

**GERMAN-AMERICAN HYMNOLOGY,
1683-1800. A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTY OF
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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German-American hymnology, 1683-1800. A dissertation Submitted to the Philosophical Faculty of Johns Hopkins University for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy by William A. Haussmann

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WILLIAM A. HAUSSMANN

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BY WILLIAM A. HAUSSMANN, 1895.

The present investigation, at its inception, appeared to call for pioneer work, and even the statement of the question to be discussed seemed at first to partake of this character. I now find, however, that in this last I was anticipated by the publication, several years ago, of a monograph* by the Rev. J. H. Dubbs, which at the time scarcely met with due recognition, and in my opinion well deserves republication. The problem could not be stated more clearly, or the nature of the task defined more accurately, than has been done in the introductory sentences of the author, which I cite at length :

"It was remarked by Robert Proud, who wrote before the American Revolution, that in Pennsylvania there is a greater number of religious societies, than, perhaps, in any other province throughout the British Dominions, . . . yet it is apprehended that there is not more real harmony known anywhere in this respect even under the most despotic hierarchies. 'Here,' he adds, in his quaint and peculiar style, 'are the Quakers, who were principally the first settlers, the Episcopalians according to the manner of the Church of England, and the German and Swedish Lutherans, the Presbyterians or Independents of various kinds and the German Calvinists (*i. e.*, Reformed), and the Church of Rome and the Jews ; the Baptists of various kinds,

* First appearing in the *Reformed Quarterly Review* (1882). Reprinted. This monograph was brought to my attention by M. D. Learned, who furnished me a copy.

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and those among the Germans called Mennonites and Dunkards or Dimplers; the Moravians and the Schwenkfelders, besides the Aborigines of America,' etc.

"The history and peculiarities of the German churches of Pennsylvania, here so oddly grouped and enumerated, suggests a field of study which has never been properly cultivated. Their hymnology, for instance, has, so far as we know, never received systematic treatment. Some five years ago Dr. Oswald Seidensticker, of the University of Pennsylvania, published in German, in the *Deutsche Pionier*, a series of articles on German-American Bibliography which throw much light on this obscure subject; but these articles are now out of print and very difficult to obtain. Some information may, of course, be gleaned from the prefaces of German hymn-books, and the writings of foreign hymnologists, but the subject still demands original investigation. At present we can hardly do more than to give an account of the various German hymn-books which were printed in this country during the last century. These were, in many instances, hardly more than reprints of books which the early settlers had brought with them from the fatherland, with occasional original hymns inserted here and there without any indication of authorship. Under these circumstances our subject can hardly be exhaustively treated, but we can, at any rate, indicate the direction of future studies. The numerous articles which have recently been written concerning the hymnology of the English churches of America would seem to suggest that something should be done, however imperfectly, in behalf of the Germans."

These words are encouraging, and the work of Dubbs has abundantly justified his plea. His primary aim was to call attention to the subject, and he accordingly confines himself to a general presentation of the facts bearing on the various sects and denominations which settled in Pennsylvania. The causes which led the pious emigrant to the New World are well stated; the historical facts pertaining to the "Sect" and the "Church" people—the Dunkers, Mennonites, Moravians, Lutherans and

Reformed—are given with sufficient accuracy; the biographical accounts of such leading personages as Beissel, Helmuth, Kunze, are short but concise; while the description of the hymn-books in use by the settlers forms by no means the least interesting part of Dubbs' article. It will be my first task to supplement his work as far as possible. I shall endeavor to show that the German-American hymn forms an integral part, not only of German, but also of American literature. Others may feel inclined to carry the work still farther. The field is large and invites co-operation. Since this investigation was begun, a revival of interest in German-American history has brought some additional helpful facts to light, and German-American hymnology itself, in certain of its subdivisions, has still more recently become the object of serious study in more than one quarter.* It is unfortunate, however the question of priority of idea may be viewed, that the results of these studies are not yet available for the present first sketch of the subject. Under these circumstances it has seemed best to withhold for the present a considerable number of detailed and partly isolated facts, which cannot yet be put in their proper setting, and to cast the present dissertation in the form of a general study. The following passage from Harbaugh,† a name forever dear to the student of Pennsylvania-German history, will show that there is a place for such a study, and may serve still further to define and justify this work:

“The social and religious life among the Germans of Pennsylvania and neighboring States, one hundred years ago, was peculiar to itself, and its history has its own charm. A retiring and rural people were our forefathers. Isolated to a great extent from others by language, social habits, religion, and even the character of their secular pursuits, they dwelt in the fertile and friendly valleys of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia, ambitious only for the quiet ways of peace and love.

* Cf., for instance, Hatfield, *Wesley's Translation of German Hymns*. Publ. Mod. L. A. XI. 2.

† H. Harbaugh, *The Life of Michael Schlatter*. Philadelphia, 1857.

. . . That the German element in Pennsylvania history has not been brought out in its due proportion is too apparent to need any proof. Of this, perhaps, we ought not to complain. Whether it is a fault arising from tardiness, or a virtue springing from a retired modesty, or something of both, it is nevertheless true, that the Germans are devotedly willing to bear the timber and build the scaffolding, so that others may erect their temples of honor, and then as patiently submit to being cast aside because needed no more. But whether they are to have credit for the good, or blame for the evil, which from them has been infused into our Pennsylvania nationality, the fact that German life is the moulding power in the life of our State will be seen in its spirit for ages to come. The phrase 'German Pennsylvania' is traditionally abroad, and will last as long as the phrase Yankee New England. This proverb, like the fabled wandering Jew, will travel the earth as a testimony, whatever historians may write in books."

Before attempting anything like a description and characterization of the poetry of the early settlers, it will be necessary to take a hasty survey of German (principally religious) literature in the period we shall have to consider. It is the time of decline and decay, of levity and languor in German literature,—the period of the two centuries marked by the absence, or as Taine more brilliantly than accurately observes, the non-existence of German literature. Yet there is an exception to the rule. From the age when Notker chanted his psalms in the ancient monastery of St. Gall to the era of Novalis and Schenkendorf, from the period when the Ezzoleich inspired the crusaders to the time when the Swiss poetess Meta Heusser composed her matchless hymns, one variety of literature has never ceased to exist and flourish in Germany—the hymn. It is true that the very period of our investigation marks an age of decline even for the German hymn. Already the time of Paul Gerhardt had passed, when the first ship-load of Palatinates sailed up the Delaware and Pastorius hailed his Germanopolis. The noble hymns of Silesius had given way to the degraded muse of Hofmanswaldau

and Lohenstein. But still the fountain of hymnology continued to flow. In the field of secular poetry the element of originality was sadly wanting, and little else than servile and courtly lyrics flourished, but the German hymn at least sustained the reputation for originality during this period of gloom, and forms the connecting link between the age of Gerhardt and the great literary revival following the Seven Years' war.*

The one great source of information for German hymnology of all periods, but more especially our own, is Koch's *Geschichte des Kirchenlieds*, a work which, notwithstanding a few shortcomings,† still holds its own as the standard work of reference for students. Familiarity with this work must be presupposed; Koch's treatment of the hymn is unique in its way, and the same amount and kind of information will not be found elsewhere. Koch postulates six periods for the history of the German hymn. I call attention especially to the fourth and fifth periods and the various sections, divisions and subdivisions, because it was only during these periods that the German-American hymn flourished. Koch's manner of periodizing, dividing and subdividing *ad infinitum* may perhaps be open to criticism. The film of distinction which separates one sect from another is often very thin, and in the hymns themselves these differences are almost completely obliterated. Who, without the help of biographical and historical evidence would undertake to tell in every instance, what sect or sectlet contributed this or that hymn? Their name is legion. But the amount of historical and biographical information—Koch is very happy in sketching the history of the many sects, their origin, growth, differentiation, as also the biographies of the founders of these sects—is enormous and must of necessity form the basis and

* Cf., Wackernagel, *Geschichte der Deutschen Litteratur*, II, 80, 238 ff, 329 ff.

† Compare the able review in Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*. Bäumker's excellent treatise, "*Das katholische deutsche Kirchenlied in Seinen Singweisen*," while correcting Koch's *Geschichte* in many instances, adds no new facts or data relative to the period here considered. Other works may likewise be passed over here.

groundwork of this investigation. Bearing these divisions, therefore, in mind, let us return to America.

For the general facts pertaining to American history of the eighteenth century the student will have consulted his Bancroft; for details as to the history of the German settlers and settlements, Löher's * *Geschichte und Zustände der Deutschen in Amerika* is still indispensable. Pages of explanation may be saved, however, and volumes of colonial records ignored, by allowing a few of the ancient memorials—ancient, certainly, so far as American history is concerned—to speak for themselves. I cite first the *Hallsche Nachrichten*,—and a passage or rather testimony coming from no less venerable a personage than Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg, the founder and patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America. As early as 1752 Mühlenberg reports to Halle:

“Es fehlet auch nicht an Atheisten, Deisten, Naturalisten und Freimaurern. Summa, es ist wohl keine Sekte in der Welt, die hier nicht geheget wird. Es giebet hier Leute von fast allen Nationen in der Welt. Was man in Europa nicht duldet, das findet hier Platz. — — Man höret frei und öffentlich die allerschändlichsten Dinge wider Gott und sein heiliges Wort reden. — — In dem ganzen Land sind viel tausend, welche der Taufe, Erziehung und Confirmation nach sollten Lutheraner sein, aber sie haben sich zum Theil zerstreuet. — — Es ist ein solch erbärmlicher Zustand und Verfall unter unsern armen Lutherischen Leuten, dass es mit Blutthänen nicht genug kann beweinet werden. Die Jugend ist herangewachsen, die Eltern haben ihre Kinder zum Theil ohne Taufe, ohne Information und ohne Erkenntniss aufwachsen und im Heidenthum gehen lassen. — — So habe es gefunden, als in Philadelphia ankam.”

A little later (1754) the celebrated printer, Christoph Saur, writes:

“Pennsylvanien ist ein solches Land von desgleichen man in der ganzen Welt nicht höret noch lieset; viele tausend Menschen

* The labors of Kapp, Koerner, Eickhoff and other more recent writers have by no means supplanted Löher's pioneer work.

aus Europa sind mit Verlangen hierher gekommen und kommen noch immer, blos um der gütigen Regierung und Gewissensfreiheit wegen. Diese edle Freiheit ist wie ein Lockvogel oder Lockspeise, welche die Menschen erst nach Pennsylvanien bringt und wann der gute Platz nach und nach enge wird, so ziehen die Menschen von hier in angrenzenden Colonien um Pennsylvanien."

Again, two years later (1756), appeared Mittelberger's *Reise nach Pennsylvanien* in print.* Pennsylvanien, the Eldorado of the emigrants, is depicted in graphic language:

"Dann in Pennsylvanien herrschen so vielerley Glaubenslehren und Sekten, die nicht alle können nahhaft gemacht werden, weil mancher es niemanden bekennet, was er einen Glauben habe: — — Hernach sind viele hundert erwachsene Personen, die nicht getauft sind, auch nicht einmal getauft sein wollen. Viele halten nichts von den Sacramenten und von der heiligen Bibel, oder gar von Gott oder seinen Worten. Manche glauben nicht einmal, dass ein wahrer Gott oder Teufel, Himmel oder Hölle, Seligkeit oder Verdammnis, Auferstehung der Todten, Gericht und ewiges Leben seye; sondern glauben es seye alles was man sehe natürlich. Dann in Pennsylvanien darf jedermann nicht nur glauben, was er will, sondern er darf es auch öffentlich und frey sagen. . . . Um wieder auf Pennsylvanien zu kommen, so besizet solches vor anderen Englischen Colonien besonders grosse Freyheiten, dass auch alle Glaubens-Sekten darinnen gedultet werden. Man trifft darinnen an Lutheraner, Reformirte, Catholiken, Quäker, Mennoniten oder Wiedertäufer, Herrnhuter oder Mährische Brüder, Pietisten, Siebentäger, Dimpler, Presbyterianer, Neugebohrne, Freymaurer, Separatisten, Freygeister, Juden, Mohometaner, Heiden, Neger und Indianer." . . .

So in the Urlsperger's *Nachrichten*, a monument scarcely less venerable and still more ancient than the *Hallische Nach-*

* Cf. M. D. Learned, *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Reise nach Pennsylvanien und ihre Bedeutung als Kulturbild*. Fifth Annual Report of the Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland.