

ZION
ON THE MISSISSIPPI



Martin Stephan. The white Meissen china cup is banded in gold, and the image is hand painted in color. The cup is of the exact size as this reproduction.

PLATE I

Z I O N
on the
MISSISSIPPI

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE SAXON LUTHERANS
IN MISSOURI 1839—1841

by

Walter O. Forster

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT
PURDUE UNIVERSITY



Paperback Edition

Original cloth edition copyright 1953

Manufactured in the USA

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23

To Lydia

SINE QUA NON

PREFACE

It is more than a hundred years since the first book appeared on the Stephanite Emigration from Saxony to the United States. Since that time much has been written on the movement. But, as no comprehensive and thorough study of the sources was made, the growing volume of literature in the field offered little that was new and much that was partisan. Unfortunately, these Saxons and their descendants are not alone in seeing the vigorous chronicle of their critical years dissipated by that familiar trinity of corrosive forces which unfailingly attacks the immigrant saga: disintegration in family chests, distortion in anniversary publications, and dilution in personal histories.

A noted student of immigration to the United States, Carl Wittke, in speaking of the tremendous task of research remaining to be done in that field, has remarked: "Much of the work now completed has been done by descendants of some particular group, and therefore many of the accounts are unreliable and exaggerated."¹ This is bad. But the treatment of religious movements among the emigrants is worse. As early as 1913, Henry Pratt Fairchild, writing at the very climax — and, as it was to prove, near the end — of an epoch in the history of immigration to the United States, pointed out: "The effects of immigration upon the religious life of the immigrant and of the United States constitute a great field of research which has been surprisingly neglected."² The "Saxons" deserve a better fate. They are an excellent example not only of the effect of religion upon immigration, but of that which Fairchild is doubly right in pointing out as neglected, namely, the effect of immigration upon the religious life of the immigrant, and then their influence upon the religious life of the United States.

Accordingly, the following pages constitute a critical examination of the abundant source material available. The resulting vol-

¹ Wittke, *We Who Built America*, xvii.

² Fairchild, *Immigration*, 293.

ume presents considerable additional information on the Saxon Immigration and revises some of the ideas prevalent on the events and men connected with it. An attempt is made to bring the religious phase of the movement, which has always been recognized, into proper focus with the social, political, and economic factors involved, which have received scant attention. This approach also makes possible some contributions to the history of German immigration to the United States and to the social history of St. Louis and the West a century ago. Research has centered about the manuscripts in the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis. This collection alone contains enough of the records and correspondence of the Stephanite *Gesellschaft* to create for the student an *embarras de richesse*. In addition, however, extensive use was made of contemporary newspapers and periodicals, manuscript court records in Saxony and the United States, and manuscripts in church archives and private collections. The study was originally prepared as a doctoral dissertation at Washington University in St. Louis. It has since been expanded and revised.

Among numerous acknowledgments which I wish to make, the first is due Professor Ralph P. Bieber. Not only was the original thesis written under his direction, but his patient advice and scholarly guidance have been freely given over a period of years since that time. I am also greatly indebted to Ida Parker Bieber (Mrs. Ralph P. Bieber) for a critical reading of the manuscript. For invaluable assistance in every phase of the study I am deeply grateful to my wife, Lydia Treichel Forster. My father, the late Rev. Frederick Forster, formerly Assistant House Editor of Concordia Publishing House, rendered substantial help in making translations and offered many useful suggestions. I am obligated to the following institutions and individuals for various forms of aid and many courtesies extended to me in the course of my search for material: Concordia Historical Institute and its present curator, the Rev. August R. Suelflow; Pritzlaff Memorial Library, Concordia Seminary; the Saxon *Hauptstaatsarchiv*, Dresden; the Saxon *Landeskirchenamt*, Dresden; Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis; State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia; St. Louis Public Library; St. Louis Mercantile Library Association; Washington University Library; Trinity Lutheran Church, Altenburg, Mo.; Concordia Lutheran Church, Frohna, Mo.; Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis; the late Prof. William G. Polack, Concordia Seminary, and the for-

mer president of that institution, Louis E. Fuerbringer; Chaplain Herbert C. W. Albrecht, U. S. N., Great Lakes, Ill.; the Rev. E. J. Buerger, Ellicottville, N. Y.; Mr. Ralph Killian, Clerk of the Perry County, Mo., Circuit Court; Miss Alice Stover, West Lafayette, Ind.; the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. A. O. Gebauer, Granite City, Ill.; and Mr. and Mrs. F. G. Hensel, Chicago, Ill. The illustrations were made possible through the collaboration of Concordia Historical Institute and the Art Department of Concordia Publishing House; specifically, contributions by Miss Esther Carlson of the Publishing House staff may properly be described as indispensable. The index is largely the product of Prof. William Schaller's patient labors.

The following holders of copyrights have generously granted permission to quote from the publications named: Ginn and Company, from George M. Stephenson's *A History of American Immigration*, 1926; Cambridge University Press, from Sir Adolphus Ward's *Germany, 1815—1890*, 1916; Brown University Press, from Vernon L. Parrington Jr.'s *American Dreams*, 1947; Carl Wittke, Dean of the Graduate School, Western Reserve University, from *We Who Built America*, 1939; the Macmillan Company, from Henry P. Fairchild's *Immigration*, 1913; Manchester University Press, from C. H. Herford, ed., *Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, 1915; the University of Georgia Press, from Carl Mauelshagen's *American Lutheranism Surrenders to Forces of Conservatism*, 1936; Harvard University Press, from Marcus Hansen's *The Atlantic Migration, 1607—1860*, 1940; The University of Chicago Press, from H. H. Maurer's series of articles on "The Sociology of Religion," in the *American Journal of Sociology*, Volumes XXX, XXXI, and XXXIII; the *American Historical Review*, from Carl Wittke's article on "The German Forty-Eighters in America," Volume LIII of the *Review*; the State Historical Society of Missouri, from articles by M. A. Owens and P. E. Kretzmann in Volumes XV and XXXIII of the *Missouri Historical Review*.

Fairchild conjectured that subjects such as that with which this volume is concerned have not received the attention they merit, perhaps "because of the difficulty of securing reliable data and establishing definite conclusions, perhaps because" they have "not seemed of sufficient importance to warrant exhaustive study."³ The question of whether the present study has surmounted the difficul-

³ *Ibid.*

ties of "securing reliable data" to the point of warranting "definite conclusions" is, of course, left to the judgment of that final arbiter, the reader. Conversely, the question of whether the aspects of migration here considered are "of sufficient importance to warrant exhaustive study" had to be answered in the writer's mind before he set himself the task. The work would neither have been begun nor completed had he lacked an abiding conviction of the transcendent importance of the things of the spirit in the life of man. His only hope is that the product will have sufficient merit to reflect the great and lasting significance of these Lutheran pioneers who came to the West to build a "Zion" in the New World.

Purdue University
December, 1952

WALTER O. FORSTER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	VII
I. European Background	1
II. Rise of Stephanism in Saxony, 1810—1837	27
III. Transformation of Stephanism into Separatism	60
IV. Development of the Emigration Idea in Stephanite Separatism	83
V. Planning an American Zion, 1837—1838	113
VI. Organization of the <i>Auswanderungs-Gesellschaft</i>	137
VII. Parting and Departing	171
VIII. The Voyage from Bremerhaven to St. Louis, 1838—1839	202
IX. The Saxons and Their New Home	226
X. The Forerunners of the Forty-Eighters in the West	245
XI. Establishing the Episcopacy	278
XII. First Contact with Religious Conditions in the West	305
XIII. Problems of Communal Living in St. Louis	325
XIV. Founding the Perry County Colony	352
XV. Discrediting Stephan's Leadership	390
XVI. Stephan's Expulsion from the <i>Gesellschaft</i>	411
XVII. Retrenchment and Reappraisal	443
XVIII. Disorganization and Reorganization, 1839—1841	473
XIX. Zion Re-Defined	507
Appendices	535
Bibliography	584

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE

- I Martin Stephan Miniature on a China Cup
Courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri
- Between pages 32 and 33*
- II St. John's Church, Dresden, Saxony, 1840
- III Religious Questions and the Phenomenon of Emigration
Discussed in the Saxon Press
- IV Notice of Escape, Description, and Appeal for Apprehension of
Franz Julius Biltz
- V Scene from "Call of the Cross," Superintendent Expostulating with
Pastor and Parishioners
Courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
- Between pages 96 and 97*
- VI Benjamin Kurtz's Report in the *New York Observer*
- VII Artist's Drawing of G. H. Hillmer's Painting of the Olbers
Courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri
- VIII Ship's List of the Olbers
Courtesy of Immigration Bureau, New Orleans, Louisiana
- IX Gotthold Heinrich Löber Miniature, by Gustav Pfau
Courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri
- Between pages 150 and 151*
- X Map, Origins of Saxon Immigration
- Between pages 240 and 241*
- XI Map of St. Louis, Missouri
Courtesy of Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri
- XII View of St. Louis, Missouri, About 1840
Courtesy of Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri

- XIII View of Front Street, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1840
Courtesy of Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri
- XIV The Saxons Landing at St. Louis, Missouri, by G. H. Hillmer and
F. Nuderscher
Courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri

Between pages 320 and 321

- XV Signatures on the "Confirmation of Stephan's Investiture"
Courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri
- XVI Stephan's Signatures
Courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri
- XVII Portion of Louise Günther's Confession
Courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri
- XVIII Sickbed Scene from "Call of the Cross"
Courtesy of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

Between pages 384 and 385

- XIX Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, by Gustav Pfau
Courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri
- XX Chest Used by Martin Stephan, and Book of Accounts Kept by the
Auswanderungs-Gesellschaft
Courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri
- XXI Page from the Book of Accounts
Courtesy of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri
- XXII Christ Episcopal Church, St. Louis, Missouri
Courtesy of Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri

Between pages 450 and 451

- XXIII Map of the Saxon Colonies in Perry County, Missouri, 1838, Owners
of Lots in Altenburg, Owners of Lots and Lands in Seelitz and Dresden
Courtesy of Walter A. Eggers, Farrar, Missouri

Between pages 512 and 513

- XXIV Early Reports in Dresden of the Crisis in the *Gesellschaft's* Affairs
- XXV Daring Advertising for Saxon Newspapers in 1839
- XXVI Sustained Repercussions in the Homeland
- XXVII The Altenburg Debate, Scene from "Call of the Cross"
Courtesy of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

**ZION
ON THE MISSISSIPPI**

CHAPTER ONE

EUROPEAN BACKGROUND

ORGANIZED MIGRATION from the German states to the Americas was rare in 1838. In Saxony such movements were virtually unknown. Therefore, when the first detachment of a large group of colonists left Dresden in October of that year, a news-conscious artist commemorated the event in a painting. The crowds at the Leipzig fair established his canvas as one of the exposition's chief attractions. But at the city's university the painter's subject was regarded as an obscurantist aberration. Clerical circles viewed the incident which the picture portrayed as a matter either for ridicule or regret.

These varied reactions were only a few of the many responses to the Stephanite emigration of 1838—1839.

In Dresden the story created headlines — not only in the sense that the events leading up to the departure appeared in them, but also because its sequel made the Dresden typesetters reach for a larger font than they had ever used before. So, for the public it was a sensation. For King Fredrick Augustus II it was a political problem. Bremen encountered it in the form of an open conspiracy to evade the anti-emigration laws or policies of several German states. Yet among the Bremen police the pathos of the drama evoked sufficient feeling to make their leniency verge on co-operation.

Readers of the *New York Observer* had the movement represented to them a sort of Protestant hejira, although "the Prophet" was somewhat more numerous and solicitously attended than his prototype. In New Orleans the colonists were just another of the many groups whose outfitting and transportation were an important piece of that bustling city's business. To the generally sympathetic St. Louis public the bumptious German press pictured the entire project as a mass hoax, whose victims were doomed to failure.

To themselves, these "victims" appeared to be the family of the faithful, fleeing from "Sodom and Gomorrah." The careful chronicler of Americana will take note of them as one of the most publicized emigrant groups in a century known for its migrations.

And an historian, who sees them in the perspective of national development, is likely to agree with Marcus Hansen that they "warrant attention because, as forerunners of the hosts to follow, they were the fathers of an exodus destined to people the broad prairies."

Usually this migration of the Saxon Lutherans to Missouri in 1839 has been regarded as exclusively religious in origin and effect. While this view is an oversimplification of a complex subject, it is nevertheless true that the religious cast of the movement serves as the most suitable point of departure in considering its history, for the group represented a conservative minority in the Saxon State Church. In 1837 one of their leaders, a Dresden clergyman named Martin Stephan, was suspended from office because of his official and private actions. He thereupon organized an emigration association which was readily joined by many conservatives who were stimulated by a fear of damnation if they remained and a hope of economic and social betterment if they went. During November, 1838, six hundred and sixty-five persons left Bremen for St. Louis in five chartered ships, one of which was lost at sea. Traveling via New Orleans, they arrived in Missouri, where their number was augmented by more than two hundred additional colonists. They soon established a hierarchy with Stephan as bishop and placed him in control of certain phases of their civil affairs. About forty-five hundred acres of land were purchased in Perry County, Missouri, as the site for a semiautonomous, theocratic community.

But before the end of the Saxons' first year in Missouri, Stephan was deposed on charges of immorality and maladministration. A contest for authority ensued between the remaining clerical and lay leaders. This controversy developed into a theological dispute, which threatened with dissolution both the St. Louis and Perry County branches of the colony and intensified the hardships of the poverty-stricken settlers. In 1841, however, C. F. W. Walther, a clergyman, effected a settlement of the differences by formulating a platform satisfactory to the majority. During the reconstruction period which followed, the St. Louis group and four of the original seven communities in Perry County survived; local antagonism expressed by the *Anzeiger des Westens* was overcome; a college, founded in 1839, was maintained; churches and schools were built; and Saxon pastors were stationed at points as distant as Wisconsin and New York. In 1847, under the leadership of Walther, and with the Saxons as a nucleus, the Missouri Synod was established by

organizing independent Lutheran congregations and clergymen on a national scale.

It was a circumstance of the first consequence for the development of the Saxon movement and the influence the group was to exert, that its arrival, orientation, and organization had taken place by 1847. For in that year the United States stood on the threshold of several generations of unparalleled immigration, in which the Germans played a significant part.

A few German immigrants had reached American shores as early as the seventeenth century, and more followed them in the eighteenth; but in the nineteenth century a marked increase in their numbers occurred. The extent of the later immigration can be determined with comparative accuracy, because on March 2, 1819, Congress passed an act requiring that, at the port of entry, ships' officers make a manifest of the passengers on their vessels. The first returns under this law, which date from September 30, 1820, mark the beginning of reliable information on immigration.¹ During the next eight decades (to 1902), the period of the greatest influx, no less than 20,408,677 immigrants came to our shores, or about twice as many as the entire population of the United States in 1820;² of this total, 5,098,005, or 24.98 per cent, were Germans.³

¹ Fairchild, *op. cit.*, 62.

² P. Hal, *Immigration and Its Effects upon the United States*, 342. The appearance of Prescott Hall's name with the initial gives occasion for a brief comment on the policy followed in this regard. Because of the family character of the Saxon emigration and the fact that the writings of a number of its more prominent members and their descendants have appeared in print, this study contains an unusual number of similar names, not only in the narrative, but also in references to both manuscript and printed material. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition of initials or Christian names, they have not been used each time a surname occurs which is borne by another person appearing in these pages. On the contrary, they have been eliminated wherever possible. Clarity was the only criterion. Accordingly, if the context, or a reference to the bibliography, or a glance at the lists of emigrants will suffice to establish the identity of such a person, the initial has not been given. Wherever there is likelihood of reasonable doubt, the initial or Christian name is inserted. In addition the following rules have been observed: The names of women appearing in the lists of emigrants are always preceded by their initials or Christian names, except in cases where the context or some other designation eliminates the possibility of confusion. However, when a duplication of surnames occurs in the case of two or more persons whose names appear in the list of emigrants, then the use of the surname, without initials or Christian name, indicates the male head of the family. In those cases where there are several families of the same name or several adult males in the same family the initials or Christian name are also given each time such a name occurs, unless the context renders this unnecessary. The single exception to the latter is Martin Stephan, Sr., who had not only a son

The coincidence of this vast migration with the climax of our westward expansion and with the period of the greatest development of the United States in almost every field is a fact that has often been noted. However, the exact relationship between these occurrences and the degree of their interaction upon each other is not always clearly indicated. Furthermore, historians have partly neglected an important portion of the larger period of immigration, namely, the portion from 1820 to 1848, into which the present study falls. The German immigrants of these years were the advance guard of their people in a new empire — the West — and to them, rather than to their more numerous compatriots of later decades, must go much of the credit for the creative influence of the pioneer. This new element made its influence felt especially in the region west of the Appalachian Mountains.

The Germans who came to the United States after 1820 tended to migrate to the West.⁴ In the specific case of Missouri, Faust asserts that in 1821 no Germans of European birth lived in the State.⁵ In 1824 Duden came to Missouri from Germany. Three years later, according to one writer, "there were less than a dozen German families in St. Louis."⁶ And a usually reliable observer, Georg Engelmann, claimed that as late as 1832 there were only "twenty or thirty" Germans in St. Louis.⁷ But from 1839 to 1847 German immigrants poured into St. Louis by the thousands, many of them coming by way of New Orleans.⁸ Of the 68,069 immigrants who came to the United States in 1839, 21,028 were Germans.⁹ Of the entire total, in turn, 10,306 arrived in New Orleans, and of these 2,691 came from Germany.¹⁰ Approximately one third of the latter

of the same name, but also an unrelated namesake with the same initial, all three of whom appear in the lists. The names of the younger Martin and of Michael Stephan occur so seldom that when they do, these two are identified clearly. In all other cases, where the simple name Stephan is used without initial, Martin Stephan, Sr., is meant.

³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴ Fairchild, *op. cit.*, 71, 84.

⁵ Faust, *The German Element in the United States*, I, 440.

⁶ Crawford, *The Immigrant in St. Louis*, 9.

⁷ Schneider, *The German Church on the American Frontier*, 98, footnote 1.

⁸ *Daily Evening Gazette*, April 23, 1839, Jan. 9, 1843; *Anzeiger des Westens*, Jan. 10, 1843; *St. Louis New Era*, June 23, 1841, Jan. 9, 1843, April 20, 1844; *Daily Missouri Republican*, Jan. 7, 1847.

⁹ Ferenczi-Willcox, *International Migrations*, I, 377.

¹⁰ *Senate Docs.* 26 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 594, pp. 22—25.

belonged to a compact, well-organized association of colonists from Saxony, whose leader was Martin Stephan.

In order to understand the German immigrant, some attention must be paid to economic and political, religious and intellectual movements in both Germany and the United States. These alone can reveal his motives for leaving his native land, his character, and the aspirations which he brought with him; these alone make possible an evaluation of his attitudes, influences, and achievements in the New World. These factors, with the exception of the religious, have frequently been neglected in the history of the Stephanites. Yet, "how shall we understand the . . . clash of cultures and creeds . . . without a knowledge of the Old World environment?"¹¹ Obviously no attempt at completeness can be made here in describing this environment, especially in the Old World, which demands immediate consideration. The aim must be to present only essentials and to keep them in rough proportion to their relative importance as underlying factors in the emigration.

The history of nineteenth-century Germany has often been divided into three periods, the first of which usually includes all or most of the first fifty years. This period was noted in the political field for the Napoleonic era and the Congress of Vienna, and in the religious field for the Union and the *Erweckung*.¹² It was a period of readjustment in several respects; and while this statement is true in some sense of every era, a brief explanation may help to show why it was true in a particular sense at the time of the Saxon emigration.

The decade following 1830 found Germany in the throes of a twofold political struggle. The one phase was a battle between liberalism and conservatism, the other a clash between particularism and nationalism. The focal point was the German Confederation, which served as a living reminder that Germany was not yet unified. The nationalist movement had failed at the Congress of Vienna; thirty-nine autonomous political units remained; and the nearest approach to the ideal of a greater Germany was the Confederation. However, this Confederation did little more than provide a back-

¹¹ Stephenson, *A History of American Immigration 1820—1924*, p. 3. See also *ibid.*, 4, 7.

¹² The origin of the term is discussed in Hennig, *Die sächsische Erweckungsbewegung im Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 9—10.

ground for the ensuing contest between Prussia and Austria, and serve as an instrument for the aggressive "reaction." Under the leadership of Metternich the forces of conservatism were largely successful in crushing the liberal movements prior to 1848. The revolutions of 1830 were generally only a prelude to the period of the severest reaction.

During this time there is noticeable a thorough reconstruction of the German intellectual attitude and the German educational system. This trend was colored by a nationalistic fervor of an idealistic, romantic type, which was "inspired by a patriotic enthusiasm and by a passionate belief in the political value of intellectual achievement."¹³ In the regeneration of Germany, education and general cultural influences were considered important agencies for developing the spiritual power and morale of the youth. An already strong intellectual tradition emphasized the principles of freedom of thought and teaching. Since there was also a general conviction of the necessity for universal education, both the *Gymnasium* and the elementary school were reorganized and imbued with the ideals of personal and intellectual freedom. The demand for political liberalization was only a natural concomitant of these developments. Educational reorganization was by no means completed by 1830, but it was already creating serious difficulties for the conservatives.

The most pressing problem for Saxony, however, was her political future. After her dismemberment at Vienna in 1815 she was left with less than half of her former territory and with little more than four sevenths of her population. A corresponding decrease in strength and prestige relegated her definitely to the ranks of second-rate German states. In 1815 Prussia, in partial fulfillment of her secret agreement with Russia, had obtained the northern half of the Saxon kingdom, including Wittenberg, whose university was then merged with that of Halle. In Dresden and Leipzig, as well as in a considerable fringe of territory around them, the monarchy was restored under mediocre Fredrick Augustus I (III), whose long reign extended from 1763 to 1827. There remained, then, Albertine Saxony, the original electorate, but since 1806 a kingdom, and Ernestine Saxony, the Thuringian ducal estates, headed by relatives of the royal line. Of the various Saxonies the kingdom and the

¹³ Herford (ed.), *Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, 106.

duchy of Saxe-Altenburg are most important for the Stephanite movement, which centered in Dresden. Fredrick Augustus died on May 5, 1827, and was succeeded by his younger brother, Anton (1755—1836). Both of these rulers attempted to ignore the real situation as far as possible and to maintain the former traditions at court and in the administration of their territory. Suggested constitutional and administrative changes, which were adopted later, were then anathema. Political reform made little progress, and liberalization of the government none.

In June, 1830, mild disturbances broke out in Leipzig and some a little more serious in Dresden. Led by students at the universities, they subsided quickly and constituted no serious threat to the monarchy. But when they began to recur in September of the same year, King Anton considered it advisable to make limited concessions, the first of which was to accept his nephew, Prince Fredrick Augustus, as co-regent, on September 13, 1830. On the same day Anton's minister and trusted adviser, Count Detlev von Einsiedel, was forced to resign.¹⁴ The count was succeeded by von Lindenau, a progressive and capable minister. On September 4, 1831, a new constitution was promulgated, establishing a limited monarchy with a bicameral legislative assembly. Although the new order did not satisfy the liberals, some progress had been made. Upon Anton's death in 1836, Prince Fredrick Augustus, an enlightened ruler, ascended the throne. "There ensued in Saxony a decade of measured political progress, which gradually transformed the kingdom into a constitutional state."¹⁵

Just prior to the Saxon emigration to the United States the industrialization of Germany was still in its incipient stages. Far behind her future industrial and commercial rivals, Germany was still an agrarian territory with a predominantly agricultural economy. Such industry as was carried on was in a rather primitive state. "In general, Germany was a rural country and its industries were home industries. . . . It was a poor country with very low wages and small incomes."¹⁶ A glance at Saxony and its textile

¹⁴ Von Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, IV, 143—146.

¹⁵ Ward, *Germany, 1815—1890*, I, 277. See also von Treitschke, *op. cit.*, IV, 149—151.

¹⁶ Herford (ed.), *op. cit.*, 88—89.

industry, important for both the country at large and the emigrants of 1838, will serve to illustrate these points.

Although Saxony was one of the more advanced states in the very backward Germany of the 1830's, she still retained the guild system even after 1840. As late as 1846 it was considered a mark of progress that there were "nearly as many cotton looms in the factory as in the home," but even of those in the factories "by far the greater number were hand looms."¹⁷ Only a fraction of the land was owned by the nobility, and small individual holdings were the rule. So the workers, besides being employed in weaving, were frequently doing some farming as well. In the case of the linen weavers, the proportion engaged in agriculture was as high as 80 per cent. However, Saxony's somewhat more rapid industrialization did not mean that she had attained any independence economically. In 1834, in accord with an agreement with Prussia during the previous year, Saxony joined the *Zollverein*. This move was a measure of economic self-defense, necessitated by the fact that the Middle German Customs Union, which Saxony had helped to found on December 8, 1828, was breaking up. Saxony had to prevent her economic isolation; so she capitulated to her more powerful neighbor. In fact, Saxony's industrialization at this time meant rather that she experienced the effects of the industrial revolution much sooner than the rest of Germany. Britain's superior mechanization of manufacture and her domination of the world market, combined with the unequal competition of cheap American cotton, reduced Saxony's linen weavers to a pitiable state.¹⁸

Industrial troubles in Saxony were aggravated by a decade of agrarian crises which had their beginning in the earlier twenties. After a particularly hard winter from 1829 to 1830 the sufferings of the people had become so acute that they attracted the attention of the government. During the ensuing investigation of the country's economic status a pastor from the stricken areas testified as follows about the condition of the people: "All houses and other establishments are mortgaged. Much property is being auctioned

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁸ Henderson, *The Zollverein*, 67, 85; Clapham, *The Economic Development of France and Germany 1815—1914*, pp. 84, 95, 100; Herford (ed.), *op. cit.*, 87—89; Rosenthal, *Die Auswanderung aus Sachsen im 19. Jahrhundert (1815—1871)*, pp. 24, 35. Cf. Gebauer, *Die Volkswirtschaft im Königreiche Sachsen*, 191 ff.

off and sold. They are not able to pay taxes and parish dues. . . . Poverty prevails not only among the unskilled and day laborers, but also among the crafts and the peasantry.”¹⁹ The sufferings of the people were termed “almost indescribable.” The poorer classes were subsisting largely on potatoes, when these were available; often they were not to be had. Begging was rare, stealing more frequent. The only ready relief from this misery was provided by a potato whiskey, which was described as the “most wretched.”²⁰

It is not surprising that, when confronted by such economic circumstances, many people looked about them for an escape from their native land, or that others, who wished to emigrate for different reasons, found little in the economic situation to hold them. During the thirties a strong urge arose in Saxony for removal from the fatherland to less developed countries. This movement fixed its greatest hopes upon America. Its vanguard and example, regardless of motives, were the Stephanite emigrants of 1838. For while there had been plans for mass emigration from Saxony prior to this date, none of them was sufficiently well organized to become a reality.²¹

Religious factors exerted a more direct influence upon the Stephanite movement and played an even greater part in the emigration of 1838 than the political and economic conditions just considered. In attempting to understand the religious controversies in Germany at that time, it is helpful to review briefly the history of conflicting German religious movements during the post-Reformation era. A contest had begun already in the latter part of the sixteenth century and early part of the seventeenth with a clash between strict doctrinalism and syncretism. The latter was a movement which advocated the union of all Christian denominations on such common ground as could be found. Lutheranism spent its energies in the violence of the quarrel with syncretism, drifted into formalism, and became an easy prey to other forces — at first to Pietism and later to Rationalism. Meanwhile syncretism had been successful to the extent that among certain elements it had created

¹⁹ Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, 24. This translation is by the present writer, as are all others in this work unless otherwise indicated.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25. In supplementing the newspaper account which the author cites, she adds: “Such and similar portrayals of need are found in the most diverse newspapers.” *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 24–25, 29, 33, 51, 67; Hennig, “Die Auswanderung Martin Stephans,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, LVIII, 164–165.

a frame of mind that offered little resistance to the further dilution of traditional dogmas.

During the second half of the seventeenth century and the first part of the eighteenth conditions in the Protestant Church of Germany produced in Pietism a reaction that emphasized Christian life at the expense of Christian doctrine. The leaders of the Pietist attack upon formalism and indifferentism were Philipp Jakob Spener (1635—1705) and August Hermann Francke (1663—1727). Pietism's primary effects were a renewed emphasis upon the study of the Bible, a revival of dynamic preaching, a high degree of emotionalism in religion, a renewal of lay activity in the Church, the abandonment of the doctrinal forms of the old Lutheran theology, the stressing of a moral life and practical philanthropy, and a separatistic tendency within the Church. Yet, just as Pietism had recoiled from the preceding tendency in the Church, it itself called forth a counteraction that was greatly intensified because it coincided with the developments in the Age of Enlightenment.

The overshadowing intellectual influence of the late seventeenth century and entire eighteenth century was the *Aufklärung*. The remarkable achievements attained in the domain of natural science by the application of the inductive method of reasoning led to the assumption that the universe was governed by immutable natural laws which reason could discover, and that constant advancement in the discovery of these laws could not fail to produce the progressive betterment of mankind from era to era. The optimistic feeling was rather general that the light of reason was dawning and was about to dispel all the evils of the world. On the basis of the *Aufklärung* a new approach to all problems was developed, which led in the field of politics first to enlightened despotism and ultimately to the French Revolution, and in the field of economics to the theories of Adam Smith. Theology was not spared the impact of these new forces. The attempt to apply the new line of reasoning to religion was called Rationalism.

In the early stage of its development the aim of Rationalism was to make theological truth self-evident, to prove it. The implication clearly was that if it could not be proved, it was not worthy of acceptance. To the Rationalists of the early eighteenth century this attitude toward theological problems appeared a firm defense against skepticism. To their orthodox critics it was skepticism

itself; and they predicted that the principle that religion was to stand or fall by its reasonableness would lead to a fundamental denial of revealed theology. Events proved that they had been correct, for Rationalism subsequently advanced along more independent lines.²² The theory of the reign of immutable natural law entailed the exclusion of the idea of miracles, which to the Rationalist were violations of such natural laws. At the same time divine activity was relegated to the very beginning of things, that is, to the establishment of these same laws, whose operation now governed the universe independently of a God. Such profound changes in theological thought not only were hostile to tradition, but precluded in theory and practice the acceptance of the principle of authority in religion. Philosophy of the Rationalistic type and science as then understood became the basis of a new *Vernunftreligion*. The concept of revealed theology was openly rejected, and the Bible was assailed with the tools of higher criticism.²³

Rationalist philosophy at one time penetrated every stratum of German society, but its easiest conquest was at the universities among the educated leaders of the Church itself.²⁴ Mass popularization was more difficult and had to be conducted largely from the rostrum of the pulpit. Theological students, thoroughly saturated with the new religio-philosophical ideas, entered the service of the state churches and sought to pass on the torch to their parishioners.²⁵ The lengths to which this attempt was carried and the degree in which it was successful naturally varied greatly, and Rationalism consequently assumed a corresponding variety of forms. For instance, a milder Rationalistic wing, the Supernaturalists, insisted

²² Seeberg, *Die Kirche Deutschlands im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, 5—6, 15.

²³ *Ibid.*; Schaff, *Germany, its Universities, Theology and Religion*, 70.

²⁴ Stöckhardt, *Die kirchlichen Zustände Deutschlands . . . im 19. Jahrhundert*, 3. The name of Stöckhardt presents for the first time one of the difficulties in spelling that is occasioned in a study of this kind by the German *Umlaut* in the case of the vowels "a," "o," and "u." Not only do later generations of a family (such as the Büngers, Bürgers, and others) often Anglicize the spelling of their names by inserting an "e" as a substitute for the *Umlaut*, but such variant spellings even occur in the name of the same person at the same period of time when, as was sometimes done, Latin letters are used. Therefore a variant spelling resulting from an *Umlaut* or the absence of it may never be taken as indicating a different person or even a different family. The initials will have to determine who is meant. Throughout this study the *Umlaut* is used unless the original to which reference is made had dropped it.

²⁵ Von Treitschke, *op. cit.*, V, 353.

upon the existence of revelation. Yet even they still subjected all alleged revelation to a rationalizing process that produced much the same effect as that achieved by the outright Rationalists themselves. "Therefore Rationalistic and Supernaturalistic sermons are often so similar, that it is impossible to distinguish to which tendency the preacher belonged."²⁶ The problems of religious life were neglected, and sermons were devoted to a discussion of current events, scientific discourses, and homespun advice on a variety of subjects, such as stall feeding, vaccinia, coffee drinking, drunkenness, careless bathing, the culture of silkworms, intelligent agriculture, the profitableness of potato raising, the necessity of tree planting, and the importance of genuine sanitation.²⁷

Rationalist preaching became more and more prevalent and often went to extremes. Miracles were summarily dismissed as fables or explained with rather strained textual and historical interpretations.²⁸ Eventually it became possible to state from the pulpit, as one preacher did in 1800: "I declare every so-called revealed religion to be a lie";²⁹ or for another to assert: "A matter which I cannot conceive and picture to myself does not exist for me."³⁰ Under the influence of the Rationalists, "Protestantism" (which they understood only as opposition to the dogmatism of the Roman Catholics and as man's right of free inquiry and loyalty to his convictions) was given a new meaning that was openly opposed to the chief tenets upon which the original protest had been based. Doctrines such as the vicarious atonement and justification by faith were dismissed as untenable in an enlightened age. The practice of continuing to appropriate the name and form of the old Protestant Church was defended by claiming that "Whoever finds these doctrines contrary to reason and to Scripture and consequently rejects them, proves his Protestantism through that very act."³¹ In other words, Rationalism regarded itself as identical with Protestantism.

²⁶ Uhlhorn, *Geschichte der deutsch-lutherischen Kirche*, II, 84—85. See also Hagenbach, *History of the Church in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, II, 106.

²⁷ Uhlhorn, *op. cit.*, II, 55; C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* (hereafter cited as *Law and Gospel*), 259.

²⁸ Herford (ed.), *op. cit.*, 147; Schnabel, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, IV, 369—370.

²⁹ Stöckhardt, *op. cit.*, 4.

³⁰ Seeberg, *op. cit.*, 16.

³¹ Stöckhardt, *op. cit.*, 3.