“Von London und Hannover verlassen”: Germans in America in the Eighteenth Century

In Göttingen during 1999–2000 I spent a significant amount of time in the reading room of the wonderful university library with eighteenth-century periodicals. To the extent that my readings were focused at all I was interested in the state of religious discussion in the 1780s and 1790s, particularly in the context of the famous/infamous Prussian Religionsedikt of 1788 and efforts during the reign of Frederick William II to restore proper piety and orthodoxy in state, church, and school.¹

In addition to the usual assortment of Enlightenment organs like the Berlinische Monatsschrift (which is on the whole, I think, somewhat over-rated as an embodiment of Enlightenment culture) I ran across some periodicals that were devoted to religious affairs without being overly dogmatic in their confessional commitment, relatively broad-minded in their approach to religious life, and open to news from all over the world. Most interestingly, I began to discover articles and reports on the state of Germans and their religions – especially Evangelical Lutherans – in North America. These materials dealt mainly with the German settlers in Pennsylvania and North Carolina and cast a revealing light both on their lives and conditions and on their prospects for maintaining their traditional culture and religion in their new environment. These were not, it must be stressed, Germans of the kind we are used to dealing with in our literary-philosophical-cultural studies, but of an altogether different and, for the most part, undocumented kind: the Germans who had emigrated to America in the eighteenth century were overwhelmingly agrarian toilers who had uprooted themselves and sought nothing more fervently than land to farm in peace and quiet. Those who traveled to Pennsylvania – the overwhelming majority of them – found by the middle of the century that earlier settlers – among them many

¹ Friedrich Nicolai had most of the works pro and contra reviewed in the Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek by Heinrich Philipp Conrad Henke, who later published the reviews together in Beurtheilung aller Schriften welche durch das Königlich Preußische Religionsedikt und durch andre damit zusammenhängende Religionsverfügungen veranlaßt sind (Kiel, 1793), reprinted by the Scriptor Verlag, Königstein/Ts., 1978. Henke was one of the most intelligent theological observers of the day and plays a major role in my paper.
Mennonites, Dunkers, Schwenkfelders, and members of other sects who had arrived from 1710 on seeking toleration for their religion as much as land to farm—had claimed the best available lands and had to move on southward into Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas in search of their own piece of Paradise. These German immigrants, barely literate and uneducated on the whole, were relatively inadaptable, not able or willing to embrace new (specifically American or “English”) religious solutions and cultural mores, and determined to hold to the practices and churches they knew and remembered from home. Although they were determined to cling to their faith, such as they knew it, and preserve or renew it, their economic and social position in the new world did not allow them to do this independently without assistance from home. Sufficient assistance was never brought to bear, either in the Colonial period or after the American Revolution, although efforts were made to help.

To be sure, there had been news of Germans in America all along, beginning with the propaganda pitches of the so-called Neuländer who, as agents of colonial proprietors and/or shipping companies, had painted a bright picture of life in America, encouraging would-be immigrants to sell everything and head down the Rhine, only to trick them, impoverish them, and practically sell them into indentured slavery—if in fact they survived to reach the other side of the ocean in those terribly crowded little ships that plied the Atlantic immigration trade. From the time of his arrival in America in 1742 Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg had dutifully recorded in his diary and in his correspondence with his superiors in Halle much of this material and his accounts, along with similar accounts of other ministers in Pennsylvania, had appeared in the many installments of the so-called Hallische Nachrichten which served both to bring news of Christians far from home and to support the call for contributions to support the missionary effort. The American Revolution had interrupted communications between Germany and America, but after the Revolution there was renewed and even heightened interest in Germany about America and the conditions under which Germans in America now lived. German reports on America no longer concentrated so exclusively on religious affairs although, as we will see, German churches and culture were still at the center of attention.

The most interesting of the religious periodicals I ran across was without a doubt a succession of journals culminating with the Archiv für die neueste Kirchengeschichte, which was published in Weimar from 1794 on and edited by the very same Heinrich Philipp Conrad Henke, a distinguished professor.

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2 For lack of good land records in much of central and western North Carolina through the middle of the century, in particular the Granville District, the settlement history is not as well documented as one would like. Almost as though from one day to the next one becomes aware of thousands of Germans who have gone south and ended up in the area west of the Moravian settlement around the present-day Winston-Salem area.
at Helmstedt, who had reviewed all the works published about the Religionseidikt. Henke was highly regarded and the Weimar government had even sought—without success—to hire him for a vacant theological professorship at the university of Jena in 1792–1793. Henke’s Archiv and its predecessors are a storehouse worth extensive exploration. For the purposes of the present essay, however, it was the Archiv which first drew my attention intensively to the situation of German settlers in North America, specifically, in this case, in North Carolina. At the end of the second volume of the Archiv were some “Kirchliche Nachrichten aus Nordcarolina . . .” relating the death of one Adolph Nüßmann, who had ministered at Buffalo Creek since 1773; there is mention also of a new stone church at Second Creek and the cornerstone-laying of a university building (the University of North Carolina) in September 1793. The area of North Carolina involved here was the Piedmont region south and west of modern-day Winston-Salem in Rowan County, centered on Salisbury; Salisbury being the county seat and the only real town for miles around at the time, most of the congregations were located by creek and river names that were difficult to conceptualize without a detailed map (Nüßmann was located forever in the German mind on “Dutch Buffaloe Creek”). When I got my hands on an early-nineteenth-century map of the area and could see better where some of these congregations were situated, my interest was piqued even more as it became clear that my own ancestors had been among those German settlers seeking help from home.

This particular news item belongs in the context of a larger story.

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3 Weimar, im Verlage der Hoffmannischen Buchhandlung, 1795–1799, 6 volumes. The journal seems to have appeared monthly. The Archiv was the successor to ACTA HISTORICO-ECCLESIASTICA NOSTRI TEMPORIS, Oder gesammlete Nachrichten und Urkunden zu der Kirchengeschichte unserer Zeit, which went back to the 1770s, and Acten, Urkunden und Nachrichten zur neuesten Kirchengeschichte (1789–1793), both also published in the Hoffmann publishing house under an Electoral Saxon privilege.


5 The original Rowan County was already in the process of being carved into smaller counties, which makes it more difficult to keep locations straight.

6 Much of this western North Carolina material was used by G. D. Bernheim in his more or less exhaustive treatment of the History of the German Settlements and of the Lutheran Church in North and South Carolina, From the Earliest Period of the Colonization of the Dutch, German and Swiss Settlers to the Close of the First Half of the Present Century (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1872. Rpt.: Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, 1972). A considerable amount of it was edited and translated by William K. Boyd and Charles A. Krummel, North Carolina Historical Review VII (1930), 79–147, 225–83. Anyone interested in the subject of German settlers in the Carolinas will have to consult Bernheim, but his work does not meet modern standards of scholarship, including proper attribution of sources (and as a result of the wide publicity given the Helmstedt undertaking in Germany there are numerous and confusing duplications of source materials of which he,
In 1772 members of a German community in this area of North Carolina (present-day Cabarrus County) had sent two lay representatives to London to petition the court for an Evangelical Lutheran preacher and a teacher to minister to them in their wilderness. This was, to my knowledge, at least the third time German Lutherans had sought this kind of assistance from Europe to establish or support a regular church organization. In the 1730s settlers in Virginia had sent an as yet unordained, but passionately committed preacher, Johann Caspar Stoever, Sr., with two lay representatives to Germany to solicit funds to endow and support a church at Hebron. The laymen had fulfilled their mission and returned home in due course, but Stoever had remained in Germany to complete his theological studies and undergo a proper ordination. He died on the return trip to America in 1739. Also in the 1730s lay representatives of three congregations in Pennsylvania had sought support in Germany, addressing themselves to the Pietist establishment in Halle (although it is not clear that this was a conscious embrace of Pietism). The result of this mission is a tangled story; the emissaries received financial commitments and some funds but did not come back with a minister. A major stumbling block was the question of who would provide funds (i.e. salary) to support a minister. The cloud from this failure still hung over the ministry of Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg when he arrived in Pennsylvania in 1742. Eventually the Hallensians, under the leadership of Gotthilf August Francke, collected material support for Pennsylvania as well as modern bibliographical projects, seem to have been insufficiently informed). Bernheim is interesting also for his incredibly naïve and totally objectionable point of view and belief in the manifest destiny of white people to fulfill the will of God in uncivilized parts of the world.


8 See William Edward Eisenberg, The Lutheran Church in Virginia 1717–1962, including an Account of the Lutheran Church in East Tennessee (Lynchburg, VA: J.P Bell Company, Inc., 1967). Stoever's son, Johann Caspar, Jr., had remained in America, was ordained under somewhat questionable circumstances and ministered to churches in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Possessed of somewhat loose morals, at least as far as sobriety was concerned, the younger Stoever was a thorn in the side of Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg over many years.
Lutherans and supplied a number of pastors up until 1769. The material support included money, books, and medicines made from Halle recipes. The books and medicines were to be used for church purposes or also sold at a profit for the benefit of the church. (After Francke’s death in 1768 support from Halle substantially ended.) A Lutheran court preacher in London, Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen, was a prime intermediary in these transactions but the court was not formally or financially involved.9

For the first and only time, as far as I know, the British court responded directly to the North Carolina petition and, in cooperation with the Hanover consistory, actively sponsored a candidate for the Lutheran ministry in North America, an ex-Franciscan by the name of Adolph Nüßmann, paid for his travel to America, along with a teacher (who later was also ordained as a preacher), and set up an endowment for the benefit of the North Carolina churches. Soon after, of course, the American Revolution intervened, cutting off practically all communication with Britain and Germany. Nüßmann was not heard from again until 1786, when a letter from him reached Johann Caspar Velthussen, a professor of theology in Helmstedt, who had earlier been stationed at the Lutheran court chapel in London and had become acquainted with Nüßmann when he stayed there in 1773 on his way to North Carolina. Nüßmann, finding himself on his own, believing himself “von London und Hannover verlassen” (p. 16), had nearly despaired but was now pleading for Velthussen’s assistance in procuring not only more preachers, but also and especially good orthodox books for the instruction and edification of the young people in North Carolina. Velthussen quotes from Nüßmann’s letter regarding the situation of the Germans in North Carolina:

An den äussersten Theilen, wo Blindheit, Unwissenheit, Aberglaube und schwärmerische Begeisterung wüten, sind die Lehrer auf 70, 80, 100 bis 200 Meilen von einander entfernt. . . . [Die Kirche] ist aus Mangel der Lehrer und Schulhalter ganz verwildert, und muß, wenn nicht bald Hülfe kommt, gänzlich ins Heidenthum verfallen. Tausende von Haushaltungen, die sehr kinderreich sind, aber aus einander wohnen, vergessen das Christenthum; ihre Kinder wissen noch weniger davon; und Kindeskinder sind wahre Heiden. Es sind keine zum Unterrichte tüchtige Lehrer da; und die, welche da sind, reissen mehr ein, als sie bauen. Ich habe so treu gearbeitet, als ich nach meinen wenigen Fähigkeiten konnte, und so viel mir der Herr Kräfte gab; aber ein Arm ist zu kurz. Mit Betrübnis sehe ich alle Tage, daß es bald hier, bald dort, bald aller Orten fehlt. Meine Arbeit ist immer mehr aufs Ganze, als auf einzelne Theile gerichtet gewesen; doch so, daß meine Hauptsorge die Buffalo Creek war, die gleich Anfangs Gottes Wort angenommen hat. Man muß hier noch mehr einen Apostel, als einen Gemeindelehrer vorstellen. Wenn man sich auf Eine Gemeinde einschränken wollte, so würde man freilich derselben viel Gutes thun können: aber der Schade des Ganzen würde desto größer seyn. (21–23)

9 Mühlenberg treated Francke and Ziegenhagen as co-equal superiors, addressing his correspondence to Halle by way of London.
Nüßmann laments an accelerating deterioration in knowledge of (culture and) Christianity over three generations from the original immigrants down to the “Kindeskinder” who are in danger of turning out “wahre Heiden.”10 In response to Nüßmann’s urgent plea for assistance, Velthusen organized a group of Helmsstedt professors to produce a series of German-language books for North Carolina young people (including, above all, a catechism),11 to raise money, and to find hardy and earnest divines who were suited and willing to toil in the North Carolina wilderness. Velthusen emphasized repeatedly that this was not an ongoing or permanent missionary society like that at Halle which had supported the churches in Pennsylvania, but rather a limited association formed to address a specific task, at the end of which accounts were scrupulously rendered to the public. Although Velthusen was the main propagandist for the undertaking in Germany, inserting notices in various periodicals at different stages of the process, Henke also did his part to communicate news from North America. Over the next few years four volumes were published and two or three young preachers were selected, ordained, and sent to North Carolina.12 Carl August Gottlieb Storch was the first to be sent over officially and played a leading role

10 Similar complaints are voiced in other areas, as we will see.
11 As with the Halle books already noted above, these books were meant both to be used for the immediate purpose of education and to be sold for the benefit of the churches. The books produced were not necessarily written explicitly for the purpose of the mission to North Carolina. It appears that the Velthusen catechism published in 1787 had been published in the normal course of things and was provided with a special North Carolina title page.
12 Potential parishioners in two localities were asked to commit themselves to support the new preachers. Velthusen quotes from a letter by Herr Bernhard (the colleague who had originally accompanied Nüßmann to North Carolina as schoolmaster and had later been ordained): “Abbots Creek, den 2. Sept. 1787. Das deutsche Settlement, das diesen Namen führt, liegt in Roan County, etwa 20 englische Meilen von Salisbury nördlich, und ist ungefähr 14 Meilen lang und 10 Meilen breit. Es sind drei evangelische Kirchen hier. Auch hier ist das Christenthum seinem Untergange nahe, sofern nicht schnelle Hilfe kommt. Im Allgemeinen läßt sich von der Religion unter den heisigen Deutschen eben das sagen, was kurz vorher von denen in Guilford County ist gesagt worden. Mangel an guten Predigern veranlaßte diese Leute, die sich doch nach dem Evangelio sehnten und das Wort Gottes gerne hörten, daß sie ihre Zuflucht zu solchen nahmen, die als irrende Ritter das Land durchstreiften, und, nachdem sie wegen ihres üblen Verhaltens bey ihrer Profession kein Brodt mehr verdienen konnten, Prediger wurden. . . . Auf die Frage, ob sie einen dieser Prediger annehmen, und ihm auch reichlichen Unterhalt verschaffen wollten, antworteten sie einmütiglich: daß sie herzlich froh wären, wenn sie einen rechtschaffenen evangelischen Lehrer unter sich wohnhaft bekommen könnten; daß sie ihre möglichen Kräfte anwenden würden, für seinen Unterhalt Sorge zu tragen; daß sie auch einen Wagen in Bereitschaft halten wollten, einen dieser Prediger, sobald ihnen seine Ankunft berichtet werde, von Charleston abzuholen.” Lehrbücher für die Jugend in Nordcarolina, entworfen von einer Gesellschaft Helmsstädtischer Professoren. Dritte Lieferung: Religionsgeschichte und Geographisches Handbuch. Leipzig, bey Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius. 1788, pp. 25–27.
in the history of the Lutheran Church in North Carolina. The second preacher
sponsored by the Helmstedt group, Arnold Roschen, actually went out on his
own and returned to Germany after a few years. Velthusen kept in touch with
the North Carolina preachers and published letters from them as late as 1804.

There are several points about all of this worthy of comment. The role of
books and printing in the undertaking to plant the Lutheran Church in North
America leaps out immediately, yet it is a subject that has perhaps not received
proper attention. Books fulfilled at least an instructional and informational,
a devotional, and a polemical role, and, as we have noted, were also at least
semi-commercial objects capable of producing revenue for the cause. In his
letters to Francke Mühlenberg pleads over and over for the means to start a
publishing operation so that he could compete with Christopher Saur, a Dunker
and critic of the established churches and aspirations for higher learning, whose
Germantown publishing house held the field. In spite of his Dunker leanings,
however, Saur had a good eye for the market and in addition to his mainstay
items, annual almanacs and a long-running newspaper,¹³ he offered numerous
mainstream religious publications for sale to the Germans in Pennsylvania: he
put out the first Luther Bible in North America, as well as separate issues of both
testaments, numerous devotional works such as Arndt’s *Wahres Christenthum*,
volumes of Teerstegen, etc., and he even published Luther’s catechisms.
¹⁴ Unless
his publications were over-priced or printed in insufficient quantities, which is
unlikely, the market for materials appropriate for Mühlenberg’s purposes would
appear to have been fairly well supplied. What Mühlenberg was pleading for in
his correspondence with Halle was above all a supply of German type. Apparently
it never occurred to him that Roman type might have been used just as well, at
considerably less cost, and at one point Benjamin Franklin seems to have offered
his assistance. Frankly, it is something of a mystery to me why Nüßmann wanted
books from Germany for North Carolina, when they might have been had much
more readily from Pennsylvania. He too wanted a printing press.

Second, we should note the active involvement of lay leaders. Whereas in
Germany church buildings and organizational structures had long existed under
the supervision of the state, city, or local parish authorities (and in the countryside

¹³ See the exhaustive study of Pennsylvania German newspapers by James Owen Knauss,
*Social Conditions among the Pennsylvania Germans in the Eighteenth Century, as Revealed
in German Newspapers Published in America*. A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Cornell University for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. ©1922,
Reprinted from Proceedings of the Pennsylvania-German Society, Vol. XXIX.

¹⁴ A perusal of German publications documented and reproduced on-line in the Evans series
of Early American Imprints is quite illuminating. Up until the Revolution a major portion of
the German titles published (practically all of them in Germantown and Philadelphia, some
in the cloister at Ephrata) were religious works.
of patrons on estates) and ministers were appointed by these higher authorities, in America local churches came into existence as a result of local initiatives. In Germany the church had always been there. In America Germans arrived, spread out and began to populate a territory, then banded together to build churches and seek ministers for them. Members of the sects met in barns, baptized in the river, had no regular clergy, and had substantially fewer financial obligations to support their worship. In the case of the Lutherans and Reformers, however, there was a tradition and expectation both of an educated and properly ordained clergy and of a visible church as social institution. The lay-people were by default in fact the proprietors who built churches and supplied the minister’s salary, and the minister was utterly dependent on their continued cooperation and good will. At the same time, however, the parishioners for the most part had little real sense of what it took to make a proper minister. They seem to have brought with them from the old country the recollection of edifying sermons and hymns without any refined understanding of the ministry per se. If they had not heard a sermon lasting at least an hour they tended to feel they hadn’t gotten their money’s worth (while the Lutherans were also generally admired for the singing in their services). They could be extremely gullible and easily exploited by the unscrupulous and unqualified rascals and defrocked preachers who could deliver a sermon, baptize a baby or hold a funeral for a fee but little more. In short: the heavy lay involvement in church affairs was a necessary evil such

15 Or, in fact, of the true nature of religion or the Christian life. Mühlenberg complains over and over of the difficulty of inculcating Christian “morals” – for example stamping out drunkenness, dancing, card-playing, and libidinous activity – and striving for a higher level of Christian piety than the parishioners had been accustomed to in Germany. This seems to me an indication of longstanding pastoral deficiencies in the German system.

as had never presented itself in the old country. This added greatly to the difficulty of establishing common standards suitable to larger-scale organizations beyond the local level. At the same time, it should be noted, it was a useful preliminary exercise in democracy which helped pave the way for informed participation in public affairs.\textsuperscript{17}

Third, it is worth noting how little the British government did for religion and the church(es) in the colonies. Pennsylvania was a special case, in that it was a proprietary colony, not under the rule of the crown, and under the Penn charter all religions were tolerated. This meant that the Anglican Church, which was the established church in other colonies and had the right to receive tithes and taxes and own glebes for the support of pastors, was on an equal footing with all others in Pennsylvania. (It must be said that even in middle and southern colonies where the Anglican Church was established, it was not at all well supported, and, as with other confessions, there were not enough ministers and churches to go around.) Contrary to the currently politically popular opinion that Americans were always a religious people, this was clearly not the case in the eighteenth century. The king, even though head of the Anglican Church, did not actively support it in America; in Colonial times there was never an American bishop (so that candidates for the ministry had to be ordained in England), and the American church was treated as a missionary undertaking under the care of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (which also played something of a supporting role in the Halle missionary endeavors). One might have thought that the Hanoverian kings, since they were heads not only of the Anglican Church, but also of an Evangelical Lutheran one in Germany, might have taken some care for the souls of their German subjects and of the other Germans who streamed to America, but this was never to be (and we know anyway that they tended to treat their Hanoverian subjects as second-class citizens). The need in any case far outstripped the means available for propagating Christianity in America. The traditional churches in Europe were not up to the task of spreading to America and flourishing in a new environment; they

\textsuperscript{17} See Dietmar Rothermund, \textit{The Layman’s Progress: Religious and Political Experience in Colonial Pennsylvania 1740–1770} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961). Rothermund argues that the experiences of the revivalist Great Awakening (1739 ff.), denominationalism, voluntarism in church affairs, etc. in Pennsylvania were a learning process for democracy, orderly debate, and political decision-making far more advanced than any experience available in the Mother Country or even in other American colonies. Pennsylvania was unique among the colonies both for its tolerance and for its ethnic and religious diversity. Also Martin Ellsworth Lodge, \textit{The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies. Dissertation . . . University of California, Berkeley, 1964}, who argues for a link between democratization of church governance, especially the post-Awakening Presbyterian Synod of Philadelphia/New York, and the spread of democratic ideas culminating in the Revolution.
could only respond to the pleas of not-yet-churched American colonists by tak-
ing up collections and sending missionaries, as though to the Indians. The support
Pennsylvania Lutherans received from Halle was exemplary, to be sure, but far
from enough to establish a church securely before the Revolution. In the end
Americans had to grow their own resources and many German Lutherans and
Reformed were lost to other denominations in the process.

The American churches started with very few resources, and hard currency
was scarce in any case because of the British mercantilist policy applied to the
colonies. The new immigrants (not only the Germans) were strapped for money,
as they mostly had to pay off their passage by working as indentured servants,
and accumulating capital was a painfully slow process. When it came to hiring
ministers and building churches, their ambitions out-ran their means, hence the
repeated appeals to Europe for resources that they could not get together by
themselves. Typically families would gather and agree among themselves to
form a congregation. Then they would look for a preacher and set out to build
a church. The first church was always a plain wooden building, like their houses;
if the congregation flourished, it would proceed to the next step and commit to
a more permanent building. Thus the significance of completion of the stone
church on Second Creek in North Carolina. Congregations often bankrupted them-
selves in the effort to provide for their worship, or alternatively if they disagreed
over the minister or the services they could tear themselves to pieces in argu-
ments over who owned what. Such goings-on were totally incomprehensible
to German preachers who found themselves either fought over or opposed by
powerful factions and were totally dependent on the good will and commit-
ment of their congregations. Congregations remained poor or had to work out
their own fortunes as their communities prospered. In any case, the only hope
of long-term stability was eventual development of a *Kirchenordnung* to be sub-
scribed by every member of the congregation (first imposed by Mühleng on in
Philadelphia).

The fact that the best (possibly only?) candidate turned up for dispatch to
North Carolina in 1773 was an ex-Franciscan should, I think, be viewed not only
as a statement about the difficulties of finding ministers suited for such heavy
missionary duty in the New World, but also as an indication of the state of affairs
at home. Everything we hear about German church conditions throughout the
century attests to general lack of commitment, lack of education and knowl-
edge, lack of talent, nepotism, exclusion of true talent from the calling (and
also the *Hofmeister* everywhere waiting for their chance to get a church from
their patron, perhaps along with the discarded mistress), etc. Which is not to
say, of course, that there were not many capable and dedicated ministers, and
Nüllmann was exemplary in his long service to the church in North Carolina.
But the products of university theology faculties were not thereby genuinely
prepared for a profession, and viewed from this perspective the Prussian
Religionsedikt represented a long overdue attempt to enhance the preparation of preachers and teachers and to shore up their credentials. In his reviews of the publications about the Religionsedikt Henke returns over and over to the lack of knowledge among preachers as to what they were supposed to be doing and teaching:

Die Hauptsache darinn bleibt allerdings, daß erstlich in Religionsvorträgen für das Volk und vor dem Volk alle streitigen Lehrbestimmungen fortgelassen werden [preachers had been indulging too much in senseless polemics], und daß zweytens man für wohl vorbereitete, tugendhafte und kluge Volkslehrer sorgt. So lange noch besonders dieser zweyte Punkt (denn der erste ist davon abhängig) von unsern Regenten und Konsistorien fast überall ganz unverantwortlich vernachlässigt wird, werden so wenig Religionsedikte der Fürsten, noch Klagen, Wünsche und Vorschläge der Schriftsteller viel ausrichten. (250)

The Old-World Union Shop: Trademarked, Branded
Product vs. Brand Dilution in America

In order to comprehend fully the significance of American conditions for the German immigrants it is necessary to cast an eye briefly on conditions in the old countries. Up until the end of the Holy Roman Empire religious “toleration” in the German territories was a carefully circumscribed commodity. While the Treaties of Westphalia ending the Thirty Years War in 1648 had mandated “toleration” of the three major confessions – Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed – whose antagonisms had caused such upheavals during the preceding hundred years, in the sense that there were to be no further efforts to eradicate one or the other of them within the Empire, they in fact sanctioned the religious status quo. Wherever members of one or the other confession were dominant in a city or territory they were forced to concede practically nothing to the others beyond their bare existence; they dictated the terms on which (or in fact whether at all) members of the other confessions were allowed to own houses of worship or even to practice their faith in an organized manner, and were usually zealous to protect their legal monopoly by any means available. While many among the upper classes and ruling elites interacted and became more enlightened over time, members of the lower and working classes were often especially vehement in fending off change, even when the change would have been

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19 One may take Frankfurt am Main during Goethe’s youth (see Dichtung und Wahrheit, Book Four) as an example of such interaction, although the Reformed were not allowed to worship within the city!
economically beneficial. During the 1780s, for example, the citizens of Cologne refused to agree to the immigration of Dutch and Belgian Protestants into the city, even though they would have brought their money with them and dramatically enlivened the city’s economy.

The landscape was totally dominated by the Big Three. The situation of any other religious party or sect (including the Jews) was generally extra-legal, depended on the will and favor of the sovereign and sometimes on their economic usefulness to the state, and could change overnight with the accession of a new ruler. The Big Three differentiated themselves from one another by enforcing their respective doctrinal edifices and exercising more or less stringent quality control over the product offered to the usually captive consumer, the believing public. All three confessions had oversight institutions – consistories and university faculties – to maintain the tradition and integrity of their teaching and ministry, and to assure the integration of individual parts into the whole, so that, for example, as all McDonald’s restaurants have their Golden Arches, all Lutheran churches would be recognizably Evangelical, etc. (Since the Lutheran and Reformed church organizations were governed at the national or territorial level, there were bound to be territorial or national differences of one kind or another. It is also worth noting that the privilege of exercising strict control over the territorially established churches also obliged governments to provide at least a modicum of support for them.) Since the Reformed and Lutheran clergy were educated and belonged to the intellectual and social elite, they had to master certain preacherly, rhetorical, and soul-persuading skills before they could be examined and ordained, then assigned to a post. For all Protestant clergy preferred to be called preachers (Prediger) rather than priests, in order to differentiate themselves from the Roman kind, it was precisely proper ordination by a traditional authority that not only constituted the stamp of approval but also set them apart and endowed them with the power to exercise the priestly function of administering the sacraments. It was at this very point – the integrity and validity of the ordination process and the priesthood – where the Lutherans, Reformed, and Anglicans, to a lesser extent perhaps also the Presbyterians, in North America were vulnerable, whereas the sects were much less inhibited.

In 1784 the Acta Historico-Ecclesiastica Nostri Temporis, the first Weimar predecessor of Henke’s Archiv für die neueste Kirchengeschichte, carried a
report from Eisenach (the other part of Carl August’s dominions) under the rubric “Vermischte Nachrichten”:

Seit länger als zwanzig Jahren hatten hier verschiedene hiesige Einwohner reformirter Religion von unserer gnädigsten Landesherrschaft die Erlaubniß erhalten, einen Prediger ihrer Konfession aus dem benachbarten Fürstenthum Hessen jährlich zweimal hierher kommen, und sich von demselben in einem Privathause das heilige Abendmahl reichen zu lassen.22

It should be noted that this permission extended only to participating in the sacrament, not to hearing sermons or otherwise seeking edification in the group practice of their Reformed religion. This concession was apparently granted during the regency of Duchess Anna Amalia and demonstrates once again her liberal-mindedness. Recently, however, the house owner had died, while the number of communicants had grown so large that it could not be expected of his heirs that they should continue to host the services as before. Therefore the Reformed citizens of Eisenach had decided to petition for the use of one of the Eisenach churches, “weshalb sie sich auch zu Ende des Monats Juni dieses Jahres mit unterthänigen Bittschreiben an Se. Herzogl. Durchl. unsern gnädigstregierenden Landesfürsten und Herrn, und an das Herzogl. Oberkonsistorium wendeten, und die hiesige Kreuzkirche zu ihrem künftigen Versammlungsorte in ohnmassgeblichen Vorschlag brachten” (117–18). The petition was granted, but under very controlled and circumscribed conditions which made it unmistakably clear that it was not a matter of right, but of official accommodation: the Reformed church-goers were to announce their intentions to the General Superintendent eight days in advance so that he could arrange for the church to be opened, they were not to draw attention to their services by ringing the church bells, and they should “die ihnen ertheilte Erlaubniß blos als einen Gnadenpunkt und als eine solche ansehen, die ihnen auf Wiederruf ertheilt worden” (118). A (necessary and parallel) development, this time involving the Hessen-Kassel (Reformed) consistory, is reported in the 77th Teil in 1785, several months later, again under the rubric “Vermischte Nachrichten.” Since Herr Otto, the Reformed preacher from Herleshausen who is going to be ministering in Eisenach several times a year, may be away from his parish for short periods of time, he requests the consistory’s permission to be substituted at such times by a Lutheran [!] preacher from Eisenach. The request is granted by the consistory, “jedoch wird euch diese Erlaubniß nur in Nothfällen und ohne

Consequenz auch revocabiliter bis auf anderwärtige Verordnung zugestanden” (635). The Eisenach consistory is notified and the editor closes: “Ein neues Denkmal der in unsern Gegendten sich immer weiter verbreitenden nachbarlichen Dultung!” (p. 636). In both these cases, making a Lutheran church available for Reformed services and allowing a Lutheran preacher to minister to a Reformed parish, one is acutely conscious of doing something out of the ordinary and blurring a brand difference that is supposed to be upheld and maintained—therefore the insistence in both cases that the concession granted can and may be withdrawn at any time.

In North America by this time the brands had long since been diluted in the flood of German immigrants, who desperately sought the opportunity to practice something like their traditional religion in the face of an acute shortage of pastors, teachers, and priests in the New World. Early on in the process of settling the colonies outside New England it had been possible for groups of sponsored colonists to be provided with their own clergy. Thus there were court-appointed Danish and Swedish Lutheran preachers ministering to colonies of their own countrymen well before Germans began to arrive in force. Before the British took over New Amsterdam Dutch Lutherans in the city had a minister of their own.\(^{23}\) The famous Salzburg immigrants of 1734 had landed in Georgia to found their new city of Ebenezer under direct sponsorship of the City of Augsburg, the University of Halle and the English Society for Promoting the Knowledge of Christ in Foreign Parts with their own Lutheran preachers. Later on, securing successors for them was a problem which put the Ebenezers back in the situation of other German immigrants.\(^{24}\) The Palatine and Swiss settlers (partly sponsored by Queen Anne) who were transported to New Berne in North Carolina in 1710 were not accompanied by their own clergy, but soon petitioned the Bishop of London to accept them as members of the Anglican


\(^{24}\) See P. A. Strobel, The Salzburgers and their Descendants. With Foreword, Appendix, and Index by Edward D. Wells, Sr. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1953; originally Baltimore, 1855, with subtitle: Being the History of A Colony of German [Lutheran] Protestants, who Emigrated to Georgia in 1734, and Settled at Ebenezer, Twenty-Five Miles Above the City of Savannah). Ebenezer was occupied by the British during the Revolution and the church turned into a stable. The pastor at the time was a Tory who left afterward with the British. Lutheranism declined there gradually after the Revolution and was eclipsed by Methodism and other evangelical persuasions. Strobel claims a major reason for this was the hesitation (or incapacity) of the Ebenezer pastors to preach and minister in English to the younger generation. The difficulty of accommodating and assimilating was similar in other areas where the Germans were relatively isolated.
Church and send them an Anglican priest who could preach to them in German.  

As time went on, it was practically impossible for immigrants to take along their own preachers because neither immigrants nor preachers had the means to survive independently (for which reason also young preachers were advised repeatedly not to strike out for America on their own without an official Beruf). Mühlenberg recounts the agonizing experience of one such would-be servant of the Lord in a letter of 16 November 1748 to Francke and Ziegenhagen (the young man’s story is interesting also for the light it sheds on the process of becoming a preacher):


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25 See Bernheim, p. 80. Bernheim “presumes” without knowing for certain that the bishop was successful in supplying the requisite clergyman, “and thus these German Protestants glided gradually into the Episcopal Church.”
Mühlenberg went on to give Wygand a modestly favorable review, but he was far from ready to be entrusted with a congregation. He became a full-fledged member of the Pennsylvania Ministerium only later.

Experience showed early on how difficult it would be for German Lutheran and Reformed immigrants to remain distinct and to supply adequately their separate wants and needs. As immigration swelled in the course of the eighteenth century they increasingly lived side by side, suffered the same deprivations, intermarried, etc., under conditions far different than those in the homeland. The fact that they were all German quickly came to unite them more than their confessional differences divided them. One church in Charleston, South Carolina even had Lutherans, Reformed, and Catholics in its congregation. The few Lutheran and Reformed clergy often found ways to cooperate and enjoy friendly relations with each other, as well as with Anglican and Presbyterian ministers. There are many examples of joint ownership of churches, union congregations, joint clergy associations, joint participation in ordinations, and arrangements to preach and offer communion in each other’s churches. In North Carolina and Pennsylvania there are even examples of Lutheran and Reformed clergy ordaining Anglicans who would otherwise have had to travel to London for the purpose – while Mühlenberg’s son Peter Gabriel, the later revolutionary general and politician, traveled to London for Anglican ordination so that he could minister to Lutheran (and also Anglican) congregations in Virginia. Under New World conditions confessional branding inevitably lost a good deal of its exclusivity; but there was always the necessity of guarding against inferior and shoddy no-brand products (such as the sects) and against counterfeit brands, of which, at least to judge by Mühlenberg’s ongoing enmity towards them, the Zinzendorfian Moravians were the most threatening. As we can see also in the tale of young Wygand, among nominal Lutherans there was still considerable hostility between “orthodox” and “Pietists”; when it came to identifying themselves doctrinally the German Lutherans insisted, as though by default, on cleaving to the “unaltered Augsburg Confession” and no other creed (as they still do today).

In 1786 the *Acta* published excerpts of a letter from Baltimore under the heading “Einige kirchliche Nachrichten aus Amerika.” There is great hope for
the future and America remains a refuge for all those who find Europe too confining and unfree:

Junge Leute, die gern arbeiten, sind uns willkommen, und diese können unter uns ein friedliches, ruhiges Leben führen, und ihrer Arbeit satt und froh werden. Wer nur fleischliche Freiheit, Weichlichkeit und Wollust sucht, der bleibe hinweg, und stecke uns mit der Europäischen Ueppigkeit nicht weiter an! Mancher Müssiggänger hat gleichwohl das Arbeiten unter uns gelernt. Unsere kirchliche und gesetzliche Verfassung ist freilich noch nicht in dem Gang und Schwung, wo wir sie gern wünschten; es ist itzt auch noch nicht möglich, und wir werden die Mischung des Guten und Bösen unter uns in der neuen Welt, wie in der Alten behalten; sie wird immer das Hauptgepräge der menschlichen Dinge auf Erden bleiben.27

To be sure, life is not easy in North America, and there is an earnest warning here that those who are not prepared to work hard should stay away. While the Revolution has been won, religious, social, and civil affairs are not yet in the best possible order, and in fact the correspondent avers that in many respects “die armen Indianer [übertreffen] die meisten hiesigen Weissen. Viele von ihnen sind religiöser” (1072). It is a common complaint of the period, reflected not only in this letter, that there is little respect for religion, churchgoing, or preachers in North America (so in this respect things had not improved greatly since Mühlenberg’s arrival in 1742!). But compared with Europe, there is a veritable army of religious workers ministering to souls and reaping the harvest of the Lord:

Wir haben hier [i.e. in Baltimore] zehen Kirchen und Meetings, d.i. Versammlungshäuser; der Grösse und Zahl der Glieder nach folgen sie also auf einander: 1) die Englischpresbyterianische, 2) die Englischbischöfliche, 3) die teutsche evangelische, 4) die Reformierte, 5) die Römischkatholische, 6) die teutschen Methodisten, oder Herrnhuter, 7) u. 8) die englischen Methodisten, Separatisten und Synkretisten, 9) die Wiedertäufer; 10) die Quaker. – Die Prediger kommen ziemlich wohl mit einander aus, versehen oft Taufen, Kopulationen und Krankenbesuche für einander.

Baltimore is of course a fair-sized city, a center of civilization and relative toleration. In the countryside things do not necessarily always appear in such a positive light.

In 1798 Henke published a “Neuestes Verzeichniß aller Religionsgesellschaften in den vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, von dem Lutherischen Prediger Herrn Schäfer zu Germantown.”28 The piece is worth quoting at some length for its depiction of religious demographics. The author lists, describes, and gives the numbers and locations of: (1–8) Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed (Synod of Dordrecht 1618), Protestant Episcopal, Baptists (“haben mit denen in England einerley Glaubensartikel,” p. 278), Unitarians or

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27 Volume 11, 90th Theil, p. 1071.
Socinians ("diese haben, so viel mir bekannt ist, jetzt noch keine gottesdienstliche Gemeinen gestiftet, es müßte es denn Dr. Priestley, welcher sich zu Northumberland in Northumberland County, Pensylvanien niedergelassen, unter seinen Landsleuten gethan haben. Vom Dr. Priestley wurde anfangs viel gesprochen – jetzt ist alles stille," pp. 278–79), Quakers, and Methodists ("Im Jahre 1790 belief sich die Anzahl der Wesleischen Methodisten in unseren Staaten auf 57621. Ihre Einrichtungen sind in vielen Stücken löblich und nachahmungswürdig. Ihr Eifer für das thätige Christenthum, und was sie so nennen, ist bekannt," pp. 279–80). This is a common judgment of the Methodists.

9) *Katholiken* werden auf 50000 gerechnet, wovon beynahe die eine Hälfte in Maryland ist. Sie haben einen Bischof, der zu Annapolis in Maryland residiret, aber freilich nicht in dem Anschen steht, wie der zu Barcellona, noch weniger wie der zu Bamberg. . . .


11) *Mährische Brüder* oder *Herrnhuter*. Im J. 1795 war ihre Anzahl in Pensylvanien folgende: zu Bethlehem zwischen 600 und 700, zu Nazareth 497, und in Nordcarolina, wo sie auch eine Colonie haben, 6 Kirchen. So haben sie auch zu Neuyork, Philadelphia, Lancaster, Yorktown, Libanon etc. Gemeinen, welche aber an Gliederzahl sehr gering sind.

12) *Dombler, Tuncker* oder wie sie sich nennen Täufer, sind zweierley [Saturday and Sunday dunkers. The Sunday variety are very numerous, especially in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.]

13) *Mennonisten* sind auch zahlreich in Pensylvanien, Maryland und Virginien. Sie sind alle Deutsche und reden gewöhnlich die deutsche Sprache. Lancaster County ist ihr Hauptsitz, denn hier ist das fruchtbarste Land, wonach sie sehr begierig sind.

14) *Schwenkfelder* stammen von etlichen Flüchtlingen aus Schlesien her, sie haben nur einige Gemeinen in Pensylvanien.


Kirche. Unter den Englischen zeichnet sich die Methodisten Kirche wegen ihres thätigen Christenthums vor anderen aus. (pp. 280–83)

Such a dizzying array of churches and sects is far beyond the experience or imagining of the German reader back home. Some of the sects would seem to be exotic enough as to pose little threat to the mainline churches. The author shows a certain envy of the Mennonites, who had, after all, managed to secure the best land, but they were hardly out proselytizing among the poor, humble German Lutherans and Reformed. The naturalists and deists belong to a different social and political class and represent more of an “abschreckendes Beispiel”; but in fact even the wildest ideas propagated by leaders of sects posed a danger for the mainline Lutheran and Reformed churches in the areas where German immigrants had concentrated, as long as the churches themselves were understaffed and there were not enough competent, credentialed clergy on the job to keep their flocks out of their clutches.

The situation described in 1798 was, except for higher population figures, hardly different from that prevailing throughout the century. Mühlenberg spent an inordinate amount of time, especially in his early years in America, trying to regularize the faith, to drive the bad pennies out of circulation, and replace them with good ones. His own theology is not really very clearly stated in his diaries or elsewhere, but appears in any case to have been more practical than theoretical. Mühlenberg’s doctrinal test was adherence to the Augsburg Confession and the other symbols; as a pastor he judged a person’s nearness to salvation by whether or not the person was as yet “unconverted,” clearly a Pietist criterion. Over the years, however, Mühlenberg, with the cooperation of like-minded colleagues, organized the Pennsylvania church under the control and supervision of a Ministerium which eventually became the Pennsylvania Synod. Lacking educational institutions for training would-be clergy, they developed a system of apprenticeship and probationary preaching. The Ministerium examined the credentials of clergy newly arrived from Europe or other colonies, subjected them to a probationary period before granting full membership, and otherwise watched

29 Mühlenberg’s diaries were published in translation to commemorate the 200th anniversary of his arrival in Philadelphia; like his correspondence, the diaries are invaluable, not only as documents of religious history, but for the light they shed on social and political conditions during the colonial and revolutionary periods. They are truly massive in extent – Mühlenberg must have spent almost as much time writing and transcribing as traveling around to discharge his pastoral duties. See: The Journals of Henry Melchior Mühlengerb, In Three Volumes. Translated by Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1942–58).
over the value of the Lutheran brand in Pennsylvania. A “Kirchenagende” published in Philadelphia in 1786 listed 24 preachers by name.\footnote{Reproduced in the editor’s introduction to the article on conditions in America and Pennsylvania already cited, pp. 191–92. In the article itself, which apparently consists largely of material taken over from the \textit{Hallische Nachrichten}, the preachers are listed according to their place of residence and according to whether they are German imports or homegrown. At this late time something less than half the total had been sent over from Germany.}

The 1788 article “Neuere Nachrichten von den vereinigten teutschen evangelischen Gemeinden in Nordamerica, vornemlich in Pensylvanien” from which I have already quoted also reported on the founding of several academies and colleges in the 1770s and 1780s. The most important of these events were the founding of the university in Philadelphia in 1779, as is proudly pointed out, “noch im Kriege,”\footnote{\textit{Acten, Urkunden und Nachrichten zur neuesten Kirchengeschichte}, Ersten Bandes drittes Stück. 1788, p. 208.} and the founding of Franklin and Marshall College at Lancaster soon after the Revolution. Franklin and Marshall had equal numbers of Lutherans, Reformed, and Anglicans on the board of trustees. The university in Philadelphia was non-sectarian, but had clergy of the leading denominations among its trustees. Just Christian Heinrich Hellmuth, one of the two Philadelphia Lutheran pastors at the time, who was to be made a Doctor of Theology and Professor at the university, had argued that German language and culture should be among the subjects taught there so that Germans could “mit den Sprachen und Wissenschaften zugleich ihre Muttersprache . . . cultiviren, weil ganze Countees (Grafschaften) wären, wo lauter Teutsche wohnten. Er setzt hinzu [as quoted in the \textit{Hallische Nachrichten} from which the article is drawn]: ‘Ich denke, daß Philadelphia in wenig Jahren einer teutschen Stadt weit ähnlicher sehen wird, als einer englischen, und warum sollten wir nicht dahin arbeiten, diesen Zeitpunct zu beschleunigen. Ferner bin ich sehr dafür, die deutsche Sprache hier, so viel als möglich, auch unter unsern vornehmen Engländern\footnote{In the Germans’ usage, “Engländer” were the “ethnically” English, to distinguish them also from Scots and Irish.} bekannt zu machen, damit unsere teutsche junge Herren sich ihrer Muttersprache zu schämen keine Ursach haben, wenn sie die vornehmsten Engländer dieselbe schätzen und reden hören.’” This is a rather strange expression of cultural and social ambition, resurrecting – in the middle of the American Revolution, no less! – the cultural and class differences of Europe which the American experience had been thought to transcend, but in which the spiritual leaders of the Germans now want at least the best of their flock to
participate! It goes without saying that such expectations are also rather far from the humble beginnings of Mühlenberg’s ministry in 1742. Pride was, however, perhaps only for the elite, or, by this time, figured in the differentiation between the cultured German ministers/intellectuals and the uncultured inhabitants of the countryside. In 1787 the *Historisches Portefeuille* published an article entitled “Über den Religionszustand unter den Deutschen in Nordamerika” which consisted of excerpts from a 1781 book by Johann Christoph Kunze, who was Mühlenberg’s son-in-law and had been...

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33 For another example of German cultural and ethnic pride see a report by Arnold Roschen, one of the German preachers sent to North Carolina: “Unter den Punkten, welche vor der Confirmation den Unverheiratheten eingeschärft wurden, war auch der, sich nicht mit den Englishen oder Irrländern zu verheirathen. Und allerdings, so widersinnig das einem Europäer scheinen muß, ist dieser Punkt in hieriger Gegend von Wichtigkeit. Denn erstlich sind die Irrländer hier zu Lande träge, liederlich und arm; wohnen in den elendesten Hütten; genießen mit ihrem Vieh (in den Städten ist es umgekehrt), gleiches Futter. Zweitens verträt sich sehr selten deutsches und englisches Blut zusammen; schwächliche Kinder sind die Früchte davon und Uneinigkeit; die Engländerin räumt dem Manne nicht ein, in seinem Hause zu gebieten; behauptet er gleichwohl sein Recht, so entstehen Mord und Totschlag. Drittens halten die Engländer in diesen Gegenden sich zu keiner Religionsparthey, und lassen ihre Kinder weder taufen noch zur Schule gehen, sondern aufwachsen wie das Vieh. Viertens sind wir es unsern Vaterlande schuldig, das unzg. dazu beizutragen, daß deutsches Blut und die Sprache in America sich erhalte und immer mehr ausbreite, wozu es in diesen Gegenden einen guten Anschein hat.


34 *Historisches Portefeuille. Zur Kenntniss der gegenwärtigen und vergangenen Zeit* appeared in Vienna, Breslau, Leipzig, Berlin, and Hamburg. At least nominally a monthly, it appeared in Stücke, which were gathered in Bände covering two months each. It featured many items about trade, fishing, prices, current affairs, military affairs and foreign news. Here *Historisches Portefeuille auf das Jahr 1787*, siebentes Stück; Monat Julius, pp. 21–28.

35 *Etwas vom rechten Lebenswege* (Philadelphia: Melchior Steiner, 1781). It was dedicated to Peter, Freiherr von Hohenthal and dated January 2, 1781. Another imprint, without the dedication, went under the title *Ein Wort für den Verstand und das Herz vom rechten und gebahnten Lebenswege*. The passages published in the *Historisches Portefeuille* are pp. 167–70, but the “Einsender” or the editor (apparently Velthusen!), identifying Kunze as a preacher in New York, gives the faulty (at least incomplete) title *Vom gebahnten Lebenswege*. I quote from the text in the *Historisches Portefeuille*. 
Hellmuth’s colleague in Philadelphia when the university was founded in 1779. He had been appointed professor in Philadelphia before Hellmuth, but had left Philadelphia to accept a call from the main church in New York when it was reorganized after the Revolution (he was also professor at the university in New York). If Hellmuth’s remarks about the “Engländer” and “unsere teutsche junge Herren” indicate an aspiration to ideological elevation to German city (patrician?) status, the excerpts from Kunze’s book – precisely contemporaneous with Hellmuth’s remarks! – demonstrate an elitist position that seems to have practically given up on prospects for combating the evil in the countryside.

Eine ins genaue gehende Pensylvanische Kirchengeschichte würde Auftritte enthalten, die die alte Welt als Fabeln ansehen würde. Auch hier darf nicht vergessen werden, daß die seltsame Beschaffenheit mancher, die man als Prediger annahm, den Gliedern der Gemeine nichts weniger als Entschuldigunggründe ihres Verhaltens sind: Denn eben dadurch, daß man ungeprüfte, ungeleherte, ungewaschene und ungesalbte sich als Lehrer aufladete, wird nur die Verachtung dieses Amts und der damit verbundenen Pflichten himmelschreiender. Lastern und Greueln, die eine Gemeine an keinem ihrer Mitglieder dulden soll, sieht man lachend und kaltblütig auf dem Lehrstuhl zu, in Versammlungen, die um das Böse von sich zu thun, sich an keine höhere Instanzen zu wenden nötig haben. Die Kirchen sind grässentheils vom Anfange ihrer Gründung an zu Lande Zankäpfel, und an vielen Orten benachbarten zum Trotz erbaut. Wenn solche fertig: sucht man entweder an einem benachbarten Prediger Antheil oder man läßt sie unbesezt. Im ersten Fall genießt die Gemeine alle 5, 6 oder 8 Wochen eine Frühpredigt, und nachdem der Prediger der Gemeine versprochen, sie den 5, 6 oder 8 Sonntag wieder zu sehen, schwingt er sich schnell auf das Thier, das ihn ohne Verzug noch 8 oder 10 Englische Meilen weiter tragen muß. Denn will der Diener Gottes im Lande leben; so muß er mehrere Male so viel Gemeinen annehmen, und bei aller Abmattung seines Leibes, beim Herumtreten Tag und Nacht, bei aller ihm möglichen Treue, an nichts als öffentlichen Gottesdienst und äusserliche Predigerhandlungen denken, wobei den Kranken und Sterbenden nicht beigestanden und beunruhigten, und wegen ihrer Seligkeit verleugnen kein Trost- und Erinnerungswort insbesondere zugerufen werden kann. Läßt man aber die Kirchen unbesezt; (und von hirtenlosen Gemeinen ist das Land voll;) so verschliesst man sie auch, anstatt, in derselben Christo ein Lied zu singen, und durch vereinigtes Darstellen vor dem Herrn und Vorlesen der Schrift und erbaulicher Predigten demselben in dieser Wüsten ein Opfer zu werden. Bei solcher Religionsverwaltung ist es kein Wunder, daß man nirgends Eltern willig findet, Kinder dem Herrn zu seinem Dienst zu weihen, und die Sprache, die ich zahlenlos gehört habe, ist: man fragt in diesem Lande nichts nach Predigern. Dabei herrschen alle Arten der Ausscheißungen, Sünde, Schande und Laster in den Städten, Städtgen und auf dem Lande, und die Zunge, dies unruhige Uebel, weis sich der Freiheit in den Wirtshäusern am lautesten zu bedienen. Ist eine Gegend der Welt, da Trunkenbolde so ehrlich [Note: so wenig verachtet] sind, wie hier? da Gotteslästerungen, falsche Eide, ia Ehebrüche, auch wil Mordthaten, so wenig zu bedeuten haben, als in Amerika? Redliche Knechte Gottes eifern dawider; aber theils unterstüzt sie keine Obrigkeit, theils keine gewöhnliche Achtung, theils werden sie dadurch unustet und flüchtig, und theils kommt man ihnen nicht in die Kirche. So sieht das erste Geschlecht der Europäischen Anbauer in Amerika aus: was wird denn aus dem zweiten und dritten werden? Ein Funke von elterlichen Ermahnungen und ein Eindruck, den das ienseit des Meers noch etwa geachtete Amt der Versöhnung machte, verursachte noch hier und da Gegenbemühungen; aber diese sind groben Theils schon gegen den Menschen unkräftig, der
dem guten deutschen Eiferer der nächste ist, ich meyne den Sohn seines Leibes. Der
rauschende Strom des allgemeinen Verderbens ist nicht nur dahineissend, sondern übertäubt
auch väterliche, so wie priesterliche Vorstellungen. Daher zeugt dies Land eine Menge von
gebrandmarkten im Gewissen, und Eltern ungehorsamen, deren Character noch greulicher
aussehst, als Europäischer Kinder, die ie das vierte Gebot übertraten. [. . .] Unverschämttheit,
Undankbarkeit, Grobheit und Bosheit müssen treue Eltern von ihren Kindern emfressen, noch
ehe, und besonders nachdem sie auf eine landesverderbliche Art frei, das heist hier, mannbar
geworden sind. Nirgends in der Welt heirathen Kinder so wider ihrer Eltern Willen: nirgends in
der Welt sind alte, die wohlhabende Kinder haben, so unversorgt: nirgends ahmen Kinder ihre Eltern in Sitten und väterlicher Weise so ungern und so wenig nach, als hier zu Lande. Wie mancher Vater hätte schon in seinen heißen Tränen darüber seine Hände waschen
cönnen, davon ich allein Augenzeuge gewesen! Aber was ist der Grund von diesen allen? Der
Gottesdienst wird nicht geachtet. (25–28)

A German Preacher Job-Hunting in Pennsylvania

We have already met Wygand, who came within a hair of being sold as an
indentured servant instead of becoming a preacher. Velthusen was at pains to
disabuse prospective preachers for North America of any idea that such a life
would be simple or easy compared to staying in Germany:

Man erträumt sich jenseits des Weltmeeres eine Unabhängigkeit und Freyheit, oder doch sorgenlose Tage, die, wenn sie je das Loos der Sterblichkeit werden könnnten, den sichtbarsten Plan der Vorsehung, uns Menschen sämtlich von einander abhängig zu machen und durch das Gefühl unserer Bedürfnisse uns auf Gott hin zu leiten, stören würden. Die wahrscheinlichste Aussicht, welche wir unserm Wanderern versprechen, ist – eine Lage, in der sie es sich unendlich sauer müssen werden lassen, als im Vaterlande, und sich noch unendlich mehr nach den Meinungen der anders Denkenden müssen bequemen lernen, als in Deutschland. . . Wer . . . über Misgeschick, Neid, Verkennung des Verdienstes, Abhängigkeit von Consistorien und Lehrnormen, Einschränkungen der Denkfreyheit, Ungerechtigkeiten der Obergerichte im Vaterlande, klagt; dessen Mismüthigkeit findet gewiß in einem fremden Weltheile mehr Stoff und Nahrung wieder, als er glaubt: und wer nicht glücklich werden will unter Bekannten, der
teht in Gefahr, sehr unglücklich zu werden unter Unbekannten.36

Yet in spite of all warnings and disclaimers adventurous souls sought their fortunes in America. I would like to close with an in-the-flesh résumé of some of the principal issues in the German Lutheran experience in America. In two numbers of volume five of the Archiv (1798) Henke published letters from Pennsylvania written by a newly arrived preacher about his experiences trying to land a job that paid enough to keep body and soul together (he was apparently

36 Lehrbücher für die Jugend in Nordcarolina . . . , pp. 28–30.
also married with children, which made the challenge even more daunting. Henke leaves the young man anonymous, but he is a Braunschweiger, apparently an ex-student and something of a protégé of Henke. In one of the documents he is referred to as A.H.S. but I will just call him Abe. The letters are dated November 1795 and April 1796.

Abe landed in Philadelphia and (apparently either following advice or responding to an advertisement) set off to try out for the job as preacher of two congregations north of Philadelphia. He spoke first with the leader of the congregation in Springfield, Paul Appel, who told him in confidence:

Auf seine Zeugnisse und sein Gesicht wollte ich ihn wohl gleich für beyde Gemeinen annehmen; aber, versteh Er recht und nehm Er mirs nicht ungut, die Leute sind scheu geworden seit dem Kriege, haben oft Hessische Soldaten zu Predigern angenommen, die sich schlecht aufführten, sich täglich besoffen und die Mädchen schwängerten; darum muß Er erst predigen.37

(Note Appel’s use of the third-person form of address, clearly marking Abe’s inferior, dependent status.) Abe tries out for the job by preaching in both congregations, and has to settle for a salary of 60 pounds a year: “Man habe nie mehr gegeben, und ein Pfarrer könne, da er überdies freye Wohnung, Holz, Futter für drey, vier Kühe und für ein Pferd erhalte, damit auskommen” (238). He could of course also expect to supplement his salary with the customary fees for confirmations, burials, weddings, and the like. He is engaged for a year, but can leave at any time. His congregations can also quit paying, fall behind in paying, or give him notice at any time, so his situation is precarious, to say the least.38

The heart of the Lutheran service and worship experience is the preaching, and the preacher is paid above all else to preach! According to Abe (and other accounts corroborate his experience) it is not at all easy to strike the right preaching mode and tone. He met criticism no matter what he did in the pulpit:

Ich predigte ohne Concept; da hieß es: der Mann ist gewiß auf unrechtem Wege, ein Quäcker, ein Mennist, der dem innern Lichte traut, und daher schwatzt, was ihm der verkehrte Geist eingebt. Ich predigte nach einer weitläufigen Disposition; da hieß es: der ist auch nicht vom Herrn gelehrt; treuen Zionswächtern wird es gegeben, was und wie sie lehren sollen. Ich


38 “Wer hier aus Deutschland als Prediger oder Schullehrer auftreten will, lerne zuvor sich gänzlich verleugnen, und bete um Muth und Kraft. Es ist ein freyes Land, und der Prediger ist auch ein freyer Mann; er steht unter keiner geistlichen Obrigkeit, selbst wenn er Mitglied des Ministeriums ist. Aber von der Gemeine, oder ihren Aeltesten und Vorstehern, ist er desto abhängiger; sie nimmt ihn an, besoldet ihn und dankt ihn ab. Sie schließt mit ihm immer auf ein Jahr; ihm aber steht es frey, jeden Sonntag aufzukündigen und davon zu gehn” (p. 239).

Abe too, like Kunze and others before him, notes a cultural and social degeneration from the older to the younger generations, at least in the countryside where life is so difficult and resources are so few:

Von den aus Deutschland gekommenen leben aber nur wenige noch, die denn aber viel gebildeter und besser sind, als die Kinder, worüber auch die Alten genugsam seufzen. Die Verwilderung muß immer weiter einreißen. Grob, roh und gefühllos sind die meisten schon; der Übergang zur Brutalität ist nicht weit. Um unsere Muttersprache steht es sehr schlecht; die jungen Leute sprechen fast nur englisch, oder vielmehr einen Mischmasch, den man Mühe hat zu verstehen. (p. 242)

Part of Abe’s problem with his congregations is that he is the first regularly ordained Lutheran preacher they have had. Because they have never joined the official organization, the Ministerium, they have forgone all hierarchical supervision and have had to fend for themselves theologically. Abe is constantly compared to their previous preachers (“Inspirirte . . . in deren Ton ich unmöglich einstimmen kann”) and found wanting in one or the other respect:

Gestern wurde ich ersucht, mich doch alle Sonntage auf der Kanzel etwas mehr zu ereifern; mein Vorweser habe gar mordmäßig und abscheulich die Kanzel geschlagen, und das habe den Leuten gar mordmäßig und lästerlich geglichen (gefallen). In Springfield ist noch ein Prediger von Reformirter Confession, ein braver und gelehrter Mann, den man aber verfolgt. Komme doch Niemand aus Deutschland, um hier als Prediger aufklären zu wollen, wenn er nicht mordmäßig geprügelt werden will. Ich bin froh, daß ich mir noch nicht habe beygehen lassen, von den symbolischen Büchern abzugehen. (pp. 242–43)

At the end of this letter he expresses the intention of attending the next annual meeting of the Ministerium at York and hopes to be admitted as a member, which would qualify him to be hired by one of the properly affiliated churches. If he can’t join the Ministerium he may move on to Virginia or western Pennsylvania (past Pittsbury, as he writes it, p. 244).

The Ministerium has restored the brand, i.e. established order and orthodoxy in Pennsylvania by sticking to its rules and regular processes for ordaining preachers and affiliating churches, and accepting them as full members. Preachers like Abe, who have been properly ordained before arriving in

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39 This last is an issue for which unfortunately there is no space in the present context: German ministers and settlers in America alike were grievously out of date, still preferring fundamentalist orthodoxy and old-fashioned devotional books like Arndt’s *Wahres Christenthum* over all else. The Enlightenment and Enlightenment theology had completely passed them by. By the 1790s the bogeyman was Tom Paine and his preaching of French revolutionary ideas.
Pennsylvania, still have to serve a probationary period before they are accepted into the fellowship or allowed to serve one of the churches affiliated with the Ministerium. It is a burden for job-hunting preachers to be so restricted in their possibilities, but Abe sees the wisdom of the arrangement:

Da indessen bisher so viele nichtswürdige Leute sich als Prediger eingeschlichen, und in der That viel Böses gestiftet haben, so ist die Wachsamkeit und Strenge, die in diesem Stücke das Ministerium beweiset, nicht zu tadeln, im Ganzen vielmehr heilsam. Wären nur alle Gemeinen zu bewegen, sich mit dem Ministerium zu vereinigen!40

He hopes, but doesn’t really expect, to be admitted to the company, and the reward for his long and expensive journey to York is to be told in writing that, while the Ministerium recognizes him as a properly ordained preacher, it finds it inappropiate to accept him into full membership at this time, “weil es gegen die Art des Ministeriums ist, irgend einen Prediger in nähere Verbindung anzunehmen, bis daß aus dem Betragen desselben offenbar worden ist, daß dies mit seinen auswärtigen Zeugnissen übereinstimme” (p. 580).

Abe is advised by acquaintances at the Ministerium meeting to audition for other jobs in Maryland and southern Pennsylvania before going home to his two congregations. He is greatly impressed by the air of prosperity and well-being in the Maryland settlements through which he passes, preferring them over what he knows from Pennsylvania, “in Absicht der Cultur des Bodens und der Menschen. . . . Herrliche Plätze, wahre deutsche Rittergüter, die schönsten Weizenfluren, große steinerne Häuser und Scheuren, brave Leute, hatte ich hier getroffen” (p. 584). But nothing works out there. Abe hears from a friend that one of the Maryland congregations he had found attractive had had such a bad experience with a preacher from Germany that it was not yet ready to hire another one. Other doors would open if he were patient, and he does in fact receive expressions of interest from other places. He would especially have liked to move to Reading because there would be schools for his children. "Ein Buschpfarrer, wie ich bin, dessen Kirchsprengel sich so weit erstreckt . . . kann sich um den Unterricht seiner Kinder wenig, um ihre Bildung fast gar nicht bekümmern. Da wachsen denn die Knaben mit den Stieren und übrigen Buschbewohnern auf, nehmen ihre Wildheit an, raufen sich, lernen Hasen fangen, Schlangen totdschlagen, gut schießen, und weiter nichts” (p. 585).41 But nowhere does Abe get a better offer, so he remains for now with his original two congregations and negotiates for a higher salary (100 pounds a year, which he actually achieves by taking on yet a third congregation). The original congregations had already been difficult enough to serve because of their past

40 Archiv . . . , Fünften Bandes Viertes Stück, 1798, p. 578.
41 Such, at any rate, seems to have been a principal part of the upbringing of Mühlenberg’s son Peter Gabriel, the Revolutionary general and later politician!
history and an infection of Methodistic inclinations and practices which he had had to root out: “Ich bin selbst Schuld daran, daß das Uebel der Verführung so weit gediehen ist, weil ich zu spät angefangen habe, Fluch und Bann von der Kanzel auf dies Gesindel herab zu schleudern. Vor einiger Zeit aber gelang es mir, einige, die sich zu ihnen [den Methodisten] hinneigen, durch eine Predigt zum Zittern und Schluchzen zu bringen; aber ich mußte mich auch, wider meinen Geschmack, dazu bequemen, recht furchtbar zu drohen und zu donnern, weil mit Sanftmuth und Belehrung hier nichts ausgerichtet ist” (pp. 586–87). Now, with the third congregation, he has even farther to travel than before and more often, especially right now, when he is instructing twenty-four people in preparation for confirmation:

Unter ihnen sind Männer und Weiber, Schwangere und Säugerinnen, in und ausser der Ehe, Getaufte und Ungetaufte, Leute, die von Gott und Menschen gar nichts, vom Teufel doch etwas durch Hörensagen, wissen, und die dabey kaum deutsch verstehen. Solche Arbeiten, durch die so wenig ausgerichtet wird, bey denen man denn zuweilen auf Reisen auch wohl der Gefahr des Umkommens ausgesetzt ist, machen das Buschpredigerleben zur unerträglichsten Last. Wie weit besser hat es der Pflanzer! Kein Wunder, wenn man hier völlig verbauert. (p. 588)

Such is the life of the church at all times as seen from below. I suspect that conditions for the German immigrants and their preacher in the Pennsylvania countryside were not all that different from and probably still superior to the fate of country Germans at home (especially with the French Revolutionary Wars about to transform their life substantially). A further project would be to find out what finally became of Abe and whether he got out of the wilderness.