled church in Germany, which were precisely the same type of experiences the Saxons encountered. The Forty-Eighters perceived “religion as the intellectual weapon of a clergy closely allied with the reactionary forces of the bureaucracy, the army, and the vested land interests.”<sup>509</sup> They felt controlled by the “ecclesiastical paternalism” of the German government.<sup>510</sup> The Old Lutherans left Saxony because of their disgust with the same system, but they fled to seek a place to worship without government intervention, while

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<sup>507</sup> Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 52.

<sup>508</sup> Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848—German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urban, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 107.

<sup>509</sup> Friedrich, “The European Background,” 21.

<sup>510</sup> Carl E. Schneider, *The German Church on the American Frontier: A Study in the Rise of Religion among the Germans of the West* (St. Louis, MO: Eden Publishing House, 1939), 6.

German radicals sought freedom from all religious influence. As “outspoken unbelievers,” they “impaired their political influence in America and offended church-going Germans.”<sup>511</sup>

Instead of bonding with the German-American community, the Forty-Eighters criticized those who arrived in America before 1848 by derisively categorizing them as the “Grays,” for their supposedly out-dated attitudes. The “Greens,” as the Forty-Eighters referred to themselves, held on to the hope that Germany would “see the light,” become united, and establish a democracy, whereupon they could abandon their “temporary exile” and return to the Fatherland.<sup>512</sup> The Grays, with whom the Saxons were lumped, had long since made their decision to remain in the United States and contribute to the nation in whatever capacity they could. The Saxons had no intention of returning to Saxony.

Both Americans and German-Americans were upset by the behavior of the Forty-Eighters. The so-called “Grays” were alarmed that the Forty-Eighters rushed in without knowing much about America and yet determined “to overthrow them and bring upon us the immorality and disorder of Europe.”<sup>513</sup> Many German Lutherans were “openly hostile” and “upset by freethinking radicalism.”<sup>514</sup> They called the Forty-Eighters “arrogant, petty, blunt, intolerant.”<sup>515</sup> Greens burst onto the American political scene before fully understanding the

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<sup>511</sup> Hildegard Binder, “Adjustment to the United States,” in *The Forty-Eighters*, ed. A. E. Zucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 55.

<sup>512</sup> Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Immigrants in American History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 135.

<sup>513</sup> Levine, *The Spirit of 1848*, 108.

<sup>514</sup> Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 73.

<sup>515</sup> Wittke, *The German-Language Press*, 73.

precepts of American government. On social issues, they pushed buttons that irritated both the Americans and the Grays. “Fundamentalist church leaders,” pens Rippley, “therefore, instinctively resented the Forty-Eighters for their activities,” such as theaters, *der Gesangverein* (singing societies), and gymnastic groups.<sup>516</sup> The Forty-Eighters set out to change America, although some of their proposed reforms, such as universal suffrage and eight-hour work days, were admirable. Others, such as the abolition of Sunday laws and taxation of church property, went against American beliefs.<sup>517</sup>

Sabbatarianism was already a point of contention between Americans and Germans and the Forty-Eighters only stirred the pot. Germans defied the Sunday laws by establishing beer gardens outside the city limits of cities such as St. Louis and New York and Cincinnati. Part of the Sunday ritual for Germans was attending church and then meeting with friends and family in the local beer garden. Americans believed Sundays should be spent in quiet and self-reflection and certainly not drinking beer or dancing or at the theater. Henry Boernstein defied the Sunday laws for a different reason on July 4, 1852, when he led Germans out of St. Louis and into the countryside to celebrate the Fourth. The city’s leadership had decided to delay the holiday festivities until Monday so that they could maintain the solemn nature of Sunday worship. Boernstein was an atheist, so his demonstration had nothing to do with religion but everything to do with the restrictions of the Sunday laws, which he strongly opposed. Historian Luke Ritter argues that Sabbatarianism struck at the Germans’ “very rhythm of life, the weekly cycle upon which

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<sup>516</sup> Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America*, 53.

<sup>517</sup> Thompson, *The Forty-Eighters in Politics*, 115.

people ordered their days into sacred and secular periods of work, worship, penance, and play.”<sup>518</sup> To the Saxons and staid American Protestants, the Greens were “anticlerical, agnostic, intellectual,” everything the Saxons had hoped to leave behind when they emigrated.<sup>519</sup> The Greens did not ease the tension by calling the Grays “barbarians without culture.”<sup>520</sup> An anonymous American observed in 1856 that the Germans isolated themselves by “their strongest passions, love of beer and hatred of the Irish.”<sup>521</sup> In addition to all this, Germans hated Germans.

Greens and Grays did share an unmitigated disapproval of slavery, but although the Greens would later adamantly oppose slavery, they did not push for its elimination after they first arrived, even though one German referred to slavery as “a political and moral cancer,” and many purposely settled in non-slavery states when they emigrated.<sup>522</sup> The prevalent feeling among German immigrants was that if the slaves were freed, they should not remain in the United States. Most supported the colonization scheme, which Lincoln also supported for many years. The Saxons had years of experience living in the midst of slaveowners. They were fully aware of the “peculiar institution” when they considered Missouri as their final destination, but Gottfried Duden’s report on his stay in Missouri convinced them to make St. Louis their initial destination. Their first eye-witness encounter with slavery

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<sup>518</sup> Luke Ritter, “Sunday Regulation and the Formation of German American Identity in St. Louis, 1840-1860,” *Missouri Historical Review* 107, no. 1 October 2012: 28.

<sup>519</sup> Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America*, 53.

<sup>520</sup> Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America*, 53.

<sup>521</sup> Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America*, 54.

<sup>522</sup> Levine, *The Spirit of 1848*, 149.

occurred when they paused in New Orleans before traveling up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. After Pastor Loeber witnessed the sale and treatment of slaves in the city, he wrote that the “heart must be filled with sadness and pain at sight of the misery of the unhappy slaves and the vulgar behavior of those visiting in this strange land.”<sup>523</sup> The Saxons were gratified that America would provide the religious freedom they were seeking, but upon reaching the shores of the United States, they were visually confronted by the physical lack of freedom for America’s black population.

Saxon Lutherans were appalled by the practice of slavery and wanted no part of it when they settled in Missouri, although they settled in a state where they would constantly encounter slaves in their everyday lives. On the very day Stephan’s steamboat arrived in St. Louis, the *Daily Missouri Republican* ran several ads for slave sales. One was for the sale of “eight Negro slaves, of the estate of William Shannon, deceased.”<sup>524</sup> A full description of the slaves followed, in which were listed a woman aged about 45 years, two other women aged 26 and 23 years, two boys aged 18 and 12, and three girls aged 10, 8, and 5. There is evidence of slavery on the grounds of the Bergt home, where Stephan briefly resided in Perry County. Two small buildings behind the house are believed to be cabins used by the slaves of the previous owner. No matter to what extent the Saxons opposed the institution of slavery, they were rarely abolitionists, although the Forty-Eighters became more animated in their dislike of slavery about the time of the formation of the Republican Party. Rural Germans usually voted Democratic, and the Saxons did not live very far from the Catholic

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<sup>523</sup> W. H. T. Dau, ed. *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 12.

<sup>524</sup> St. Louis *Daily Missouri Republican*, February 19, 1839.

seminary in Perryville, where slaves were used to help the priests with daily tasks. A basic distaste for politics pervaded conservative Germans, which makes it difficult to ascertain their position on these issues. The best answer lies in their reaction to the War, that they were willing to join in the fight to abolish the institution, and that, from the start, they found slavery to be incompatible with liberty and freedom.

Although he did not own slaves, Archibald Hager frequently recorded incidents involving slaves and masters who lived in Perry County.<sup>525</sup> In his characteristically terse style, Hager mentioned slavery many times in his journal, but without any overt judgment of the institution. When he spoke of a few slaves who were whipped, he was careful to say the punishment was according to the law or he explained the serious nature of the slave's infraction. In December 1857, for example, five slaves were whipped for stealing. Several attempted to escape, such as one of Joseph Abernathy's "negrows" in March 1848. Hager actually caught one of Abernathy's slaves, Miles, in June 1851, but he ran away again later in the month. Other slaves moved freely around the county. As historian Diane Mutti Burke points out, "slaves roamed the countryside doing their owners' business and participating in the extensive slave hiring system found in the state."<sup>526</sup> Furthermore, "both slaveholding and nonslaveholding Missourians were quite familiar with local bondspeople."<sup>527</sup> Another of Abernathy's slaves, Bob, was permitted to travel to California. When he returned in December 1852 he was able to buy his wife Mahala's freedom for \$600.

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<sup>525</sup> Archibald Little Hager, *Diary in Hand of Archibald Hager, 1814-1887*. State Historical Society of Missouri Collection, Kansas City, MO

<sup>526</sup> Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 240.

<sup>527</sup> Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 241.

In St. Louis, where a portion of the Saxon immigrants resided, historian Adam Arenson speaks of a vicious slave system and the public lynchings of free blacks.<sup>528</sup> St. Louis became known as a place of violence. Historian James Neal Primm notes that a former slave “wrote that St. Louis was noted for its barbarity; and there were examples of extreme cruelty.”<sup>529</sup> Lynch’s Slave pen, which held slaves “crowded by the hundreds, sold by the thousands,” was located on Locust Street.<sup>530</sup> William A. Brown, a fugitive slave, wrote that after his master moved to St. Louis he bought a farm outside of the city and hired “Friend Haskell” as his overseer. He described one of Haskell’s “Virginia plays,” in which he “would take up a chair and throw it at a servant; and in his more rational moments, when he wished to chastise one, he would tie them up in the smoke-house and whip them.”<sup>531</sup> Such was the treatment slaves in St. Louis and on farms received consistently. For abolitionists attempting to protect the black people it became increasingly difficult to speak out publicly against the institution without fear of violence. Elijah Lovejoy, who continually complained in his newspaper about the blatant violence in St. Louis, lost several of his printing presses during mob actions against him and eventually his life while he was protecting yet another new printing press at his office across the river in Alton, Illinois, on November 7, 1837.

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<sup>528</sup> Adam Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 85-86.

<sup>529</sup> James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing, 1981), 187.

<sup>530</sup> Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic*, 22.

<sup>531</sup> William A. Brown, *Narrative of William A. Brown, A Fugitive Slave* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1847), Kindle e-book, loc. 140.

While Hager made no mention of his German neighbors in Perry County, except for a few references to the “Dutch,” the Saxons did not mention the close proximity of slaves, even though, as has been discussed, they must have seen slaves traversing the county. Perry County’s best known slaveholder owned the historic Bush place, which was located on the Mississippi River just thirteen miles from Perryville, the county seat. The farm had a busy steamboat landing site. The original owner of the land was French, followed by Francis Jones, Jr., who owned thirty-nine slaves, the largest number in the county.<sup>532</sup> In 1984 the whipping post still stood as testimony to the institution that once flourished on this spot not so very far from the Saxons’ land. When the Saxons first settled in Perry County, all four non-German families living in the little settlement of Wittenberg had slaves. The United States 1840 census reported that out of a population of 5,760 in Perry County, 778 were slaves, which was a fairly substantial number. A short history of Wittenberg reports that a Robert Slaughter owned a wood yard on the river where “he employed six hands at the wood yard, and he had seven slaves, ranging from three months to 25 years.”<sup>533</sup> The likely place Slaughter employed his slaves “would have been at the wharf when the steamboats were loaded and unloaded.”<sup>534</sup>

The Forty-Eighters disliked slavery, just as the Saxons did, but they did not loudly oppose it until the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which was proposed by Stephen A. Douglas in 1854. The senator was a speculator in western lands and wanted to see the West

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<sup>532</sup> Charles Weiss, “Perry County’s Most Historic Place,” *The Republic Monitor*, November 11, 1984.

<sup>533</sup> “Wittenberg: Perry County, Missouri” (Perryville, MO: Perry County Historical Society), 13.

<sup>534</sup> “Wittenberg,” 13.

developed, urging a transcontinental railroad be built across the region to speed its growth. Under the act, those who settled the region would decide by popular vote if they wanted to become a free or a slave state. Opposition exploded after the South demanded that an amendment be added to the bill which specifically repealed the 1820 Missouri Compromise on slavery. Many Americans who opposed slavery considered the Missouri Compromise a permanent agreement to limit the expansion of slavery into yet undeveloped lands. The compromise was extremely important to Benton, who also felt it was a promise that the nation would perpetually remain half free and half slave, which was Benton's answer to decreasing the evident and growing strife between the North and the South.

Slaveowners initially felt the Kansas-Nebraska bill would work in their favor and allow them to broaden the boundaries of slavery. Popular sovereignty may have initially sounded like a workable arrangement, but, in action, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was a disaster which launched a vicious war in Kansas. Missouri slaveowners worried that a free Kansas would be too enticing for slaves seeking their freedom, so Missourians crossed the border in March 1855 when the first elections for territorial legislators were held and illegally voted for slavery. Claiborne Fox Jackson, who would become the governor of Missouri in 1860, actually bragged about doing it, as did David Rice Atchison, a former United States senator. The parameters of the future contest to keep Missouri a slave state were already being set.

Liberal German immigrants quickly opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which had instigated an eruption of liberal fury. *The Free West*, a Chicago newspaper, observed that "no class citizens have manifested more indignation...than our immigrant and

native Germans,” who, at one point, burned Stephen Douglas in effigy in Chicago.<sup>535</sup>

According to historian Bruce Levine, the Forty-Eighters were the “most plebeian radical democrats,” whereas Germans who had been in America longer tended to yearn for the status quo.<sup>536</sup> As a more “plebeian group,” they were strong proponents of free labor and abhorred the idea of spreading slavery into the undeveloped lands of the West. Nor did they want slaves competing with freemen for work, which was a sentiment shared by laborers across the country. They worried, writes Levine, that “the coveted soil of the West would be preempted by a homegrown aristocracy [Southern slaveowners] that cordially despised free labor.”<sup>537</sup>

St. Louis itself was an example of what could happen when free labor and slave labor competed. The influx of German and Irish laborers undercut the use of slave labor, as is reflected in the drop of the percentage of slaveowners in St. Louis from ten percent in 1840 to less than one percent in 1860.<sup>538</sup> James Neal Primm comments that “the vast majority of St. Louisians had never owned slaves, but antislavery rhetoric was unpopular, and the decline of slavery reflected economic realities rather than humanitarian sentiment.”<sup>539</sup> This was a key turning point in German political loyalties, which would affect the balance of power when the Civil War began. Most Forty-Eighters had not yet committed themselves to either of the political parties, but when the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed, they

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<sup>535</sup> Levine, *The Spirit of 1848*, 156.

<sup>536</sup> Levine, *The Spirit of 1848*, 158.

<sup>537</sup> Levine, *The Spirit of 1848*, 154.

<sup>538</sup> Primm, Introduction in Rowan, *Germans for a Free Missouri*, 6.

<sup>539</sup> Primm, Introduction in Rowan, *Germans for a Free Missouri*, 6.

flocked to the Republican Party. They were particularly upset by an amendment by Senator John Clayton which insinuated that Congress preferred slaves rather than immigrants to occupy new lands. In addition, Southern Democrats consistently blocked the Homestead Act, which would have been very beneficial for immigrants seeking small farms of their own in the United States.

Thomas Hart Benton also disapproved of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. For years, Benton looked to the Missouri Compromise as the means to keep the Union intact. He based his political career on attaining “a tranquil union achieved by restoring the Missouri Compromise.”<sup>540</sup> Most of the German press and the Democratic Party supported him in this position. Although Benton died in 1858, two years before the Civil War began, a harbinger of the impending conflict occurred when Benton broke with the “Central Clique,” a “planter’s clique led by Claiborne Fox Jackson, chiefly over the slavery question.”<sup>541</sup> The Clique championed John C. Calhoun’s insistence that slavery should be allowed in all American territories, but Benton feared this meant the dissolution of the Missouri Compromise. Frank Blair, Jr., another former Kentuckian, continued to carry the banner of Benton’s politics after his death, but as part of the Republican rather than the Democratic Party. Blair’s father had been a prominent member of President Andrew Jackson’s “Kitchen Cabinet,” but in 1856 he left the Democratic Party to become one of the founders of the Republican Party. The Blair family was known for being “clannish, contentious, and

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<sup>540</sup> Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 8.

<sup>541</sup> Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 6.

politically adept at wielding an immense influence.”<sup>542</sup> This stubborn contentiousness was applied to the fight for the Union in one form or another. The father helped establish the Republican Party, and his namesake fought to keep St. Louis in the Union; both depended heavily on help from German immigrants. Abraham Lincoln realized the importance of their support also, which is the reason he purchased the German newspaper, the *Illinois Staatsanzeiger* on May 30, 1859, when the owner faced financial disaster. Lincoln thus ensured that the paper would remain pro-Republican.<sup>543</sup> Several other German newspapers also supported the Republican Party, including Heinrich Boernstein, Carl Berneys, and Carl Daenzer, who were all editors of the *Anzeiger des Westen* at various phases in their lives. German newspapers consistently supported Benton, and then, later, John Charles Frémont, and Lincoln.

However, German liberals were not warmly welcomed into the nascent Republican Party because their reputation for being severe critics of American culture preceded them. During the Panic of 1857, a critical account of the Grays and Americans appeared in the *Anzeiger des Westens* on October 22, which was written by the ever vocal Friedrich Muench, under his pseudonym “Far West.” In the first paragraph, he chastised any Germans threatened by bankruptcy because they had “flown too close to the blazing sun of credit and have singed their wings—or they are those who have surrendered themselves to the American ‘show’ of luxury and overconsumption and have paid out more than they could

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<sup>542</sup> Hardy A. Kemp, *About Brigadier Nathaniel Lyon: United States Army Volunteers and Wilson’s Creek* (Prairie Village, KS: privately printed, 1979), 12.

<sup>543</sup> Thompson, “The Forty-Eighters in Politics,” 141.

bring in.”<sup>544</sup> When he spoke of the Americanization process, it was with equal disdain. The way to become American, he advised, was to avoid all their many faults because the result of such an action is “to give oneself up to the American style of loafing; to wander the streets spangled with gold but with empty heads, hearts, and pockets; to participate in swindles of all descriptions; to waste one’s talents and energies on the false values of lotteries; to be obsessed by humbug; and to lose one’s own mother tongue and pass the day mangling English instead.”<sup>545</sup> With equal disdain he wrote,

a resurrected, truly free Germany, England, and North America united in close association could force the rest of the world to strive for humane institutions and clear away the last vestiges of barbarism. The more the German element in British life and, most of all, in North American life asserts itself, the more it assumes decisive influence over the future course of human history.”<sup>546</sup>

“Far West” was obviously scornful of the process of assimilation.

In May of 1860, Muench was sent to Chicago to report on the second Republican Convention. He appears to have gained some wisdom on the relationship between German immigrants and Americans, although his never-ending praise for all things German was still prevalent. Bearing in mind that he had, at this point, been in the United States since 1830, this was his summary of the German contribution to the Republican convention: “In this convention the Germans have won a position, have achieved a weight, have attracted attention to their views, which no foreign element has ever won in any country in the world.”<sup>547</sup> His assessment of how this was achieved was even more interesting when

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<sup>544</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, October 22, 1857.

<sup>545</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, October 22, 1857.

<sup>546</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, October 22, 1857.

<sup>547</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, May 19, 1860.

compared to the previously quoted article in 1857, for he now preached the importance of patience and tact, two qualities that he usually lacked. The German delegates avoided a break with Americans understandably poised against them by deciding to act with “energetic and measured activity.”<sup>548</sup> He explained why this approach was successful in an article written after he returned to St. Louis. “During the first days of the convention week,” he reported, “there was a great deal of talk about the German caucus, and the idea that a German rump was trying to control the whole Republican convention and dictate terms that excited the highest degree of hostility. If this feeling had persisted it would have been impossible for the German delegate to have any influence at all.”<sup>549</sup> To avoid a stalemate (or political defeat), the Germans clearly stated to the Republican leadership that all they wanted was a statement supporting liberal immigration policies in the platform. Considering that some of the nativists from the Whig party had merged into the Republican Party, this was not an unreasonable request and was an important signal that the Republicans would be pro-immigrant. While liberal Germans became active in the party, the Saxons remained concerned about Nativist leanings and, therefore, some, including Walther, were very hesitant to support the Republicans.

The 1860 convention was a critical one for the fledgling Republican Party. Two of the platform planks were nicknamed the “Dutch planks,” because men such as Carl Schurz worked hard to make them a part of the Republican platform. One was the resolution Muench mentioned, which protected the rights of citizens at home and abroad. The other

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<sup>548</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, May 19, 1860.

<sup>549</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, June 14, 1860.

was a promise that, upon winning the election, the Homestead Act would immediately become law. After he won the 1860 election, Lincoln appointed Carl Schurz as minister to Spain, and Heinrich Boernstein was selected to be the consul in Bremen. The latter assignment came after Boernstein served in Missouri's Wide Awakes and also in the initial battles in Missouri, including Wilson's Creek. These two men were direct opposites in temperament. Schurz fought in the 1848 revolution, was imprisoned, and then managed to escape to America, where he devoted himself to the service of his new country. For Schurz, America was "a new world, a free world, a world of great ideas and purposes."<sup>550</sup> Eight years after arriving in the United States he was a delegate for Wisconsin at the 1860 Republican convention, where he gave his wholehearted support to Abraham Lincoln. During the Civil War he served as a brigadier general for volunteers and fought in several of the most devastating battles of the War, including Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. Schurz was a consistent advocate of integrity and honesty in government. Heinrich Boernstein, who was a close friend of Blair's, was a fireball of emotion, all of it aimed at the preservation of the Union. His articles were often aimed at "organized religion and establishment politics," but, early on, he anticipated the need to align with the Republican Party.<sup>551</sup> During the Civil War, he was a colonel of volunteers until President Lincoln assigned him to the post of ambassador to Bremen. It was said of him that he was "part revolutionary, part bigot, part vulture, and wholly sensationalist."<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> Friedrich, "The European Background," 16.

<sup>551</sup> Steven Rowan, ed. and trans., *Germans for a Free Missouri: Translations from the St. Louis Radical Press, 1857-1862* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 40.

<sup>552</sup> James Neal Primm, introduction and commentary for *Germans for a Free Missouri* (Rowan, ed.), 37.

Something else happened at the 1860 convention that Muench disclosed in his articles. He recognized in Abraham Lincoln, whom he said “is truly a man of the people,” the reflection of Andrew Jackson, the legendary hero of the people.<sup>553</sup> He heartily endorsed the candidacy of Abraham Lincoln because of the similarities he perceived in the two men. He noted that since Jackson there had not been another president from the West, another man who represented the common people. In his own way Muench understood that “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” was a promise to all Americans. And he believed, as Thomas Hart Benton had, that the West was the hope of the future and was of more importance to the political health of the Union than the East. Muench understood that:

the sympathy of the masses (which alone decides elections here) is with the man who once “walked barefoot driving his ox across the prairies of the West,” who then raised himself to the same level as the greatest in his country through this man on whom no corrupt clients depend, who is honorable as he is simple, as open as he is unshakably solid, who stands before the people impervious to intrigue, who may not *bring along* the most elevated statesmanlike capacities one usually obtains in aristocratic circles (which derive from a long and thorough education, hence depending on riches and social position) rather than in the Western primeval forests.<sup>554</sup>

Abraham Lincoln, the new Jackson from the West, was about to take the helm of a divided nation.

Southern sympathizers and Union supporters scrambled to gain control of the St. Louis arsenal at the Jefferson Barracks before the war officially began. In February of 1861 Captain Nathaniel Lyon, whose previous assignment was Fort Riley, Kansas, was sent to St. Louis to protect the arsenal. He and Francis Blair were alike in their devotion to the

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<sup>553</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, Chicago, May 19, 1860.

<sup>554</sup> St. Louis *Anzeiger des Westens*, Chicago, May 19, 1860.

Union and quickly joined forces. Lyon's extensive military experience included fighting in the Mexican War, in which he participated in the invasion of northern Mexico, eventually joining General Zachary Taylor in Monterrey. He made captain "for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Contreras and Churubusco, Mexico."<sup>555</sup> After the war he was in California for five years and then was sent to Fort Riley, Kansas in 1854. He was staunchly abolitionist and was convinced that the institution of slavery darkened the future of America. He was already convinced that it was not possible that slavery could be removed from states where it was already established, and he was vehemently opposed to its extension into the new territories. As a soldier in "Bleeding Kansas," he was ordered to remain out of the fray but, personally, he pledged to oppose any pro-slavery Kansas legislature. During this period of his life he wrote the following in a letter home to Connecticut: "I despair of living peaceably with our southern brethren" and he prophesied "ultimate sectional strife."<sup>556</sup>

The newly elected Missouri governor, Claiborne F. Jackson, shocked the state, but not the Southern-leaning Missouri legislature, of whom 80% were slaveowners, with his inaugural address in which he urged Missouri to stand with her sister slave states.<sup>557</sup> His first allegiance, he insisted, was to his state. Luckily for the Unionists, the legislature opted for a separate convention to decide whether Missouri should secede or not. The so-called "Secession Convention" met in Jefferson City on February 28, 1861, elected soon-to-be Confederate general Sterling Price president of the group, and then adjourned to meet in

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<sup>555</sup> Kemp, *About Brigadier Nathaniel Lyon*, 33.

<sup>556</sup> Kemp, *About Brigadier Nathaniel Lyon*, 44.

<sup>557</sup> Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 247.

St. Louis on March 4 and 9. No known secessionists were elected by the people to represent them at this convention, however. Those elected were either staunch Unionists or “conditional” Unionists, meaning they wished to remain in the Union but hoped to protect the institutions of the state, which included slavery.<sup>558</sup> Unionists in St. Louis had sweetened the pot by allowing free use of the Mercantile Library building and free transportation from Jefferson City, where the secessionists were much stronger, to their own city, where the convention adjourned on March 22 after voting in favor of the Union.

On April 12, South Carolina fired on Ft. Sumter, and on April 15, President Lincoln called for Missouri to provide four regiments of volunteers. Governor Jackson refused to comply with the order, deeming it illegal and unconstitutional. In a fit of rage, the governor dismissed the president’s order as “inhuman, diabolical, and cannot be complied with.”<sup>559</sup> On April 20, men from Jackson and Clay counties captured the United States arsenal in Liberty, Missouri. The governor then looked with barely disguised interest at the arsenal in St. Louis, which was much larger than the one in Liberty. Governor Jackson ordered “the militia throughout the State to go into camp in their respective districts on May 3.”<sup>560</sup> Seven hundred men under General Daniel Frost, commander of the state militia, encamped at a “beautiful grove just within the western city limits of St. Louis, which was named Camp Jackson in honor of the governor.”<sup>561</sup> The secessionists established Camp Jackson for the

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<sup>558</sup> William Riley Brooksher, *Bloody Hill: The Civil War Battle of Wilson’s Creek* (Washington: Brassey’s, 1995), 37.

<sup>559</sup> Brooksher, *Bloody Hill*, 42.

<sup>560</sup> Eugene Morrow Violette, *A History of Missouri* (1918; repr. Cape Girardeau, MO: Ramfre Press, 1960), 337.

<sup>561</sup> Violette, *A History of Missouri*, 338.

Missouri State Guard, giving the streets names such as “Beauregard” and “Davis.” The intent and the sympathies of those in Camp Jackson were clear to all involved.

Unionists in St. Louis waited impatiently in May of 1861 for the government to take decisive actions to prevent Missouri from seceding. Missouri was important to the Union for several reasons. It contained needed manpower, mineral and agricultural resources and was a central hub for all trails heading West. In addition, the state’s geographic location on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers was essential for maintaining the Union’s lines of communication between its various forts and transporting needed supplies. William Riley Brooksher believed that losing Missouri, although it was a slave state, would have been psychologically detrimental to the Union because “north of the old Missouri Compromise was the line of demarcation for slavery.”<sup>562</sup> South Carolina left the Union immediately after it was announced that Lincoln was elected, and was followed by six additional Southern states. Months passed, and the destiny of Missouri remained undecided. Other states, such as Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, and Arkansas, also hung in the balance. Captain Lyon, steadfastly pro-Union, managed to protect the arms and ammunition only because Blair surreptitiously managed to get Brigadier General William S. Harney, Lyon’s superior, out of the city. Both men suspected Harney of Southern leanings and did not trust him to stand firm against the secessionists in Jefferson City. While the general was gone, the captain managed to move part of the ammunition over state lines to Illinois. Blair, who was a colonel at that point, could clearly see that war was imminent. Behind the scenes, he was preparing to protect St. Louis and keep the city and the state in the Union. He was in charge of the First

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<sup>562</sup> Brooksher, *Bloody Hill*, 30.

Regiment of Missouri Volunteers and continued to be Lyon's steady and daring partner in fighting for the Union. Both men depended heavily on the "Wide Awakes," who were mainly German, in preparation for possible conflict with the governor's men.

As the city waited with apprehension and tensions increased, Lyon and Blair waited for the right time to capture the secessionist camp. With General Harney still out of town, the two men decided it was time to tackle the problem of Camp Jackson. In the very same issue of the *Post* already quoted, was an account of what happened on May 10, when Captain Lyon approached Camp Jackson with between 6,000 and 7,000 inexperienced soldiers, with the exception of German veterans of the Revolution of 1848.<sup>563</sup> As a division traveled to the outskirts of town, the *Westliche Post* reported that "we saw old men weeping tears of joy, and everyone gripped his weapon tightly."<sup>564</sup> What followed was an eye witness account of that fatal day of May 10, 1861. The journalist compared the event to those he'd seen during the Revolution of 1848: "We saw few scenes of this sort in 1848 or 1849, either in Paris or in the Baden-Palatine Revolution. It was one of those splendid moments when emotion glowing deep in the heart of the masses suddenly breaks into wild flames."<sup>565</sup>

The German presence at the pivotal event was substantial. His report was in the paper the day after the clash between Unionists and secessionists. Somewhere between two and three in the afternoon, the news spread rapidly throughout St. Louis that "United States troops were marching on the secessionist encampment."<sup>566</sup> Captain Lyon arranged for his

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<sup>563</sup> Brooksher, *Bloody Hill*, 59.

<sup>564</sup> St. Louis *Westliche Post*, May 15, 1861.

<sup>565</sup> St. Louis *Westliche Post*, May 15, 1861.

<sup>566</sup> St. Louis *Westliche Post*, May 11, 1861.

troops to almost simultaneously surround the camp on all sides. General Frost was commanded to surrender unconditionally and give up all the weapons, the cannon, and any other military equipment within the camp. A large number of Germans were part of the Union troops who marched their secessionist prisoners to the Arsenal that day. Emotions ran high and many of the secessionists took their anger out on anything they had at hand, destroying drums or mess kits, while cursing the Dutch and yelling hurrahs for Jeff Davis.

Large numbers of observers pressed in to see what was happening and undoubtedly created more turmoil as the secessionists flew the white flag of surrender above the camp. When the column stopped at Olive Street to regroup and the last captive passed by, someone fired shots into the group, while others threw rocks. The reporter for the *Westliche Post* wrote that “there is hardly any other possibility than that the whole thing was planned by a misled gang of secessionists to precipitate bloodshed and to excite hostility against the Unionists among the people.”<sup>567</sup> The reporter “stood perhaps seventy or eighty paces from the place where the first shot was fired.”<sup>568</sup> After the shooting stopped, he counted fourteen dead and about forty wounded, including women and children. “On the military side,” he continued, “three soldiers of the Second (Boernstein) Regiment were wounded and Captain Blandowsky of the Third (Sigel) Regiment was mortally wounded. One volunteer of Company H of the Sigel Regiment was killed, and Nicolaus Knobloch of the regulars.”<sup>569</sup> All of the latter victims were Germans, but a worse toll was taken among the spectators.

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<sup>567</sup> St. Louis *Westliche Post*, May 11, 1861.

<sup>568</sup> St. Louis *Westliche Post*, May 11, 1861.

<sup>569</sup> St. Louis *Westliche Post*, May 11, 1861.

Brooksher reported that a drunk shot at the troops after a soldier attempted to grab his gun.<sup>570</sup> There were additional shots from the crowd, and the troops returned the fire after Captain Blandowski was wounded. According to Brooksher, the final count of fatalities was twenty-eight civilians, including a baby, three prisoners, and two soldiers.<sup>571</sup>

“Those responsible for the blood that flowed,” the journalist wrote, “were the fanatics who made this cowardly attack on quietly marching troops from the middle of a peaceful and unarmed crowd, as if from behind a shield.”<sup>572</sup> Secessionists blamed the “Dutch” for this conflict, and for several days snipers targeted Germans. Southern sympathizers hated German, often foreign-born, soldiers, for their solid support of the Union when so many had been in the United States for only a few years. In the more prestigious parts of the city where Southern-leaning citizens often lived, rumors spread that the Germans were bent on vengeance. One person commented that “if Unionism means such atrocious deeds as have been witnessed in St. Louis, I am no longer a Union man.”<sup>573</sup> All these fears were not based on facts. The Germans never considered indiscriminately targeting St. Louis citizens. This would be the last threat against St. Louis during the war until 1864, when General Sterling Price attempted to capture St. Louis in order to discredit Lincoln in the eyes of the northern public as the 1864 election approached.

Abraham Lincoln worried that Lyon’s hot temper would ignite the increasing tempest in St. Louis. Lyon had already pushed Sterling Price so far that Price gave up his

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<sup>570</sup> Brooksher, *Bloody Hill*, 62.

<sup>571</sup> Brooksher, *Bloody Hill*, 63.

<sup>572</sup> St. Louis *Westliche Post*, May 11, 1861.

<sup>573</sup> Brooksher, *Bloody Hill*, 64.

moderate position and came down firmly on the side of the South. He was a slaveholder in central Missouri who believed freeing the slaves would be “degrading to society.”<sup>574</sup> The cat-and-mouse game between the two sides ended on June 11 at a hotel room in the Planter’s House in St. Louis when Lyon finally told Price and Jackson that there would be no more talks, told them “this means war” and then turned and left the room.<sup>575</sup> Things moved quickly after this point, as the “Boonville Races” or the “Fox Chase” began. The Union army’s pursuit of pro-Jackson secessionist forces ended outside of Springfield, Missouri, on August 10 at the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, where Captain Lyon was killed only three months after his men captured Camp Jackson. Jackson continued his bravado by proclaiming that “anyone helping the Yanks” was an enemy, but Missouri was already largely controlled by Union forces.<sup>576</sup> At one point, Jackson insisted no St. Louis “Dutchmen” would keep Missouri from seceding, but this threat also failed.<sup>577</sup> It is no wonder Jackson tried to intimidate the so-called Dutchmen, who were the backbone of the Union forces.

While the Forty-Eighters were already heavily involved in the Union army, the position of the Saxon Lutherans remained unclear. Boernstein was clearly convinced that the Lutherans were a bunch of secessionists. For their part, the Saxon Lutherans remained hesitant about the Republican Party, which was now filled with agnostic, freethinking,

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<sup>574</sup> Brooksher, *Bloody Hill*, 69.

<sup>575</sup> Brooksher, *Bloody Hill*, 80.

<sup>576</sup> Return Ira Holcombe and Thomas W. Adams, *An Account of the Battle of Wilson’s Creek or Oak Hills* (Springfield, MO: Independent Printing, 1961), 74.

<sup>577</sup> Brooksher, *Bloody Hill*, 120.

radical Germans and rabid abolitionists. After years of supporting the Democratic Party, they were understandably tentative about joining a party which was untested on the immigrant question. Walther was very vocal about his dislike of revolution, and he mentioned several times how the Thirty Years War, which pitted German against German, had left deep scars on the German psyche and that a civil war in the United States would have the same tragic results. The Saxons “had sought the wilds of the West that they might build their house in quiet and contentment.”<sup>578</sup> The Civil War changed all that.

Most of the confusion about the Saxons comes from the prolific theological writings of C. F. W. Walther. He based his understanding of the American political system on his experience as a first-generation immigrant—one still tempered by some of his experiences in Saxony. In a letter to Theodore E. Buenger on May 7, 1861 he wrote the following: “I am a Missourian and therefore will never be moved to separate my fortune from that of my state unless I am forced. This state has so far protected me and my life and property, so in the time of need I will not become unfaithful to it.”<sup>579</sup> When he left Saxony there was no German nation, nor would there be until 1871. He grew up under the system of separate German political states, so he felt his first duty was to the state of Missouri. In contrast to Walther, second-generation Saxons had a firmer grasp of the American political system and were strong believers in Union cause.

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<sup>578</sup> H. Birkner, “Der Lutheraner, from 1844-1847,” in *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century*, ed. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 44.

<sup>579</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther*, 21.

Walther continued to muddle the issue of his allegiance with comments, such as the following:

We, the teachers and pastors (exclusive of the rector) are considered as secessionists because we are opposed to having our Lutherans freewillingly serve in the Union military or take the oath of allegiance to the administration to serve as volunteers in the "Home Guards." But in a way we cannot see why the state does not have the right of secession according to the United States Constitution and according to their own constitution...and partly we have declared that if a state secedes from the Union, naturally the individual citizens will not revolt but will either immigrate or will subject themselves to the seceding state government, according to the Bible passage: "Be obedient to the power that has authority over you."<sup>580</sup>

In 1838, the Saxons chose to emigrate rather than remain and attempt to change the existing political system. Unlike the Forty-Eighters would a decade later, they rejected revolution. In a sense, they simply seceded, and Walther's position reflected that political philosophy.

The Forty-Eighters could not identify with Walther's theological position that Lutherans should obey the government in power. They believed it was, in fact, a dangerous position because it bore similarities to the same defense Southern ministers used to support slavery. Walther's argument was based on verses such as Romans 13:4: "For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."<sup>581</sup> Ironically, Romans 13: 4 was one of the verses America's Founding Fathers quoted when they declared war on England. Peter and the apostles were ordered to come before the Sanhedrin, to be questioned by the high priest, who then demanded that they no

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<sup>580</sup> Drevlow, Drickamer, and Reichwald, *C. F. W. Walther*, 23.

<sup>581</sup> Romans 13: 4 (NIV).

longer preach about Jesus. Peter replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!”<sup>582</sup> The verse could rightfully be interpreted that Christians must disobey the government in order to obey God.

In spite of his personal opinion or that of any other Saxon pastor, the clergy wisely did not sanction an official position on the war. The Saxons learned an invaluable lesson in the difficult years from 1839 to 1841, which they tenaciously adhered to during the Civil War. The clergy was “called” to minister to the church, but that did not mean they could arbitrarily make decisions for the rest of the congregation as Martin Stephan once did. As had been taught to Protestants since the days of the Reformation, each believer was to study the Word himself or herself and make personal life decisions based on what they believed the Lord wanted them to do. Walther himself said in a sermon in 1876 that “it is patently wrong, therefore, to teach that the office of the public ministry was established by Christ also within the church to the end that Christians might be relieved of the need for personal searching of the Scriptures and that the clergy might do this for them.”<sup>583</sup> Pastor Loeber reported, “in our congregation [in Altenburg] men use their judgment; they know fairly well what constitutes a proper evangelical sermon.”<sup>584</sup> In other words, the laity knew the Bible well enough to judge whether or not a sermon was based on sound doctrine. So, although Walther wrote for the *Lutheraner*, pastored Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, taught at Concordia Seminary, and was a Missouri Synod leader, each male Lutheran was free to

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<sup>582</sup> Acts 5: 29 (NIV).

<sup>583</sup> C. F. W. Walther, “Third Sermon at the Synodical Convention,” *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* (Winter 1987): 169.

<sup>584</sup> Buenger, “The Saxon Immigrants of 1839,” 17.

make his own decision about politics and whether or not to fight for the Union. German historian Walter D. Kamphoefner points to this same conclusion about the laity. Apparently a Lutheran journal at this time declared that the leadership of the Missouri Synod would not join the Republican Party, but “the laity saw things differently.”<sup>585</sup> “Germans,” wrote Kamphoefner, “were the city’s most enthusiastic supporters of Union and emancipation,” and German Lutherans were among those supporters.

The Missouri Civil War records show that, overwhelmingly, Germans in Perry County fought for the Union and that more often than not, they volunteered instead of waiting to be drafted. The surnames of many Saxon settlers are found in the military records, such as Bergfeld, Bergt, Bock, Fischer, and Gunther. The short history of Perry County attributes the fact that the area remained in the Union to the “loyal German citizens of Perry being in the majority.”<sup>586</sup> Furthermore, several prominent first-generation Saxons served during the Civil War. T. E. Buenger, MD, is praised in the same short history of Perry County concerning the merits of the county. The publication goes on to say that “Dr. Buenger was examining physician for the Federal army during the war, with headquarters at Perryville.”<sup>587</sup> Dr. Buenger, who faithfully served the Union, was one of the original leaders of the Saxon movement. The Honorable Joseph G. Weinhold of Wittenberg was a second generation Saxon, but he is listed first among the respected residents of Perry

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<sup>585</sup> Walter D. Kamphoefner, “Missouri Germans and the Cause of Union and Freedom” *Missouri Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (April 2012): 120.

<sup>586</sup> *A Modern Eden: A History of Perry County, Missouri* (Republican Print, 1895; Repr. Perryville, MO: Perry County Historical Society, 1991), 10-11.

<sup>587</sup> *Great Southwest: Devoted to the Interests of the South and the West*, Vol. 1. No. 1 published by the Perry County Historical Society, Perryville, MO, no date, 43.

County. In 1866 he helped his father establish a flour mill at Wittenberg, which was still in operation at the time *The Great Southwest* pamphlet was printed. Weinhold, his short biography reads, “has always had a great and abiding faith in the future of his native country and takes a deep interest in everything that will bring her to the front.”<sup>588</sup> He was the county judge for six years and a notary public for several years. One other Saxon of note was Judge C. A. Weber, who came over with the Saxons when he was six years old. He is described as “one of Perry County’s most esteemed and respected gentlemen” who held the position of Judge of Probate Court.<sup>589</sup> During the Civil War “when he saw the union of the states was assailed, he organized a company mustered in as Co. G Fourth Missouri militia.”<sup>590</sup> While in the army he was elected county clerk but left the duties to one of his deputies while he “organized and enrolled the Sixty-fourth Mo. Militia, of which he was appointed major.”<sup>591</sup> In spite of a general disinclination to become heavily involved in politics, Saxons of the first and second generations distinguished themselves in the service of the Union during the Civil War. Because they did choose to help the Union, historian James Neal Primm believes that “nowhere else in American history has a single group of foreigners or a single cohort of leaders made such a difference in the course of a region as in St. Louis between April and June 1861.”<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> *Great Southwest*, 27.

<sup>589</sup> *Great Southwest*, 33.

<sup>590</sup> *Great Southwest*, 33.

<sup>591</sup> *Great Southwest*, 33.

<sup>592</sup> James Neal Primm, introduction and commentary for *Germans for a Free Missouri, Translations from the St. Louis Radical Press, 1857-1862*, ed. and trans. Steven Rowan (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), vii.

Years later, President Warren G. Harding sent a letter of congratulations to the Missouri Synod when they celebrated their diamond anniversary:

This company [the Saxons], inspired by a desire to locate in a country where they could worship in accordance with the dictates of their own consciences, set out from Europe in five vessels, determined to establish a colony of their own in the U.S. The parallel between this migration and the voyage of the Mayflower more than 200 years earlier need not be suggested. . . . From that beginning developed a great community which has contributed vastly to the material and spiritual development of our country.<sup>593</sup>

The opening sentences of *A Tale of Two Cities*, written by Charles Dickens in 1859, can be applied to the first twenty-one years the Saxons were in America: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief.” The years preceding the Civil War were filled with challenges for the nation that directly affected the Saxons’ lives. It was a time of increased democratization, tension over the issue of slavery, nativism, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. When the number of Catholic immigrants grew and the radical Forty-Eighters caused a stir among Americans as well as other Germans, nativist American groups briefly rose to oppose any immigrant elements that might threaten America’s Protestant constitutional republic. But they disappeared as quickly as they had appeared. The Kansas-Nebraska Act again stirred sectional animosity, and this time war could not be avoided. The Saxons, who achieved their goal of religious freedom, now had to deal with a tragic war between Americans over the physical freedom of the slave population. It was the best and the worst of times, as the Saxons became naturalized citizens in their adopted homeland and then sent their second-generation Lutherans off to fight for the Union. Ultimately, the Saxons chose to

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<sup>593</sup> Buenger Family Collection (1683-1992), Concordia Historical Institute, Folder 32, Box 3.

give their loyalty to the country which had given them a second chance to exercise their faith without government interference. As they embraced freedom and exercised the right to worship as they believed, they also moved forward as grateful, responsible American citizens.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

On October 29, 1967, the great-great grandson of Pastor Gotthold Loeber, the Reverend Walter C. Loeber, gave the sermon at the Centennial Service commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the building of Trinity Lutheran Church in Altenburg, Missouri. Rev. Loeber exhorted the congregation to “continue to preserve in this place the very heart of God as the Means of Grace are constantly in use.”<sup>594</sup> Here in the epicenter of the original Saxon settlement, the challenge continued as Loeber’s descendant spoke with pride about the years his ancestor lived above the first church and about the “Big” school nearby, which was the main parochial school after the Log Cabin College was moved to St. Louis. School and church remained the focus of this rural community. The original reason the Saxons came to the United States—the freedom to worship and to develop their own education system—was a continuing reality.

Accepting that immigration is what Maldwyn Allen Jones calls “the most persistent and most pervasive influence in her [America’s] development,” studying immigration groups and their adaptation to their new country is central to the history of the United States.<sup>595</sup> It is integral to understanding the nation’s religious and cultural roots and how these are interwoven with the political development of the nation. The story of the Saxon

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<sup>594</sup> Walter C. Loeber, “Sermon Resumé, October 29, 1967 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Altenburg, MO,” Kansas City, MO: The State Historical Society of Missouri.

<sup>595</sup> Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1.

immigration speaks predominantly to the question of the assimilation process for those migrating to the United States during the middle of the nineteenth century, but, also, to the larger question of assimilation throughout the history of United States. More particularly, it examines those who did not speak English, who possessed a culture much different than the English-based culture, society, and politics that undergirded the young republic, and who, in the particular case of the Saxons, were pushed out of their home country by religious persecution and sought freedom in the United States.

The spotlight was on the Saxon group the moment they set foot in Missouri because anti-ecclesiastical German-American newspapers had already been tracing the activities of the Stephanists before their arrival. This abruptly ushered the Saxons into the reality of the divisions within the German community in Missouri and the hard line drawn between Germans along religious lines. Historian Philip Otterness writes, “the making of a German identity in America was one of immigrants not just defining themselves in contrast to a British other but also defining themselves in contrast to many German others.”<sup>596</sup> On one hand were liberal Germans who dominated the German-language newspapers. They loudly proclaimed anti-religious, revolutionary, caustic rhetoric, which went against the grain of American attitudes. St. Louis residents disliked their gloomy and often elitist attacks on politics and religion. A deeply Protestant population disagreed with their stance against faith and was dismayed when Germans congregated in beer gardens on Sunday afternoons rather than maintaining a quiet, sacred Sabbath day.

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<sup>596</sup> Philip Otterness, *Becoming German: The 1709 Palatine Migration to New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 3.

In addition to this tension between Americans and the German-American press was the conflict between the Saxons and the press, which continued up to and throughout the Civil War. Liberal Germans who preceded the Saxons' arrival did not provide a safe haven for the Saxons where they could receive assistance in adjusting to life in the United States. This was a unique dilemma pertaining only to the German immigrant community. Traditionally, immigrants were aided by those who came before, migrating to Irish or Jewish or Italian enclaves or wherever others of the same background gathered together. The Saxons did not have the luxury of an emphatic, supportive association with liberal Germans who could have shared their learned experience of American life.

In contrast to liberal Germans, the Saxons did receive support from St. Louis citizens, who provided them with temporary space for their church services, legal advice when they discovered Stephan's transgressions, food and assistance from the Americans in Perry County, and respect for the strong religious convictions that grounded their decision to move to the United States. Their initial stay in St. Louis, followed by Stephan's brief residence in Perry County, turned out to be the decisive period for the Saxons. The Saxons were forced to realistically assess the situation because of several factors: the German press, the growing disapproval of Stephan by St. Louis citizens, and—the final blow—the confessions of several Saxon women. The result was the quick removal of Stephan from his office as bishop and his indecorous trip across the Mississippi River to the Illinois side in a rowboat. It is certain that the reality of individual freedom and religious liberty impacted their decision to quickly remove Stephan from office and to insist on individual autonomy for their churches from that time forward. It also influenced their rising opposition to rigid

ecclesiastical structures. In general, Americans did not approve of placing so much power into the hands of the clergy; for one thing, it reminded them of the Roman Catholic Church structure and what they perceived as the stifling interference of church hierarchy on the religious freedoms of the laity.

The laity, who were suffused with anger and confusion for the two years following the Stephan fiasco, clashed with clergy members, who blindly argued for maintaining a substantial part of the original ecclesiastical structure. If the clergy had prevailed, the synod that eventually became the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod would not have been formed. Carl Vehse's return to Germany signaled the deep disillusionment of the laity. Drinking in the attitudes of Americans in St. Louis and Perry County and refocusing on the original reasons for leaving Saxony, the laity pondered the seriousness of the situation. Organizing a synod was secondary to the congregational autonomy the Saxons jealously protected during these formative years after the Altenburg Debate. They also resolved to follow the Protestant concept that the laity were responsible for their own decisions, based on their direct relationship with their Lord. With the guilt about wrongfully allowing Stephan to dominate in both secular and spiritual matters essentially assuaged, the Saxons faced the hard work of adapting to life in Missouri.

As life then progressed, the Saxons did not follow what is considered a traditional immigration process in the United States. Their commitment to the German language set them apart from other immigration groups, as evidenced by citizens in towns such as Hermann, Missouri, who continued to use German in their everyday language as late as the 1960s. According to historian Russell A. Kazal's definition of assimilation, however, the

Saxons were assimilated because they displayed a “shared feeling of peoplehood” while retaining an “individual’s sense of self.”<sup>597</sup> The definition of assimilation in the 1828 Webster’s dictionary expresses this same attitude, which is “to bring to a likeness, to cause to resemble.”<sup>598</sup> The Saxons were truly strangers in their own land, a concept also expressed by historian Steven Nolt. But the Saxons considered themselves loyal Americans soon after they arrived and certainly after the Altenburg Debate, which convinced them to remain in Missouri.

They undoubtedly considered themselves Americans in spite of the many aspects of their lives that set them apart from the Americans surrounding them—their language, the emphasis on maintaining German in their church services and schools, their reluctance to speak of political issues, and the differences in their cultural background. Immigration historians such as Michael Novak appreciate these differences in cultures, which is why they view the term “assimilation” as dismissive of the different cultures that compose the tapestry of American culture. On the other hand is the argument that if immigrants are to become United States citizens, the “hyphen” should essentially be removed, that there is no German-American or Irish-American, but only American. This position was prevalent in the nineteenth century, as is demonstrated in the nativist movement. It was famously reiterated by Theodore Roosevelt when he urged that the hyphen be removed. Roosevelt believed that “There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism. The one absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin, of preventing all possibility of it continuing to be a

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<sup>597</sup> Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>598</sup> *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*, Version 2 (Christian Technologies, 2004), [www.christiantech.com](http://www.christiantech.com).

nation at all, would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities.”<sup>599</sup>

Historians such as Russell A. Kazal make valid arguments for reinstating the term “assimilation” into immigration history vocabulary.<sup>600</sup> While recognizing the richness of the contribution of the many cultures that have infused American culture, there remains the importance of unifying principles that bring cohesiveness into national identity. The Saxons embody that principle by stalwartly preserving many aspects of their culture and their religious heritage but, at the same time, sharing in the corporate sense underlying the responsibilities of becoming United States citizens.

Regardless of the language obstacles, the attitude of the Saxons was to “make this country their and their children’s home; and to do their share in building up its material and spiritual prosperity.”<sup>601</sup> The Saxons prided themselves on having an “ardent love of liberty.”<sup>602</sup> This love of liberty faced continuous challenges as each year drew the nation closer to the outbreak of the Civil War. Because they believed in liberty and equality, and not in slavery, second-generation Saxons did fight for the Union. In spite of years of conflict with liberal Germans, it was the radical Forty-Eighters who influenced the Saxons and other conservative Germans to become involved in the national conflict over slavery. Historian

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<sup>599</sup> “Teddy Roosevelt on Hyphenated Americans,” The Western Center for Journalism, accessed January 14, 2014, <http://www.westernjournalism.com/teddy-roosevelt-hyphenated-americans/#TBRwuvZyUCuJTUR.99>.

<sup>600</sup> Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*.

<sup>601</sup> W.H.T. Dau, ed. *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod During Their Three Quarters of a Century* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 19.

<sup>602</sup> Dau, *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod*, 19.

LaVern Rippley writes that “the Germans probably would not have entered politics on the side of the North” because they preferred to remain “silent and neutral.”<sup>603</sup> On their own, the Saxons would have remained neutral as long as they could, but when it was clear war could not be avoided, many of them in Perry County and St. Louis joined up to fight.

The Saxons’ original religious zeal is visible today in their creation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, which remains one of the most conservative Protestant organizations in the United States. Total membership in 2012 was 2,196,788 with 6,151 congregations.<sup>604</sup> To this day, Missouri Synod Lutherans are adamant about the inerrancy of the Scriptures and rely strongly on the same confessionalism they fought to preserve in Saxony in the 1830s. The discovery of Stephan’s deceit could have derailed this immigration group only months after they arrived in St. Louis. But, after two years of indecisiveness, they chose to move forward and make a life for themselves in Missouri and to reach out to Germans not only in Perry County and the St. Louis area, but across the United States. These pastors lived in poor conditions, often in one-room log cabins, and were responsible for four or more congregations, traveling over rough and dangerous roads, particularly in the remote lands out West.

The Concordia Publishing House, founded in 1869, is another influential outgrowth of the Saxon immigration. To this day its website emphasizes the importance of church, school, and family. Concordia originated *The Lutheran Witness* solely for the purpose of

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<sup>603</sup> LaVern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), 59.

<sup>604</sup> “Congregations Report Record Financial Offerings for 2012,” The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, last modified October 11, 2013, <http://blogs.lcms.org/2013/record-financial-offerings-for-2012>.

reaching English-speaking Lutherans, but it did not appear until May 21, 1882. In contrast, the *Lehre und Wehre*, which was started by Walther in January 1855 as a theological publication particularly for the ongoing training of pastors as they led churches of their own, continued to be printed in German until the last edition in November 1929. Concordia also prints the church's hymnals, the *Lutheran Service Book*, the *Lutheran Study Bible*, and even an edition of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*. In addition, it publishes resources for school, church, and home as well as devotionals. It is the oldest publishing house west of the Mississippi River.

Recovering German immigration history is important for a proper understanding of immigration during this period of American history. The Saxon experience incorporates many aspects of life in the young republic, as the nation moved to define itself and then almost disintegrated over the institution of slavery. The Saxons, as did many immigrants, had to contend with many circumstances to which they were unaccustomed—pioneer conditions on their Perry County land, the raw conflict within the German immigrant community, nativism, the rise of the Republican Party, the decision about which party to support, and, of course, the institution of slavery of which they disapproved even before they witnessed it firsthand in New Orleans. Although the focus of researchers has been on the Forty-Eighters, it is important to include the history of the German farmers and religious conservatives during this pivotal period of United States history. The purpose of this dissertation has been to highlight the conservative Lutheran experience of the Saxons and to capture the laity's voice as much as possible, in order to add depth to our understanding of what German immigrants were daily experiencing and how they have impacted American

history. After all, immigrants are at the core of American history, and the story of the Saxons enhances that story.

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Video

*From Faith to Faith: The Story of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in Perry County, Missouri*. Produced and directed by the Saxon Lutheran Heritage. Videocassette.  
Frohna, MO, 1996.

## VITA

Lani Marie Kirsch was born in Seattle, Washington. Her high school education was begun at Columbia, Missouri, and concluded at Truman High School in Independence, Missouri, in 1968. She graduated cum laude in 1972 from the University of Missouri at Columbia with a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education. Her Master of Art in history was completed at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1999.

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