

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES IN THE LIFE OF
CHRISTIAN HERMAN DASHER

by
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A THESIS

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PREFACE

The study of the early church planting in Georgia is rich in lessons for church planters of today. People are still the same and they react in the same ways. Good methodologies worked then and will work today. Poor methodologies failed then and will fail today. Our work today in Georgia can be greatly improved from a practical standpoint when we study and apply lessons learned many years ago by Christian Herman Dasher and others of his era.

I am deeply indebted to the members of my Master of Theology committee at the Alabama Christian School of Religion, Montgomery, Alabama. My major professor on this committee was Dr. Rex A. Turner, Sr. He was assisted by Dr. Rex A. Turner, Jr. and Dr. Curtis Cates. Their answers to my questions in committee meetings, private conferences, and long distance phone calls were very helpful.

Special assistances were given me by the librarians at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana, formerly the School of Religion of Butler University. My greatest success in locating materials about restoration history in Georgia was experienced in this Indiana library.

Special assistance was also given me by Dr. William P. Frech of the faculty of the Department of History,

Valdosta State College, Valdosta, Georgia. His helpfulness was far beyond the normal call of duty. I wish to say "Thank you" to him.

In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation for the interest and the cooperation of the librarians and archivists of the following institutions for making available to me the sources that I needed to write this thesis: Woodruff Research Library and Candler Theological Library of Emory University; University of Georgia; Columbia Theological Seminary; Disciples of Christ Historical Society; Savannah Public Library; Oconee Bible College; and Georgia State University.

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VITA

John Michael Mills was born in Rome, Georgia, July 15, 1942; he is the son of J. Archie and Christine Mills. After his graduation from Pepperell High School, Lindale, Georgia, in May, 1959, he attended Shorter College, Rome, Georgia, obtaining the B.A. degree in August, 1962. His undergraduate work included additional Biblical studies from Harding University, Searcy, Arkansas, and Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas. Immediately he enrolled in the Harding Graduate School of Religion, Memphis, Tennessee, where he earned the M.A. degree in 1963 and the M.R.E. degree in 1965. Early in his career, he taught in the Rome City Schools, Rome, Georgia, and Georgia Christian School, Valdosta, Georgia. Interested in mission work in Georgia, he has assisted in the planting of twenty-four new churches. Since 1973, he has preached regularly for the Eatonton Church of Christ, Eatonton, Georgia. He is the founder and president of Oconee Bible College, Eatonton, Georgia. In June, 1963, he was married to his wife, Ann, and they have two children, Julie (age 14) and Don (age 8). Based upon the completion of the Master of Theology degree at Alabama Christian School of Religion, he has been accepted into the Doctor of Ministry program at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia.

THESIS ABSTRACT

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John Mills

Master of Theology, 1979

(B.A., Shorter College, 1962;
M.A., Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1963;
M.R.E., Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1965)

The purpose of this investigation was to study religious influences in the life of Christian Herman Dasher that caused him to plant two key congregations in the development of the restoration movement in Georgia. Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Was he influenced in his background by the Lutherans, possibly through his ancestors who were allegedly members of the Gastein Church of Christ, Gastein, Austria?
2. Was he influenced by his good friend and associate, Sheldon C. Dunning?
3. Was he influenced by restoration periodicals, such as The Christian Baptist, Millennial Harbinger, and

Morning Watch?

4. Was he influenced exclusively through his independent study of the Bible alone?

The hypothesis of this study was that Christian Herman Dasher was influenced primarily in his religious views by Sheldon C. Dunning and to a lesser extent by religious periodicals.

Considerable controversy exists over the historical origin of the restoration movement in Georgia, especially as it relates to Christian Herman Dasher.

One view, as expressed by W. Ralph Wharton in his book, The Salzburgers, Georgia, and Christian Herman Dasher, was that Christian Herman Dasher was the great-grandson of a "Christian Dasher," who was one of the three elders of the "Gastein Church of Christ" in Gastein, Austria, and that "some of the spirit and teaching of New Testament Christianity apart from denominationalism may have been handed down to him from his great-grandfather."

Another view was that Christian Herman Dasher, in the early 1840s, led a group of Lowndes County pioneers in a "Back-to-the-New-Testament-Movement" and that this group had "no connection with or knowledge of the various other movements of a similar nature." This view took the position that the first contact with anyone associated with the restoration movement, outside of the Lowndes County area, came in

1866, when a Dr. Hooker of Henderson, Kentucky, held a protracted meeting for them.

The view advanced in this study was that Christian Herman Dasher was a Bible-believer who became dissatisfied with the general decay of Lutheranism in the Effingham County area during his early adulthood and was searching for a religion that would be more acceptable to him. He became convinced that baptism was to be by immersion, rather than by sprinkling. He could not get his Lutheran pastor to immerse him. This led him into an acquaintance with Sheldon C. Dunning, who was in a controversy with the Baptist Church in Savannah and who came under the influence of Alexander Campbell as early as 1828 or before.

The goal of this research study was to gather documented evidence which will give the reader an overview of what really happened in the planting of the Lord's church in Georgia in the first half of the nineteenth century and thereby end the confusion that has existed as a result of a lack of scholarly research in this aspect of American church history.

Historical data for this research study were obtained primarily from original courthouse records, local newspapers of contemporary dating with Christian Herman Dasher, religious periodicals of this era of American church history, original subscription books to religious periodicals, handwritten ledgers involving purchases of religious literature,

original handwritten minutes of meetings involving Christian Herman Dasher and/or others directly involved with this study, and military and other records in the Archives of the State of Georgia.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The planting of the Lord's church in Georgia was an exciting and thrilling adventure in the expansion of true Christianity in the New World. Christian Herman Dasher, soldier, sheriff, politician, farmer, and preacher, was a key figure in the movement to restore the Lord's church in Georgia. Through his influence, two churches were planted in his home that have had far reaching effects on the religious life of Georgia and beyond. The first of these churches was in Effingham County, Georgia, and the second was in Lowndes County, Georgia. The church that he planted in Lowndes County is the forerunner of numerous congregations in Valdosta and in other areas of South Central Georgia and Northern Florida. In turn, the influence of these congregations has spread throughout the world.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this investigation was to study religious influences in the life of Christian Herman Dasher that caused him to plant two key congregations in the development of the restoration movement in Georgia. Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Was he influenced in his background by the Lutherans, possibly through his ancestors who were allegedly members of the Gastein Church of Christ, Gastein, Austria?
2. Was he influenced by his good friend and associate, Sheldon C. Dunning?
3. Was he influenced by restoration periodicals, such as The Christian Baptist, Millennial Harbinger, and Morning Watch?
4. Was he influenced exclusively through his independent study of the Bible alone?

The hypothesis of this study was that Christian Herman Dasher was influenced primarily in his religious views by Sheldon C. Dunning and to a lesser extent by religious periodicals.

Stated in its null form, the hypothesis for the study of this problem was: There was no valid evidence that Christian Herman Dasher developed significant restoration movements in both Effingham County and Lowndes County without the influence of others, such as Sheldon C. Dunning and Alexander Campbell.

Significance of the Study

Considerable controversy exists over the historical origin of the restoration movement in Georgia, especially as it relates to Christian Herman Dasher.

One view, as expressed by W. Ralph Wharton in his book, The Salzburgers, Georgia, and Christian Herman Dasher, was that Christian Herman Dasher was the great-grandson of a "Christian Dascher,"¹ who was one of the three elders of the "Gastein Church of Christ"² in Gastein, Austria, and that "some of the spirit and teaching of New Testament Christianity apart from denominationalism may have been handed down to him from his great-grandfather."³

Another view was that Christian Herman Dasher, in the early 1840s, led a group of Lowndes County pioneers in a "Back-to-the-New-Testament-Movement" and that this group had "no connection with or knowledge of the various other movements of a similar nature."⁴ This view took the position that the first contact with anyone associated with the restoration movement, outside of the Lowndes County area, came in 1868, when a Dr. Hooker of Henderson, Kentucky, held a protracted meeting for them.⁵

The view advanced in this study was that Christian Herman Dasher was a Bible-believer who became dissatisfied

¹The name "Dasher" has at various times been spelled Daescher, Dascher, Desher, and Dasher.

²W. Ralph Wharton, The Salzburgers, Georgia, and Christian Herman Dasher (n.p.: Earl L. Humphries, n.d.), p. 3.

³Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁴Luther M. Cole, First Christian Church (Valdosta: First Christian Church of Valdosta, n.d.), p. 7.

⁵Ibid.

with the general decay of Lutheranism in the Effingham County area during his early adulthood and was searching for a religion that would be more acceptable to him. He became convinced that baptism was to be by immersion, rather than by sprinkling. He could not get his Lutheran pastor to immerse him. This led him into an acquaintance with Sheldon C. Dunning, who was in a controversy with the Baptist Church in Savannah⁶ and who came under the influence of Alexander Campbell as early as 1828⁷ or before.

Christians must attempt to be honest and truthful in their reporting of historical events. As a result of inadequate study, various writers have espoused the first two positions. The significance of this study was that in-depth research, which has not previously been done in this problem area, was expected to yield significant links between the restoration movement in Georgia and the restoration movement in other parts of the United States. Through ignorance, mistaken positions have been reported as fact, and confusion has resulted.

The goal of this research study was to gather documented evidence which will give the reader an overview of what really happened in the planting of the Lord's church in Georgia in the first half of the nineteenth century and

⁶Baptist Church in Savannah (Georgia), Minutes, meeting of 9 June 1811. (Handwritten.)

⁷Alexander Campbell, "Ledger A," p. 46.

thereby end the confusion that has existed as a result of a lack of scholarly research in this aspect of American church history.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the religious aspect of the life of Christian Herman Dasher. The purposes of this study did not encompass his military life, his public life as sheriff and state representative, or his employment as a farmer. This study was not intended to be a biography of Christian Herman Dasher.

Considerable interest has been expressed in the genealogy of Christian Herman Dasher. However, limitations were imposed on this study that prohibited an exhaustive genealogical study of the Dasher family.

Definition of Terms

For a clearer understanding of the problem of this thesis, the following terms were defined as follows:

The Lord's church--an undenominational body of Christians who advocated a return to First Century Christianity.

Restoration Movement--a movement which has surfaced at various times since the first century to reproduce the church which was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, which gained tremendous momentum in the first half of the nineteenth century on the American

frontier and in other isolated places, and which was identified with prominent leaders, such as Barton W. Stone, Alexander Campbell, and Walter Scott.

Influenced--a word used to describe forces that were brought to bear upon a person through environment, teaching, and/or private study.

Effingham County--one of the counties of the State of Georgia, located to the northwest of Savannah and bounded on the eastern side by the Savannah River and on the southern side by Chatham County, with significant communities at Ebenezer, Springfield, Guyton, Rincon, and Goshen.

Lowndes County--one of the counties of the State of Georgia, located in its South Central region and bounded on its south side by the State of Florida, with Valdosta as its county seat.

Methodology of the Study

Historical data for this research study were obtained primarily from original courthouse records, local newspapers of contemporary dating with Christian Herman Dasher, religious periodicals of this era of American church history, original subscription books to religious periodicals, handwritten ledgers involving purchases of religious literature, original handwritten minutes of meetings involving Christian Herman Dasher and/or others directly involved with this

study, and military and other records in the Archives of the State of Georgia.

Some secondary sources have been assembled which set forth background material and current thinking in the problem area of this study.

Organization of the Study

This study was divided into six sections. Chapter I introduced the study. Chapter II examined the European heritage of Christian Herman Dasher. Chapter III noticed the influence of Dasher's Lutheran community. Chapter IV noted the influence of Sheldon C. Dunning. Chapter V examined the influence of his personal readings, such as the Bible, The Christian Baptist, Millennial Harbinger, and The Morning Watch. Chapter VI gave the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF HIS EUROPEAN HERITAGE

Christian Herman Dasher, the subject of this study, was the product of an exciting adventure in European religious history. The persecuted protestants of the Archbishopric of Salzburg were forced to leave jobs, homes, and families in search for new homes and places in life. This search led a colony of Salzburger to Georgia. Included in this pilgrimage were the ancestors of Christian Herman Dasher.

The Beginnings of Germany

The history of the portion of the world, known as Germany, as a separate entity, began about the middle of the ninth century with the disintegration of Charlemagne's Empire. Located in Central Europe were a group of people who were similar in "race, speech, manners, and social arrangements,"¹ and the logical arrangement would have been for them to become a nation like France and Spain. This did not happen immediately.

Through lack of foresight, Germany tried to become a world power. Otto I, for example, expended his energies in

¹Philip Van Ness Myers, Mediaeval and Modern History (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1919), p. 234.

an effort to build an empire, world-wide in scope, like Charlemagne had done.² Another attempt to rule all of Germany was undertaken by Ferdinand II.³ In this, both were unsuccessful. As a result, the hopes of an unified Germany were lost for many hundreds of years.

The resulting situation was that the population in Central Europe was organized into a great number of semi-independent, competitive states with weak monarchs. The ruling princes were regional or sectional, rather than national. An example of this type of government was the divisions of the Holy Roman Empire. Walbank and Taylor described this empire as "a loose, polyglot collection of over two hundred states, which (before the Thirty Years' War) had been nominally under the control of the Austrian Habsburgs."⁴ Thus there existed a group of states in Central and Eastern Europe that did have some organization; yet the princes of these states did not yet enjoy "full legal autonomy."⁵

²Louis L. Snyder, A Survey of European Civilization (Harrisburg, Penn.: Stackpole Sons, 1942), 2:181.

³Minna R. Falk, History of Germany from the Reformation to the Present Day (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), p. 41.

⁴T. Walter Walbank and Alastair M. Taylor, Civilization: Past and Present (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1961), 2:10.

⁵The Encyclopedia Americana, International ed., s.v. "Germany: The Confessional Age, 1519-1618," by Gerald Strauss.

The Thirty Years' War

The Thirty Years' War was a descriptive designation for a series of wars which began in 1618 and ended in 1648. This period of conflict began as a struggle between Roman Catholics and protestants. As time passed, however, the conflict became "an almost purely political struggle to reduce the power of the Habsburgs in favor of France and Sweden, a newcomer to high international policies."⁶ Germany suffered tremendously in this long struggle. One half, possibly two-thirds, of the German population was killed either directly or indirectly by these wars.⁷ Henry Smith Williams described the situation in the following words,

Immense provinces, once flourishing and populous, lay entirely waste and uninhabited, and were only by slow degrees reepeople by foreign emigrants or by soldiery. The original character and language of the inhabitants were by this means, completely altered.⁸

Eventually, the German population became tired of war and the various elements became responsive to suggestions of peace. The conclusion to this war was the Peace of Westphalia, consummated in 1648.

⁶Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher, and Robert Lee Wolff, A History of Civilization, vol. 1: Prehistory to 1715 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 531.

⁷Henry Smith Williams, The Historian's History of the World (London: The History Association, 1907), 14:385.

⁸Ibid.

Politically, the most important aspect of the Peace of Westphalia was that this treaty formally recognized the "sovereignty of the Germanic States in the whole extent of their territory."⁹ These almost wholly independent states were now given the right to enter into alliances with each other and with foreign governments of their choosing. Of course, this provision was dependent upon these agreements being in the best interest of the emperor and of the empire.¹⁰ Each governmental unit could now have its own foreign ambassadors, military forces, and financial treasuries-- three essentials to independent government. The emperor became an "honorary president of an aristocratic republic,"¹¹ and the imperial assembly, or the Diet, became a legislative body without power.¹² One of the sovereign states of the Germanies was Salzburg, which was of tremendous importance to the study.

Religiously, the Peace of Westphalia did not solve the religious conflicts that were the beginning causes of the Thirty Years' War. Each group continued to push violently its own religious doctrines upon others of different persuasions.

⁹The World's Great Classics, 3 vols. (New York: The Colonial Press, 1899), vol. 3: Modern History, by Jules Michelet, p. 136.

¹⁰The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (Macropaedia), 1977 ed., s.v. "History of Germany."

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Wallbank and Taylor, Civilization, p. 10.

These religious infightings prevented the "exclusive control over the empire" by either the Lutherans, the Calvinists, or the Roman Catholics. Several religious conclusions, however, were made. Mauelshagen enumerated them as follows:

Calvinism was given the same legal standing as Lutheranism. Each prince or free city of Germany was authorized to enforce conformity to one of the three faiths [Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Catholicism] and the expulsion of dissidents. The governments were to allow at least private worship, liberty of conscience, and the right of emigration.¹⁴

Thus, the ruling princes had the right to determine the state religion within their province, but the right of those who disagreed with established religion were also protected. They were given the liberty to emigrate and to locate a place where they could be happy religiously.

Absolutism in Government

During the last half of the seventeenth century and most of the eighteenth century, the controlling political philosophy of the day was absolutism--the supreme power of government residing in the ruler. This philosophy of government was known as the "Divine Right of Kings."¹⁵ At various times, this philosophy was interpreted as having reference

¹³The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, 1965 ed., s.v. "Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648."

¹⁴Carl Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran Expulsion and Its Impact (New York: Vantage Press, 1962), p. 71.

¹⁵Myers, Mediaeval and Modern History, p. 396.

to the upper sociological grouping of society, to a prince or archbishop, or to the king or emperor. The practical implications of the Peace of Westphalia were that the territorial princes, including bishops and archbishops, depending on their rank, could now increase their armies and treasuries without interference from the "powers-that-be," either higher or lower; thereby, they were able to increase their independence. The consequence was absolute governmental control within their boundaries.¹⁶ Louis L. Snyder believed that these princes were "busy imitating the extravagance of Louis XIV [of France] in somewhat ludicrous fashion."¹⁷ Wallbank and Taylor drew a vivid word-picture of the rulers of this period in the following words:

He was the supreme and only lawgiver--the fountain of justice. As head of the church he decided what religion his subjects were to follow and persecuted those who dissented. The worship of God was a matter of state, not the preserve of the individual conscience.¹⁸

In summary, the princes, the bishops, and the archbishops of this period believed that God had bestowed on them the total economic, political, and religious responsibility of their subjects. Accordingly, they ruled in a very dictatorial manner.

¹⁶The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (Macropaedia), 1977 ed., s.v. "History of Germany."

¹⁷Snyder, European Civilization, 2:252.

¹⁸Wallbank and Taylor, Civilization, 2:10.

A model of absolutism in government during this era was the Archbishopric of Salzburg.¹⁹ This independent ecclesiastical province in the Holy Roman Empire of post-Westphalia days comprised both the City of Salzburg and the broad valley of the Salza River in the European Alps. This was a geographic area of about three hundred-fifty square miles. The City of Salzburg, the principal city of the Archbishopric of Salzburg, was located in a key position on the Salza River at the Lug Pass, where the main flow of traffic from the Danubian Plateau to northern Italy passed.²⁰ Resulting from its location on the extreme southern side of the Germanies, Salzburg was influenced tremendously by its neighbor to the south--Italy. In fact, the City of Salzburg has been called the "German Rome."²¹

A prime example of absolutism among rulers in Salzburg's history was Leopold Anton von Firmian, also known as "Leopold, Count of Firmian and Archbishop of Salzburg."²² Firmian was born on May 27, 1679,²³ and was educated at a

¹⁹George F. Jones, The German Element in Colonial Georgia (n.p.: Society for the History of Germans in Maryland, 1963), p. 71.

²⁰Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. viii.

²¹Franz Fuhrmann, Salzburg and Its Churches, trans. by Amethe von Zellelin (Wien, Austria: Kunstverlag Wolfram, 1950), p. 8.

²²P. A. Strobel, The Salzbergers and Their Descendants (Baltimore: T. Newton Kurtz, 1855), p. 41.

²³New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed., s.v., "Firmian," by L. Weisensel.

Jesuit Gymnasium until he reached the age of fifteen. At this point in his life, Firmian broadened his education by enrolling in the Collegium Germanicum in Rome, which had been founded by the Roman Catholic Ignatius Loyola, and where he continued until he had finished his course of study.²⁴ One observed as the life of Firmian was studied that he was more influenced toward Italian culture than toward German culture as a result of the education that he received from the Jesuits and in Italy. His Roman Catholic career began as Dean of Salzburg in 1713 and progressed to the office of bishop, first at Levant in 1718, later at Seckau in 1724, and at Laibach in 1727. Also, in 1727, Firmian became the Archbishop of Salzburg.²⁵

The ascendancy of Firmian into power at this juncture in German history was significant. First, the German Empire of this period was a loose-knit confederacy in which "each independent ruler considered himself sovereign in his own realm."²⁶ This gave Firmian the power to do as he wished, not being accountable to any higher or lower authorities. Second, Charles VI, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in which Salzburg tokenly held membership as an independent state, was obsessed with obtaining recognition of his

²⁴Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. 85.

²⁵New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed., s.v. "Firmian," by L. Wiesenel.

²⁶Snyder, European Civilization, 2:313.

Pragmatic Sanction²⁷ by the various sovereigns of Europe and by the German princes, including Firmian. The purpose of this legislation was to prevent the demise of the Habsburg dynasty at his death in the absence of a male descendant.²⁸ The Pragmatic Sanction was "a family treaty regulating the rights of succession,"²⁹ written in 1703 and finalized as law in 1713 by royal decree.³⁰ This decree became exceedingly important as time progressed and as Maria Theresa, a woman, became the obvious heir to Charles VI's throne, since there were no male children of Charles VI who lived into adulthood. Under these circumstances, Charles VI, even if he had the power, would do nothing to threaten the power of Firmian, whose vote he badly needed in the January, 1733, meeting of the Diet.³¹ Again, the power of Firmian was evidenced.

Additionally, protestantism by this time has lost considerable power and influence through division within its ranks. This division was a conflict between emphasis on godly living versus rigid adherence to traditional doctrines. The result was that German protestants devoted themselves

²⁷Edward Crankshaw, Maria Theresa (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), p. 13.

²⁸Friedrich, Herr, The Holy Roman Empire (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), p. 244.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. 108.

primarily to fighting each other, rather than to fighting the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, Firmian did not fear opposition from protestantism in the execution of his wishes.

Anti-Protestant Tirades

Being confident of his political and religious power, Firmian desired to make the Archbishopric of Salzburg into a totally Roman Catholic country. As this campaign began, Firmian found that the City of Salzburg already was to a large extent Catholic, but that Lutheranism was still a vibrant religious force in many of the rural areas of his territory.

Numerous viewpoints have been expressed regarding the origin of Lutheranism in Salzburg. First, P. A. Strobel, the Lutheran pastor at New Ebenezer in the mid-1800s and the Salzburgers' historian, expressed the viewpoint in 1855 that the Lutheran Salzburgers "descended from the Vallenses [Waldenses]."³² This view was reiterated by John F. Hurst in 1892 in an article entitled, "The Salzburger Exiles in Georgia,"³³ and was the view expressed in much of earlier written history of Georgia.³⁴ A more modern viewpoint was that the Salzburg Lutherans were influenced in their

³²Strobel, Salzburgers, pp. 25-26.

³²John F. Hurst, "The Salzburger Exiles in Georgia," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, August 1892, p. 397.

³⁴Thomas F. Sanders, Jr., "The Salzburger Sage" (term paper, Mercer University, 1969), p. 2.

anti-Roman Catholic stance by the doctrines of John Huss and also by the Wycliffites.³⁵ The next viewpoint, which was least well-known, was that the Salzburg Lutherans were influenced by dissenters of the Roman Catholic Church from Italy, under the leadership of Juan de Valdes and of Pietro Martire Vermigle.³⁶ The final viewpoint was that the Salzburger Lutherans developed their religious understandings totally independent of any outside religious influence. This independent viewpoint was expressed by Milton Rubincam³⁷ and originated in the excuse given by the Roman Catholic rulers that these Salzburgers were not Lutherans; and therefore, they were not entitled to the privilege of emigration, as was guaranteed to Lutherans and Calvinists by the Peace of Westphalia.³⁸ This position was advanced for the benefit of the Catholics and is yet unproven. When the Salzburgers were tested, they immediately stated that they were definitely Lutherans. The rebuttal was that they subscribed to Lutheranism solely for the purpose of emigration.³⁹ Betty

³⁵ Maelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. 53.

³⁶ Sanders, Salzburger Saga, p. 2.

³⁷ Milton Rubincam, "The Background of the Salzburger Emigration," Georgia Historical Quarterly 35 (March 1951): 110.

³⁸ The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, 1911 ed., s.v. "Evangelicals of Salzburg," by Christian Friedrich David Erdmann.

³⁹ Wharton, Salzburgers and Christian Herman Dasher, pp. 3-4.

Ruth Morrison said, "Modern historians of the Salzburger Lutherans do not agree with this position."⁴⁰ There was, however, knowledge of Lutheranism in Salzburg as early as 1519. From that date until the protestant expulsion by Firmian in 1732, the doctrines of Luther did exert a wide-spread influence.⁴¹ Lutheranism, then, was not unknown in the Archbishopric of Salzburg.

Nevertheless, by the time of Firmian, Lutheranism was deeply imbued in the minds of these rugged mountaineers. They loved their old German way of life and demanded their German Bibles, with their beloved booklets that had been written by Luther and other books, such as Haberman's Prayer-Book, the Augustan Confession, Schaitberger's Letters to His Countryman, Arndt's Garden of Paradise, Veit Dietrick's Postil (or Collection of Sermons), and a portion of the Bible known as the Psalms of David.⁴² According to Maelshagen, they resented "the steady encroachment of ultramontane Italian cultural influences upon their Germanic environment."⁴³

⁴⁰Betty Ruth Morrison, "A Social and Economic History of the Salzburger in Colonial Georgia" (M.A. thesis, University of Georgia, 1951), p. 3.

⁴¹Charles A. Linn, Georgia Salzburger Bicentennial Pageant (Savannah: Savannah Convention of United Lutheran Church in America by the Local Committee, 1934), p. 5.

⁴²A Further Account of the Sufferings of Persecuted Protestants in the Archbishopric of Saltzburg Taken from Authentic Papers (London: Jos. Downing, 1733), pp. 29, 71.

⁴³Maelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. 84.

Although there was a spirit of acceptance of the inevitability of Roman Catholicism as the predominant state religion,⁴⁴ these rural Salzburger still cherished their unique Germanic mountain way of life.

The aforesaid fairly stable situation suddenly changed when Firmian imported, in a surprise move, Jesuit priests to remove all religious influences that were not Roman Catholic. The protestants of Salzburg had been accustomed to persecution for many generations, living in a papal state, and some had chosen to emigrate prior to this time; but never before had they been subjected to the atrocities of the Jesuits. Strobel said that the followers of Martin Luther were "hunted like wild beast by the emissaries of Rome, and made to suffer every cruelty and indignity which the malice of man could possibly devise."⁴⁵ Indeed, the Lutherans were made to feel the presence of being the members of the unapproved religion.

Firmian's procedure with the Jesuits was to import a maximum of ten Jesuits in any one period of time and to let them work independently of the established clergy in the

⁴⁴Salzburg's protestants were not a violent or dangerous people. They seemed to realize that Roman Catholicism was the state religion and that they must eventually emigrate elsewhere to practice the protestant religion. For example, an interview with John Hoyer of the Village of Saalfeld after his expulsion revealed that he was questioned concerning his possession of arms and guns. Hoyer replied that some of the protestant Salzburger "kept Guns for shooting now and then a Bird; but that none of them kept Arms with any Design to do Mischief"; see A Further Account, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁵Strobel, Salzburger, p. 27.

Archbishopric of Salzburg.⁴⁶ The purposes of the Jesuits were to strengthen those who were faithful Roman Catholics and to recruit those of other religions for the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁷

The protestants' opposition to the Roman Catholics was highly crystalized at this point. They resisted and resented the authority of the Pope and preferred the authority of the Bible. Objection was made to the use of Latin in the Roman Catholic services which they were required to attend. The sermons of the priests were classified as nothing except "fables, and Doctrines of the Pope's Invention."⁴⁸ They further differed with the priest's refusal to baptize their babies⁴⁹ and to permit their partaking of the "Sacraments."⁵⁰ Disagreements existed concerning purgatory, invocation of the saints, the observing of feast days, the Rosary, the wearing of the Scapulary, the monastic orders, "and the like Stuff."⁵¹

During this period, Lutheran parents indoctrinated their children against the doctrines of the Roman Catholics. The children were taught to disregard "Popish Mass"⁵² and

⁴⁶Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. 86.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸A Further Account, p. 5.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 7. ⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 36-37.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 70.

⁵²Henry Newman, Salzburger Letterbook, ed. and trans. George Fenwick Jones (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1966), p. 264.

other Roman Catholic activities. In further opposition, the children "were instructed by their parents to pray to God alone for if he forsook them, the Saints could not help them."⁵³ Thus, the battle continued between the Lutherans of the rural mountain regions of the Archbishopric of Salzburg and the Roman Catholics of Firmian.

As the work of the Jesuits continued and as confrontations became more and more numerous, bitterness between the Roman Catholics and protestants continued to increase. One of the Salzburger who came to Georgia told of his being threatened by "many fearful punishments,"⁵⁴ if he subscribed to the Lutheran faith. His elderly Roman Catholic "sponsor-in-baptism" came to him and stated that he had several Bibles and that he had compared Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism. His conclusion was that "the Roman Catholic faith alone was the one which could bring salvation."⁵⁵ Though the man being taught was both uninformed and as yet unconverted to the Lutheran doctrine, still he said that "he would have gone into the fire rather than return to Popery from the Protestant doctrine."⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America . . . Edited by Samuel Urlsperger, ed. and trans. by George Fenwick Jones and Marie Hahn, vol. 3: 1736 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972), pp. 11-12.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 11.

The invasion of the privacy of individual homes by the Jesuits created further infuriation. This invasion was under the pretense of searching for "censored literature."⁵⁷ Joseph Pilzögger, a Salzburger of the province of St. Johann, had an experience which was typical of the many home invasions of this period. He related his experience when he stated:

200 Soldiers, by the Command of his Serene Highness the Archbifhop, fell upon Twenty one of us in our Houses, (as if we had been Murderers and Thieves) at eleven of the clock at Night, on Saturday before Michaelmas 1731, with drawn Swords, and other Arms in their Hands, dragged us out of our Beds, and without giving us Time to put on our Clothes, forcibly tied our Hands with Cords behind our Backs, and pulling us out of our Houses, and from our Wives and children, made a Mock of us; and cried, "Get along, you Heretick Dogs; you are already damn'd, and will certainly be burned in Hell." They gave us several Buffets, and otherways abused us. And the Cries and Lamentations of our Wives and children, instead of producing the least Compassion in them, made them only laugh at them the more.⁵⁸

Additionally, they were cursed by the Roman Catholics, were called "Lutheran Heretick Dogs"⁵⁹ and were rushed in march with the cry, "Along you Heretick Dog, you Hell-Hound."⁶⁰ In the wake of all this private persecution, Pilzögger affirmed that they were obedient in civil matters. He stated:

⁵⁷Newman, Salzburger Letter-book, p. 265.

⁵⁸A Further Account, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 11.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 31.

Out of a due Sense of our Duty, all manner of Obedience to the Will of our Superiors, and did all that was incumbent on us, without the least Show of Obstinacy or Opposition; and God hath preserved our Minds from any such Thought.⁶¹

This statement was further evidence that the protestants of Salzburg were not dangerous people, but were rather people who could not conscientiously support the religion of Roman Catholicism.

Preachers and others with teaching ability were singled out for special persecution. Under examination, eight hundred Salzburgers from Gastein who were soon to be exiled made the following unanimous testimony:

That all who profess the Protestant Religion are most severely persecuted; and especially those who have a superior Knowledge of the Divine Truth, who can read the Bible, and other Protestant Books, to their Companions, and sing Hymns for their Edification. These are immediately treated as Traytors and Rebels; of which there have been but too many fatal Instances publickly known.⁶²

Strobel concurred with this point of view and gave these examples:

One of their ministers, Anothony Brassus, was decapitated, and, as if to add insult to injury, his head was nailed to his pulpit; others were scourged with such severity that they expired at the whipping-post; and every pastor who fell into the hands of the priest was put to death under the most revolting circumstances.⁶³

⁶¹Ibid., p. 8. ⁶²Ibid., pp. 55-56.

⁶³Strobel, Salzburgers, pp. 27-28.

Firmian also used family traditions, such as burial customs, to intimidate the protestants. Nonconformists to his edicts were refused a standard burial in the Common Burial Ground. Note the following incident:

N.N. of the Ziller Valley . . . told me with Tears in his Eyes, that in his way through Gastein he had seen a Peasant who died a Protestant, and was not allowed to be buried in the Church-Yard but was cast into the open Fields, and there left for his Friends to put him into the Ground at Night.⁶⁴

Others of the protestant faith were sunk into muddy lakes or given "other unbecoming burials."⁶⁵

Finally, the impasse that existed between Firmian and the Lutherans of Salzburg resulted in a peaceful (not violent) protest, early in 1731, to the Corpus Evangelicorum at Ratisbon. This protest was signed by nineteen thousand protestant peasants. They resided in the administrative districts of St. Johann, Werffen, Goldegg, St. Veit, Radstadt, Wagrain, Grosthal, Gastein, Taxenbach, and Saalfeld.⁶⁷ This ultimatum demanded:

That either Evangelical preachers be given them and that they be permitted to worship in their own way,

⁶⁴Newman, Salzburger Letterbook, p. 264.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 273.

⁶⁶The Corpus Evangelicorum is the protestant membership of the Diet, or Parliament, of the loose-knit confederacy, known as the Holy Roman Empire.

⁶⁷A Further Account, p. 6.

or that they be allowed to sell their property and emigrate with their wives and children.⁶⁸

Provisions were made for the last request in the Peace of Westphalia. Those who found themselves disagreeing with the established religion were allowed to relocate in another province where they could freely exercise their chosen religion.

Firmian responded to this protest with a survey "to ascertain the general temper of the mountain folk."⁶⁹ The results were given to Firmian on July 30, 1731. Maelshagen summarized:

The study group found religious grievances to be comparatively slight. Its report did, on the other hand, condemn the oppressive and offensive tactics of spiritual as well as political officials. Though Protestants were firm in their faith and were not inclined to yield in matters of conscience, they were reported to be loyal citizens in every other respect . . . Though they found the number of loyal supporters of the Protestant faith to be greater than they expected and there seemed to them no immediate cause for alarm, they advised the stationing of 150 regular soldiers at Radstadt to act as a stabilizing influence in the nearby area.⁷⁰

In order to ascertain a more exact number of protestants in his archbishopric, Firmian demanded that all who subscribed to the protestant faith were to appear before his

⁶⁸The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, 1911 ed., s. v. "Evangelicals of Salzburg," by Christian Friedrich David Erdmann.

⁶⁹Maelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. 89.

⁷⁰Ibid.

commissioners within three days. The total number exceeded twenty thousand. Betty Ruth Morrison says that the figure is usually computed at 20,678.⁷¹

With a known protestant population of this large size, Firmian dispatched troops to strategic locations and prohibited the holding of public meetings. The people were told that these were "precautionary and defensive measures to guard against outside attack."⁷² Yet, on August 4, 1731, only the Roman Catholics were warned to "prepare themselves against a sudden attack."⁷³ With the increase in persecution and with the threat of military attack by the Roman Catholics, about three hundred Lutherans met on August 5, 1731,⁷⁴ to consummate the "Covenant of Salt," a pledge of loyalty to God and to one another "in the face of any danger or persecution, even death itself."⁷⁵ Word of this pact reached Firmian, and he looked upon it as an "act of rebellion."⁷⁶ Thus Firmian increased his efforts of persecution.

By this time, the news of Firmian's unusual treatment of his protestant subjects had spread to other parts of the

⁷¹Morrison, Salzburgers in Colonial Georgia, p. 10.

⁷²Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. 90.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴This date is debated, but the generally used date is the one stated above.

⁷⁵Morrison, Salzburgers in Colonial Georgia, p. 10.

⁷⁶Ibid.

empire. Appeals had been made to the Diet, but they had been ignored.⁷⁷ The protestants appealed to the emperor, but he did not have the power to do anything and would not help.⁷⁸ Other appeals were made to the princes in protestant provinces of the Germanies. A responsive reply was made by Prussia's Frederick William I, one of the most powerful of the protestant rulers in Germany at that time.⁷⁹ Frederick William I threatened special punishment for his Roman Catholic subjects unless Firmian changed his course.⁸⁰ Still Firmian continued in his determined course of exterminating all non-Roman Catholic influences from his archbishopric.

Emigrationspatent

By September, 1731, Firmian felt that he was ready politically to issue an order for the expulsion of all protestants. He supposedly was acting quickly to "suppress what he was pleased to call a revolt."⁸¹ A formal decree, the Emigrationspatent, was drafted. On October 29, 1731,

⁷⁷Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. 90.

⁷⁸The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, 1911 ed., s.v. "Evangelicals of Salzburg," by Christian Friedrich David Erdmann.

⁷⁹R. L. Brantley, "The Salzburgers in Georgia," Georgia Historical Quarterly 14 (June 1930):215.

⁸⁰E. B. Spiers, "The Salzburgers," English Historical Review 5 (1890):684.

⁸¹Lucian Lamar Knight, Georgia's Landmarks, Memorials, and Legends, vol. 2 (Atlanta: The Byrd Printing Co., 1914), p. 181.

Firmian presented this decree to Emperor Charles VI of the Holy Roman Empire. Two days later, Firmian signed this decree. This date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the Reformation and the birthday of Luther's famous act of tacking his ninety-five theses on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany.⁸² In order to further irritate the Lutherans, Firmian waited five days and then sent out the patent on Martin Luther's birthday. On November 11, 1731, this Emigrationspatent was made public. This day was the anniversary of Luther's baptism.⁸³ Thus, Firmian proved to be the kind of man with a special ability to irritate those people that he opposed.

On November 11, 1731, the residents of the Archbishopric of Salzburg were to gather in their home community and hear the reading of the Emigrationspatent. The protestants were shocked to learn that they must leave the country within eight days, unless they were property owners, who were given one to three months. Their children were to be given to the Jesuit priests, so that they could finish their training in Roman Catholicism.⁸⁴ The result of this announcement was pandemonium. One can imagine approximately thirty thousand people, one-fifth of the total population of the

⁸²Linn, Pageant, p. 13.

⁸³Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutherans, p. 95.

⁸⁴J. M. Hofer, "The Georgia Salzburgers," Georgia Historical Quarterly 18 (June 1934):99.

Archbishopric of Salzburg, relocating in this short period of time. Of course, this was impossible, and Firmian had to extend the process.

Firmian's timetable of expulsion, however, brought criticism to him. According to the Peace of Westphalia, he had the right to expell subjects who did not adhere to the established religion, but he was to have given them three years' notice, not eight days. Linn said:

The widespread criticism that the Archbishop Leopold Anton of Firmian brought upon himself resulted not so much from the expulsion of his Lutheran subjects as from his failure to give them notice as provided by the treaty.⁸⁵

Still, very few, if any, of the Salzburgers were given their required three years to close their business affairs.

Their journeyings in search for new homes proved to be extremely difficult. Winter was fast approaching when the first exiles were leaving. The path of travel was through the Alps, where temperatures became very cold early in the fall. Some of the countries through which they would travel were unfriendly. Firmian persisted in using his influence against them in other provinces, making their journeyings more difficult and embarrassing.

As these Salzburgers were being expelled from their homeland for religious reasons, they conducted a singing march into protestant provinces of Germany. Songs written

⁸⁵Linn, Pageant, p. 13.

by Joseph Schaitberger, one of the first exiles, were favorites. One of his songs, the "Salzburg Emigrant's Song," especially encouraged the Salzburgers on their difficult trek. This song gave significant insights into their attitude and was sung in the following words:

I am a Wretched exile here--
 Thus must my name be given--
 From native land and all's that dear,
 For God's word, I am driven.

Full well I know, Lord Jesus Christ,
 Thy treatment was no better:
 Thy follower I now will be;
 To do thy will I'm debtor.

Henceforth, a pilgrim I must be,
 In foreign climes must wander;
 O Lord! my prayer ascends to thee,
 That thou my path will ponder.

O faithful God! be thou my stay;
 I give me to thy keeping;
 Forsake me not to this my day,
 Nor when in death I'm sleeping.

Thy faith I freely have confessed:
 Dare I deny it? Never!
 Not though they call me "heretic,"
 And soul and body sever.

My ornament, the galling chain;
 For Jesus' sake I wear it,
 And scarcely feel its weight or pain,
 While in his faith I bear it.

Though Satan and the world conspire
 To seize each earthly treasure,
 If in my heart true faith but dwell,
 I'm rich beyond all measure.

Thy will O God! be done! May I
 Still cheerfully obey thee!
 And may thy arm of power and love
 Encompass still, and stay me!

Though I go forth to poverty,
 For Christ's sake, I am going,
 And see in heaven, reserved for me,
 A crown with glory glowing.

Forth from my home I now must go:
 My children! Must I leave them?
 O God! my tears in anguish flow--
 Shall I no more receive them?

My God conduct me to a place,
 Though in some distant nation,
 Where I may have thy glorious word,
 And learn thy great salvation.

And though in this dark vale of tears
 I yet awhile must tarry,
 I know that thou to heaven at length,
 My ransomed soul will carry!⁸⁶

Communications travelled rapidly concerning the unusual happenings in Salzburg, and protestants sympathized with great empathy. A patent was issued to welcome these exiles into protestant areas of Germany. This patent requested Firmian to "allow them to depart freely"⁸⁷ and urged "all princes through whose land they should go to aid them."⁸⁸ And, welcomed they were! Liberal contributions were received from numerous European countries. Mauelshagen said: "Money, clothing, household linens, household necessities, Bibles, hymnals, and religious tracts were showered on

⁸⁶Strobel, Salzburgers, pp. 39-40.

⁸⁷The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, 1911 ed., s.v. "Evangelicals of Salzburg," by Christian Friedrich David Erdmann.

⁸⁸Ibid.

the refugees as they traveled from place to place."⁸⁹ Protestants of all denominations united in the common cause of service to the approximately thirty thousand exiled Salzburgers.

A Company to Georgia

Where did these expelled protestants settle? During 1632,⁹⁰ approximately twenty thousand moved into an area in East Prussia, known as Lithuania, where the population had been destroyed by a plague. In describing the success of this venture, Erdmann summarized:

Thus more than 20,000 exiles from Salzburg repopulated the wide Lithuanian plains devastated by a pestilence, and the Prussian king was richly repaid by the agricultural benefits received from his industrious and intelligent immigrants.⁹¹

Another group of "approximately seven hundred eighty-eight souls, mostly miners from Durnberg,"⁹² relocated in Holland.⁹³

⁸⁹Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. 117.

⁹⁰Georgia Salzburger Society, "The Beginning of the Salzburger Settlement: Ebenezer in Georgia, Translated from German Documents in Possession of the Georgia Salzburger Society," trans. Works Progress Administration of Georgia, vol. 1 (1937), p. 1. (Typewritten).

⁹¹The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, 1911 ed., s.v. "Evangelicals of Salzburg," by Christian Friedrich David Erdmann.

⁹²Georgia Salzburger Society, "Ebenezer in Georgia," 1:1.

⁹³Ibid.

Several thousand additional Salzburger settled in several towns in the southern part of Germany, such as Augsburg, Kempten, Memmingen, Lindau, Olm, and Regensburg.⁹⁴ Another group from Salzburg arrived in Augsburg in August, 1733. With regard to this company of exiles, the introduction to the translation of the documents by the Georgia Salzburger Society took the position that "presumably they came from the Gartein [Gastein] Valley."⁹⁵ This information was important to this study because the original transport of Salzburger to Georgia was included in this contingency.

Background information concerning the 1733 contingency is important, for it involved the status of emigration into Europe at that time. Already, approximately thirty thousand had been placed in new homes, and difficulties were beginning to develop regarding locations for additional placements. The aforesaid introduction outlined the situation for these late-comers:

Prussia could not take in more Salzburger. The Durnbergers in Kadsand (Cassant) Holland, were not satisfied with their new adopted homeland, in fact about five hundred returned to Germany. In the southern cities they were also overcrowded and could not take any more emigrants.⁹⁶

One of the key spokesmen in the relocation efforts was Samuel Urlsperger, Senior Minister of the St. Anne

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 2.

Lutheran Church in Augsburg and a member of the Society for the Propagating of Christian Knowledge in England.⁹⁷ Through his influence, a cooperative agreement was reached between this society and the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia. At the society's request, the following decision was reached by the Trustees on May 24, 1733:

Resolved That the Trustees for establishing a Colony in Georgia in America do greatly approve the Proposal of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge for defraying the Expence of settling certain poor Saltzburgers in Georgia in America; And will readily join and concur in sending and settling so many of them, as by the Contributions which the said Society shall transmit to the Trustees, and What other Money the said Trustees shall for the purpose receive, they shall enable to send, and settle in the said Colony.⁹⁸

Some of the terms of passage were free passage from Rotterdam to Georgia; provisions for one year; fifty acres of land,⁹⁹ without tax for ten years, to each head of a household; religious liberty; and the rights of British citizenship.¹⁰⁰

Even with these inducements, the majority of this contingency from Salzburg was reluctant about embarking on the proposed journey to an unknown land. Nevertheless,

⁹⁷Morrison, Salzburgers in Colonial America, p. 14.

⁹⁸Allen D. Candler, ed., Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, vol. 1 (New York: AMS Press, 1970), p. 77.

⁹⁹Robert G. McPherson, ed., The Journal of The Earl of Egmont: Abstract of the Trustees Proceedings for the Establishing the Colony of Georgia, 1732-1738) Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962), p. 18.

¹⁰⁰J. W. Hofer, "The Georgia Salzburgers," Georgia Historical Quarterly 18 (June 1934):100.

forty-one heads of families,¹⁰¹ mainly from the districts of Gastein and Pinzgan,¹⁰² plus their wives and children,¹⁰³ making a total of seventy-eight,¹⁰⁴ departed from Augsburg for Rotterdam, from which they were transported to Dover, England, in preparation for their forthcoming voyage to Georgia. In order to be accepted for passage to Georgia, each of the Salzburgers had to make "an affirmation of his faith and willingness to live in righteousness and obedience to God and the Trustees."¹⁰⁵

In Rotterdam, this adventurous group came under the guidance of two Lutheran "pastors," Johann Martin Golzius and Israel Christian Gronau. Bolzius resigned his position as superintendent of the Latin Orphan House at Halle, Germany, in order to become the chief minister of the Salzburgers who were coming to Georgia. Israel Christian Gronau, a tutor at the same institution in Halle, was selected as Bolzius' assistant. Christopher Ortman was chosen to be the schoolmaster. Concerning the salaries for these men, the society agreed:

¹⁰¹Candler, Colonial Records I, p. 139.

¹⁰²Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran, p. 132.

¹⁰³Hofer, "Georgia Salzburgers," 18:100.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Morrison, Salzburgers in Colonial Georgia, p. 18.

To support a Minister and a Catechist if the said Saltzburgers and Other Emigrants be settled together in One Town; But if they shall be settled at such a Distance as One Minister cannot conveniently attend them, then the Society will maintain two Ministers and two Catechists.¹⁰⁶

The agreement further included a commitment from Urlsperger to secure in Germany the salaries of the current ministers and of their successors and to forward it to Georgia through the society. This procedure continued until the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, at which time all ties with England were severed. An example of this procedure was included in the minutes of the Trustees in 1750, where the salaries of the Lutheran ministers were reported. These minutes stated:

Read a Report from the Committee of Correspondence, that the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge had intimated by Mr. Vernon, That they had set apart the Sum of two thousand five hundred Pounds in order to provide Salaries for the two Saltzburgh Ministers, at Ebenezer, One of Fifty pounds a Year, and the Other of forty pounds a Year.¹⁰⁷

Thus, the pastors and school teachers of the Lutherans in Georgia were selected and supported through the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, with the funds being raised mainly in Germany under the auspices of Urlsperger, who was a member of the society until the end of the Revolutionary War.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 137-138.

¹⁰⁷.

Allen D. Candler, ed., Colonial Records of the State of Georgia, vol. 2 (New York: AMS Press, 1970), p. 500.

In order to expediate the business affairs of this first transport, a twenty-three year old outspoken German nobleman, named Baron Philip George Frederick von Reck,¹⁰⁸ was selected as the commissary, or business manager. Von Reck was evidently a man of great talent and of serious devotion to God, which was evidenced in his journal¹⁰⁹ and in his editing of a book of Luther's sermons, entitled Sermons on the Gospels and Epistles.¹¹⁰ Strong attachments appeared to be formed between the Salzburgers and Von Reck, and he described them as "such good Christians, and good Friends."¹¹¹ The result of these close ties was that Von Reck became their foremost promoter in Europe in encouraging others to go and settle with them in Georgia.

In England, the Salzburgers met with the Trustees, and plans were made for them to depart for Georgia on December 28, 1733. By this time, the Trustees had advanced information to Oglethorpe that he could anticipate the arrival of sixty Salzburgers "very soon."¹¹² This was a

¹⁰⁸Von Reck has been described as young, hotblooded, and the maker of rash resolutions on occasions. See Johann Martin Boltzius, "The Secret Diary of Pastor Johann Martin Boltzius," Georgia Historical Quarterly 53 (March 1969):24.

¹⁰⁹Extracts of Mr. Von Reck's Journal from Dover to Ebenezer (London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1734), pp. 1, 6, 7, 14, 19, 21, and 26.

¹¹⁰Henry Eyster Jacobs, A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1893), pp. 160-161.

¹¹¹Von Reck's Journal, p. 26.

¹¹²Candler, Colonial Records I, p. 141.

reduction of eighteen from the figure of seventy-eight that originally embarked on the pilgrimage from Augsburg. The evidence indicated that some defected. As the date of departure came closer and closer, others too changed their minds. By the time Bolzius recorded the names of those who were actually on board the ship headed for America, the number had been reduced to forty-six by actual count of specifically named people.¹¹³ Obviously there was fear of the unknown among the group. Only the true pioneers continued with the journey to Georgia.

At the scheduled time, these forty-six Salzbergers boarded the ship Purisburg, and heard a sermon preached by Bolzius, prior to their departure. His text was, "He that hath mercy on them will lead them" (Isaiah 49:10). Strobel summarized his address in the following paragraph:

He endeavoured, by reviewing the mercies which they had experienced under the most trying circumstances, to inspire them with fresh confidence in the goodness of God. He encouraged them to believe, that He who had hitherto been their protector, and had defended them against all the mechanations of their enemies, would watch over them amidst the dangers of the trackless ocean, as well as those to which they might be exposed in the strange land whither they were going.¹¹⁴

After they had sung a hymn and united in prayer, their ship lifted its sails, and the first transport departed for Georgia.

¹¹³Georgia Salzburger Society, "Ebenezer in Georgia," pp. 10-12.

¹¹⁴Strobel, Salzbergers, p. 56.

The journey to Georgia took a period of sixty-four days, and land was first sighted at Charleston, South Carolina, where they anchored and accidentally met General James Oglethorpe, the founder and governor of the colony of Georgia, who was enroute to England. General Oglethorpe changed his plans, returned to Savannah, and assisted in welcoming and in situating the new arrivals. Upon their approach to the Georgia coast, the ship carrying the Salzburgers, the Purisburg, grounded accidentally on a sandbar, and they were detained for more than one day.

On March 12, 1734, the Salzburgers entered the Port of Savannah. Their excitement, mixed with deep thanksgiving, was recorded by Von Reck in his Journal:

God blessed us this Day with the Sight of our Country, our wish'd for Georgia, which we saw at ten in the Morning; and brought us unto the Savannah River, and caused us to remember the Vows we had made unto him, if He did through his infinite Goodness bring us hither.¹¹⁵

As they approached the shore, greetings were given with the firing of several cannons and with the shouting of a joyous cheer.¹¹⁶ The passengers were taken to the shore in

¹¹⁵An Extract of the Journals of Mr. Commissary von Reck, Who Conducted the First Transport of the Saltzburgers to Georgia: and of Mr. Bolzius, One of their Ministers (London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1734), p. 9.

¹¹⁶George Fenwick Jones, ed., and Hermann J. Lacher, trans., Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America . . . Edited by Samuel Urlsperger (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1968), p. 59.

a smaller boat and were carried on a tour of Savannah, of the woods around it, and of the Trustee's gardens. The new arrivals were served an elaborate meal, including fresh meat and what they called a "very good and healthful English strong beer."¹¹⁷ The initial reactions of the Salzburger was expressed by Bolzius in the following statement:

And because much love and friendliness was shown them by the inhabitants, and because the beautiful country was much to their liking, they were all very happy and praised God for it.¹¹⁸

As an expression of this happiness, a meeting was scheduled for prayer and later for worship. Bolzius stated:

Last Night we Prayed on shore for the first time, in the English Chapel, made of Boards, and used for divine Worship, till a Church can be Built; the Use of which is allowed us, during our Stay here . . . Though the Chapel is but of Boards, it is very convenient, and pleases the Salzburger.¹¹⁹

This successful arrival in Savannah thus ended a long and eventful pilgrimage from persecution at the hands of Roman Catholicism in Salzburg to religious freedom in the New World.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Journals of Von Reck and Bolzius, p. 20.

CHAPTER III

THE INFLUENCE OF HIS LUTHERAN COMMUNITY

A study of the religious influences contemporary with Christian Herman Dasher in his Lutheran community of Effingham County was essential to an understanding of why the subject of this study was receptive to the plea for the restoration of New Testament Christianity. Why did Christian Herman Dasher react to the events of the early nineteenth century as he did? Why was his mind fertile soil for the planting of the seeds of the restoration movement?

The Settlement of Ebenezer

The first transport from Europe was temporarily housed in Savannah, awaiting a determination of the location for their permanent settlement. Von Reck, their commissary, had the responsibility of locating a suitable place for their settlement and of assisting them in the initial pioneer work required for the development of a community. General Oglethorpe explained to Von Reck that the Salzburgers could exercise their own choice in the selection of a location for their settlement. Immediately, after their arrival in Charleston and their accidental meeting of General Oglethorpe, Von Reck had a conference with him. Von Reck said,

Mr. Oglethorpe shewed me a Plan of Georgia, and gave me the Liberty to choose a Settlement for the Saltzburgers, either near the Sea, or further in the Continent. I accordingly accepted his Favour, and chose a Place 21 Miles from the Town of Savannah, and 30 Miles from the Sea, where there are Rivers, little Hills, clear Brooks, cool Springs, a fertile Soil, and plenty of Grass.¹

Thus the location was selected sight unseen.

After his arrival in Savannah, Von Reck was furnished by General Oglethorpe with three horses. One was for himself, and the other two were for a constable and for a guide, enabling Von Reck to observe the geography of land northwest of Savannah and to visit the place that he had selected on the map for the Saltzburgers' settlement. Von Reck told of the difficulties of this exploratory journey, when he said,

After we had gone a Mile or two, we enter'd some thick Woods, divided by deep Brooks of Water; and though we could with great Difficulty pass over some, yet there were others we could not pass; wherefore we returned back to the Town.²

The next move was for General Oglethorpe to recruit an expert team for the proposed journey with Von Reck. The party consisted of General Oglethorpe; a Mr. Jenys, the Speaker of the Assembly of Carolina; the Indian's War Captain, named Tufkeneoi; and two Indian hunters.³ This journey was successful, and Von Reck did reach the site of the proposed

¹Von Reck's Journal, p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 14.

³Ibid., p. 15.

Salzburger settlement. He wrote his impression of the proposed site in the following words:

The Lands are inclosed between two Rivers, which fall into the Savannah. The Saltzburg Town is to be built near the largest which is called Ebenezer [meaning "Stone of Help"] in Remembrance that God has brought us hither; and is navigable, being twelve Foot deep. A little Rivulet, whose Water is as clear as Crystal, glides by the Town; another runs through it, and both fall into the Ebenezer. The Woods here are not so thick as in other Places. The sweet Zephyrs preserve a delicious Coolness, notwithstanding the scorching Beams of the Sun. There are very fine Meadows, in which a great Quantity of Hay might be made with very little Pains: there are also Hillocks, very fit for Vines. The Cedar, Walnut, Pine, Cypress, and Oak, make the greatest Part of the Woods. There is found in them a great Quantity of Myrtle Trees, out of which they extract, by boiling the Berries, a Green Wax, very proper to make Candles with. There is much Sassafras, and a great Quantity of those Herbs of which Indigo is made, and Abundance of China Roots. The earth is so fertile, that it will bring forth any thing that can be sown or planted in it; whether Fruits, Herbs, or Trees. There are wild Vines, which run up to the Tops of the tallest Trees; and the Country is so good, that one may ride full gallop 20 or 30 Miles on end. As to Game, here are Eagles, Wild Turkeys, Roe-Bucks, Wild Goats, Stages, Wild Cows, Horses, Hares, Partridges, and Buffaloes.⁴

Great significance must be attached to the above quotation. First, this was the report that was carried back to the Salzburgers in Savannah. Second, this report was recorded in Von Reck's Journal, which was printed and circulated in Europe and which encouraged others to settle in Georgia. The result was that many were excited over the prospects of living in this wonderful paradise in the New World.

⁴Ibid., pp. 16-18.

The regrettable part was that this description of Ebenezer was lacking in accuracy. Upon their arrival at Ebenezer, the Salzburgers of the first transport discovered that the creek, which was reported to be twelve feet deep, was not navigable, even in the smallest boats. In many places, the creek was very shallow and was filled with fallen trees. Another factor hindering its practical use was its crookedness. Charles C. Jones, Jr., explained,

Although Ebenezer was distant by land from the Savannah River only six miles, in following the creek which furnished the sole outlet by water, twenty-five miles must be traversed before its confluence with the Savannah [River] could be reached.⁵

They also discovered that the soil was unproductive. Agricultural pursuits barely produced enough food for their own people, not considering future transports that were enroute. Fertile acreage that would produce good crops was not available in the Ebenezer area. The surrounding land was predominantly swamp, and even the building of a road to Savannah was a difficult task that would require heroic efforts. In fact, after its construction, the new road to Savannah was under water and was impassable much of the time. Slowly reports began to make their way to England and to Germany that conflicted with Von Reck's glowing journalistic statements.

⁵Charles C. Jones, Jr., The History of Georgia, vol. 1: Aboriginal and Colonial Epochs (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1883), p. 209.

The question was, "Why did they settle at Ebenezer in the beginning? Why did they not select a better place?" First, the Salzburgers did not want a seashore environment; they preferred hills and valleys like their home land of Salzburg. Ebenezer was reported to be in the geographical setting that they wanted. The truth is that two hundred additional miles of inland travel would have been required in order to reach the hills and valleys of Georgia. Second, the Salzburgers said that they were not warriors and did not want to be located on the southern outpost of the English colonies, where there would be grave dangers of war with the Spaniards, who were Roman Catholics. The Spaniards controlled the land to the south of Georgia, namely Florida. Third, the Salzburgers spoke German, and they desired to be located in a community separate from the other settlers who spoke English. Fourth, a distinct possibility existed that Von Reck was pressured by General Oglethorpe into accepting the Ebenezer location for the benefit of the overall development and protection of the Colony of Georgia and not for the benefit of the Salzburgers. This view would be substantiated by Von Reck's fictitious description of the site of the Salzburger settlement. James Etheridge Callaway, respected historian of Georgia, expressed the view that General Oglethorpe wanted the Salzburgers settled at this particular location for reason of defense. As a result, every excuse was used to keep them from moving to a better location. Callaway made the following very significant statement:

Following his usual plan of planting settlers in the most strategic spots, rather than in regard to the settlers' best interests, Oglethorpe placed them on a spot near two rivulets surrounded by woods and meadows, sixteen miles to the north and west of Savannah; and although this is not the reason given in the contemporary accounts, by an examination of early maps it is evident that Ebenezer was placed squarely on the path customarily taken by the Indians when they attacked Carolina.⁶

Thus the original Ebenezer location may not have been selected for the best interest of the Salzburgers.

The Removal to New Ebenezer

As time passed, difficulties continued to increase. The Salzburgers began to die as the result of malaria. The second transport from Europe arrived in Ebenezer on January 13, 1735,⁷ compounding the problem of shortages of fertile land and of supplies. Internal conflicts, especially within the leadership of the community, further impeded its successful operation. This episode reached a climax when the third transport arrived and needed a suitable place to settle. The citizenship of Ebenezer appointed their leader, Bolzius, and his assistant, Gronau,⁸ to be their representatives to discuss with General

⁶James Etheridge Callaway, The Early Settlement of Georgia (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1948), pp. 202-23.

⁷Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutherans, p. 140.

⁸In a religious community such as Ebenezer, the customary practice was for the preachers to serve both as spiritual and temporal leaders. George F. Jones said that Bolzius was the "absolute ruler of this little theocracy." See George F. Jones, The German Element in Colonial Georgia (n.p.: Society for the History of Germans in Maryland, 1963), p. 74.

Oglethorpe the desirability of their relocation to a better site. General Oglethorpe was so disturbed at the prospects of the Salzburgers leaving their original location that he immediately planned a visit to Ebenezer for the purpose of persuading the Salzburgers to stay. He left Savannah on February 10, 1736, for this journey to Ebenezer.⁹ Frances Moore, a visiting author and guest of General Oglethorpe, wrote the following words concerning the urgency of this trip:

On the 9th, I heard that the Saltzburghers at Ebenezer were very discontented; that they demanded to leave their old town and to settle upon the lands which the Indians had reserved for their own use; and this was the occasion of Mr. Oglethorpe's going up in such haste at a time when he could be ill spared from the ships.¹⁰

When General Oglethorpe arrived in Ebenezer, he was carried on a tour of the new village by Bolzius. Bolzius, in his Secret Diary, recorded the following summary of General Oglethorpe's visit:

I briefly showed Mr. Oglethorpe our people's work, their way of making hay, and their way of handling their cattle. All of this pleased him very well and he was amazed that the people wished to abandon everything after so much work and move into a wilderness.¹¹

⁹Strobel, Salzburgers, p. 86.

¹⁰Francis Moore, "A Voyage to Georgia, Begun in the Year 1735," in Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, ed. William B. Stevens (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840), 1:93-94.

¹¹"Johann Martin Boltzius, trans. George F. Jones, "The Secret Diary of Johann Martin Boltzius," Georgia Historical Quarterly 53 (March 1969):10.

General Oglethorpe's next move was to assemble all the Salzburgers together and to have Bolzius to "ask them whether they were serious in wishing to abandon all this and move elsewhere."¹² In reply, the group announced in unison, "Yes."¹³ Even after extended persuasion from General Oglethorpe, the Salzburgers were persistent in their desire to relocate at a more favorable location.

The Salzburgers longed to settle on Red Bluff, an area of red soil sitting on high ground overlooking the Savannah River. General Oglethorpe gave many excuses which supposedly prohibited them from having this land. All of the excuses were designed to protect the interest of the Englishmen. Bolzius demonstrated his displeasure when he wrote,

We still hope that the Salzburgers will enjoy the rights and liberties of Englishmen as free colonists. It appears to me and to others that the Salzburgers and the Germans in general are a thorn in the eyes of the Englishmen, who would like to assign them land that no one else wants and on which they will have to do slavish work.¹⁴

Finally, after extensive maneuvering and politicking, General Oglethorpe reluctantly gave his tentative approval for the Salzburgers to begin developing farm land and planting crops in the Red Bluff area, subject to his obtaining of approval from authorities in England.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 15.

However, this arrangement was still not very satisfactory to General Oglethorpe. Upon his return to Savannah, General Oglethorpe again discussed the matter with his visitor, Frances Moore, who wrote the following notation in his records:

On the 11th Mr. Oglethorpe returned from Ebenezer to Savannah. . . . I heard that he had given leave to the Saltzburghers to remove from Old Ebenezer to a place called the Red Bluff, upon the river Savannah. Some people had infused such notions into them, that they were obstinately resolved to quit Old Ebenezer, where they had very good houses ready built, a pleasant situation, a fine range for cattle, and a good deal of ground cleared. Mr. Oglethorpe in vain advised them against the change, and told them, that sickness would naturally follow the clearing of a new town; but they insisting, he granted their request.¹⁵

Admittedly, the entire situation was tremendously embarrassing to General Oglethorpe. George F. Jones, in his introduction to Bolzius' Secret Diary, stated that the new community at Red Bluff used the old name Ebenezer for its designation and that this change was not mentioned in reports that were sent to Europe. Jones said, "Thus it could be maintained that the settlement at Ebenezer had been successful."¹⁶

Within less than two years, the Salzburgers again had constructed a nice community and the affairs of life were finally ready to again operate in a normal pattern. When John Wesley, the founder of Methodism and an early missionary

¹⁵Moore, "Voyage to Georgia," p. 101.

¹⁶Jones, ed., "Secret Diary," p. 2.

to Georgia, visited Ebenezer, he was very impressed with the industry of the Salzburgers. Wesley recorded the following descriptive statement in his diary:

New Ebenezer to which the Saltzburgers removed in March 1736, lies six miles eastward from the old, on a high bluff, near the Savannah river. Here are some tracts of fruitful land, though the greatest part of that adjoining to the town is pine-barren. The huts, sixty in number, are neatly and regularly built; the little piece of ground allotted to each for a garden is everywhere put to the best use, no spot being left unplanted. Nay, even one of the main streets, being one more than was yet wanted, bore them this year a crop of Indian corn.¹⁷

When the new town of Ebenezer was surveyed at Red Bluff, provisions were made for the religious, educational, and benevolent needs of the community. Strobel said that two-thirds of a square was reserved for a church building, parsonage, and academy, and that the same amount was reserved for an orphans' home.¹⁸ Immediately, the home for orphans was constructed and was used temporarily as the Lutheran place of worship. By 1744, a simple church building had been constructed at Ebenezer and was in use. The church building was called "Jerusalem." Additional church buildings were constructed in outlying areas. One of these, known as "Zion," had also been constructed by 1744. Located about four miles south of New Ebenezer, this Lutheran church building was

¹⁷The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1913), 1:64.

¹⁸Strobel, Salzburgers, p. 92.

constructed because many of the Salzburgers had settled in the areas between New Ebenezer and Savannah. Later, about 1751, a Lutheran group was organized in the farming community named "Goshen," where a number of Salzburgers had migrated.¹⁹

A close connection existed in those pioneer days between religious and secular education. Both were usually sponsored by the Lutheran Church. An attempt was made to have a school master accompany every preacher that was sent out. The schoolmaster taught both religious and secular subjects.²⁰ The intent of this measure was to insure that a school would be operated in every place where there was a Lutheran preacher. However, difficulties were experienced in obtaining satisfactory teachers.

One of the problems in obtaining teachers involved the Salzburgers' adherence to the German Language for almost one century after their arrival in the New World. In 1733, Christopher Ortman was sent as a school master and parish clerk.²¹ He soon proved to be ineffective, because the Salzburgers needed to learn English, and his sole language was German. Other German teachers who followed him experienced the same failures. This lack of understanding of the English

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 120-121, 131.

²⁰Candler, Colonial Records I, pp. 137-138, 142.

²¹Ibid., p. 142.

language resulted in the other colonists looking on the Salzburger as ignorant and unlearned people.

Progress in the development and expansion of New Ebenezer continued through this period in its history. Farmers brought their products to Ebenezer for shipment to Savannah and to points beyond. The citizens at Ebenezer involved themselves in providing services to their trade area and in developing several small industries in the fields of lumber, grain, rice, and silk production. Agricultural activities were conducted on farms in outskirts of the community.

Numerically, New Ebenezer continued to grow in this pre-Revolutionary era. The final transport from Europe arrived in June, 1741, bringing an additional sixty-three persons. Other Salzburger heard of the new settlement at Ebenezer and paid their own passage to Georgia, enabling their settlement at New Ebenezer with their family and friends. Included in this category were Christian Dasher, Sr. and his son, named Christian Dasher, Jr.,²² who settled in New Ebenezer in 1741.²³ (These two persons were not a part of the fourth transport.) Christian Herman Dasher, the subject of this study, was the grandson of Christian Dasher, Jr., and the great-grandson of Christian Dasher, Sr.²⁴

²²E. Merton Coulter, ed., and Albert B. Saye, ed., A List of the Early Settlers of Georgia (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1949), p. 70.

²³Pearl Rahn Gnann, ed., Georgia Salzburger and Allied Families (Savannah: By the Author, 1956), p. 42.

²⁴Ibid.

This influx of German protestants continued until fifteen hundred of them had made their home in the colony of Georgia by 1751.²⁵ Thomas L. Stokes verified this fact when he explained:

It is customary to think of Georgia as an English colony. Yet it was not. It was truly a melting pot. Population statistics show that Georgia, in its first few years was more Germanic than British. For to the Savannah came many persecuted Middle Europeans. The Salzburgers found along the Savannah [River] a refuge finally from religious persecution which had driven them from the mountains of Austria.²⁶

Thus, prior to the Revolutionary War, the Lutheran community of New Ebenezer reached its zenith of prominence and prestige.

The Revolutionary Era

In 1765, Bolzius died,²⁷ bringing an end to the era of absolute rule by the Lutheran pastorate over the religious colony of New Ebenezer. Gronau, his associate, had previously died. The successor of Bolzius was Herman H. Lemke, who was assisted by Christian Rabenhorst. When Lemke died, the Lutheran headquarters in Germany sent Christopher Frederich Triebner to the Salzburgers in 1768. Triebner, who was also sponsored by the English Society for Propagating Christian

²⁵Robert Preston Brooks, History of Georgia (Boston: Atkinson, Mentzer, and Co., 1913), pp. 49-52.

²⁶Thomas L. Stokes, Rivers of America: The Savannah, ed. Harvey Allen and Carl Cramer (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1951), p. 90.

²⁷Strobel, Salzburgers, p. 146.

Knowledge, served as a Lutheran preacher for the Salzburger during the Revolutionary War.

The importation of Triebner was the beginning of serious troubles in the Salzburger's community. Early in his Georgian ministry, problems arose over the failure of the German church hierarchy to designate the role that Triebner was to perform in relation to Rabenhorst, who had already served in the area for sixteen years. Immediately upon his arrival, Triebner assumed the role of senior minister, taking over the work of the late Lemke as the pastor of the Jerusalem Lutheran Church. This left Rabenhorst to work in outlying areas.

Triebner as a preacher was never able to demand the respect that was earned by the previous ministers. The historian, Charles C. Jones, Jr., described Triebner as a "violent, uncompromising man,--at times intent upon the success of his peculiar views and wishes."²⁸ Strobel concurred in this description of Triebner, when he said,

Mr. Triebner was a young man of fine talents, but very impetuous in his character, and seems to have possessed but a very small share of the humility and piety which characterized his predecessors.²⁹

²⁸Charles C. Jones, Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, vol. 9: The Dead Towns of Georgia (Savannah: Morning News Steam Publishing House, 1878), p. 37.

²⁹Strobel, Salzburger, p. 151.

The results of having a Lutheran pastor with Triebner's disposition in the community during the Revolutionary War proved to be disastrous for the Salzburgers.

As news of the Revolutionary War spread to the colony of Georgia, the Salzburgers were forced to make a decision. The choice was between the British or American forces. The majority of the Salzburgers chose the American side. Their reasoning was recorded by Charles C. Jones, Jr.:

We have experienced the evils of tyranny in our own land; for the sake of liberty we have left home, lands, houses, estates, and have taken refuge in the wilds of Georgia; shall we now submit again to bondage? No, never.³⁰

What decision did Triebner make? He quickly espoused the cause of the British. The effect of this decision was to divide the Salzburgers into two camps with the majority favoring the American revolution and the minority rallying with Triebner in behalf of the British cause. This created a critical conflict among the Salzburgers that was never resolved.

In 1775, the Revolutionary War had its beginning, and the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. Although there were not any major battles fought in Georgia until 1779,³¹ the indication was that the American forces took control in 1776 in the hope that their position would not be tested. The

³⁰Jones, Dead Towns, pp. 35-36.

³¹Strobel, Salzburgers, pp. 201-202.

following statement, dated March 4, 1779, was given by Triebner to his sponsor, the English Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge:

That having for two Years and a half been under a Tyrannical Government and particular Oppression, he [Triebner] had no Opportunity to write to the SOCIETY; that during the Rebellion, he and his Adherants had been exposed to many Indignities and Dangers, that he had been looked upon as a Ring-leader of the Tories [British] in the District where he lived, and had been three Times obliged to pay a Fine of Forty Shillings; and that he and fourteen of his Hearers on refusing to take an Oath of Abjuration were made Prisoners; that on the 5th of October, 1777, he was carried before a Committee of twelve Men as an Enemy of the State, and because he refused taking the Oath, he was declared a Prisoner of War; he was at length forced by one of the rebel [American] Commanders, who held a drawn Sword over him, to take the Oath. At length, says he, the Time of Deliverance drew near-- His Majesty's Troops arrived at the End of the Year, and by the Blessing of GOD, they under the Command of Colonel Campbell obtained a complete Victory over the Georgian and Carolinian Rebels.³²

The battle under consideration by Triebner in this respect was the capture of Savannah by the British during the last week of December, 1778, under the command of Colonel Campbell.³³

Immediately Triebner went to Savannah and took "the oath of Allegiance to the crown."³⁴ Next he urged the British to militarily take control of New Ebenezer. According to Jones,

³²Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Protestant Missions to the East, vol. 2: East India Mission (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, n.d.), pp. 89-90.

³³Jones, Dead Towns, p. 36. Compare with Strobel, Salzburgers, p. 202, who says the capture of Savannah was under the command of General Provost.

³⁴Strobel, Salzburgers, p. 202.

New Ebenezer was occupied by the British on January 2, 1779.³⁵

Reliable historians report that New Ebenezer suffered tremendous damage as the result of the British occupation. For example, concerning the Jerusalem Lutheran Church, the British destroyed nearly all of the church records, shot ammunition at the church building to damage various parts of it, and turned it into a stable for their horses.³⁶ In spite of all of this, Triebner could only say nice things about the British soldiers. He claimed that they preserved "good Discipline"³⁷ in the community. His view was that the destruction to the community must be attributed to local troublemakers, not to the British soldiers. In writing to his sponsors, he reported,

But since Ebenezer is become the Place of Retreat for all Sorts of People of this Province, and of South Carolina, who have been driven from their Habitation, it has not been possible to prevent great Damage being done to the Fields near the Town, especially by their Horses which they brought with them.³⁸

Thus, according to Trievner, the British could not do any wrong!

For the benefit of his sponsors, Triebner tried to paint a glowing picture of the opportunities that were created

³⁵Jones, Dead Towns, p. 36.

³⁶Strobel, Salzburgers, p. 207.

³⁷Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Mission, pp. 89-90.

³⁸Ibid.

for him because of the Revolutionary War. He said that many of the British troops stationed at Ebenezer, including their major, attended his "divine Service,"³⁹ and he therefore had the opportunity to minister to them. In his report of August 22, 1781, to the English society, Triebner reported,

But this Concourse of People, of various Sects and Denominations, may be the Blessing of God tend to the Promotion of his Kingdom. The Uniformity of our divine Worship, and the diligent Attendance to the same, and the strict Observance of the Sabbath by the Members of our Congregation, have already produced good Effects.⁴⁰

Thus Triebner tried to impress those to whom he was financially indebted.

Another problem of serious consequence to New Ebenezer during the war was the decline in morals. Under Bolzius, the Salzburgers were under strict standards and were prohibited from practicing certain sins, such as drunkenness, immorality, and card playing. Those who engaged in such practices were tried before Bolzius and a jury, composed of several of the Lutheran elders. Now, the Salzburgers were being exposed to a radically different environment. Strobel said,

The soldiers were licentious in the extreme, and tippling-houses were established for their accommodation in several parts of town. These became the resort for the soldiers and many of those Salzburgers who espoused the royal cause, and thus habits of intemperance were introduced, and the once sober and

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

moral Germans soon learned to imitate the vicious practices of their corrupt and debased English associates.⁴¹

The above described influences had a greater effect on the decline of Lutheranism in the Salzburger community than did the physical damage done to the community by the war. In fact, Triebner admitted that there was a problem during the war over sin. He reported to his foreign sponsors that the situation had given him the opportunity to distribute some of their tracts, entitled, "A Dissuasive from the Sin of Drunkenness, and the Sinfulness of profaning the Lord's Day."⁴² He commented that this tract had made a "deep Impression on some Wild thoughtless Persons."⁴³

As the war continued, Triebner bemoaned the difficulties involved and told of his conduct of church affairs. In his report of May 22, 1780, to the English society that sponsored him, he gave the following report:

That though he and his Family have suffered greatly from the Calamities of War, yet he has never abandoned the Care of his Congregation, that he has preached to them thrice a Week, and administered the Sacrament once every six Weeks. The Number of Communicants on the Sunday preceding the Date of his Letter was fifty-four at Ebenezer, and at Goshen forty-three. Thirty-

⁴¹Strobel, Salzburgers, pp. 207-208.

⁴²Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Mission, pp. 89-90.

⁴³Ibid.

six of his Congregation had died in the Course of three Months.⁴⁴

The degenerate state of affairs under Triebner was now obvious. This once large congregation had become progressively smaller. He only had the support of the small number who had politically aligned themselves with him and his Tory cause. In fact, when the war had ended and the Tory faction had been brought into submission, the Jerusalem Lutheran church at New Ebenezer and others on his circuit were almost nill.

As the war approached its conclusion, the British abandoned Ebenezer on December 8, 1781,⁴⁵ and retreated to Savannah.⁴⁶ Triebner described his plight in a letter to the English society, dated April 4, 1782:

I was obliged, when the King's Troops evacuated Ebenezer on the 8th of December, to betake myself, together with my Wife and three Children, a young Relation, and about twenty-eight Men, Members of our Congregation, to Savannah, where I am still, and shall continue till the Storm shall subside, and Ebenezer be cleared again. The accounts from thence are for the present not so alarming. However, the Inhabitants there are plundered of the Necessaries of Life by strolling Parties.⁴⁷

The situation for Triebner was more serious than he wanted his

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 96.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Amanda Johnson, Georgia As Colony and State (n.p.: Amanda Johnson, 1938), p. 148.

⁴⁷Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, Mission, pp. 89-90.

supporters to realize. In the summer of 1782, the English society reported in the following words that Triebner had left Georgia:

Mr. Triebner, in a Letter dated St. Augustine, October 28, 1782, says, that he retreated thither from Savannah in the Beginning of August 1782, with his Wife and three Children, and some others, from Ebenezer, at the Evacuation of the Province of Georgia. He says, he is named among those, who on Pain of Death must not return.⁴⁸

Shortly thereafter Triebner returned to England.⁴⁹

The Decline of Lutheranism

The decline of Lutheranism in the Salzburger community was the result of several factors converging at approximately the same historical period. These factors were enumerated as follows: additional agricultural acreage, European financial support, political bitterness, isolationism, and religious apathy. Each was studied in the above listed order.

First, the decline of Lutheranism in New Ebenezer was related to the shortage of good agricultural lands at Red Bluff, the site of New Ebenezer. As additional settlers became residents of New Ebenezer, more acres were needed to meet the needs of an agrarian society. Although the land at Red Bluff itself was fertile, the surrounding lands were not satisfactory. Strobel verified this position when he wrote,

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Brantley, "Salzburgers," p. 221.

But unfortunately for the permanent prosperity of the town, it was surrounded on three sides by low swamps, which were subject to periodical inundation, and consequently generated a poisonous miasma prejudicial to the health of the inhabitants.⁵⁰

The resulting situation was that the younger generation and later arrivals from Europe were forced to search outside of New Ebenezer in an ever-increasing radius for suitable farmland. Some settled in other parts of what is now Effingham County; the remainder looked to other Georgia counties and other states. Those who scattered were not usually located close to a Lutheran church. Therefore, many Salzburgers investigated the religion of their new neighbors.

Through this pattern of outmigration from the original settlements of Ebenezer and New Ebenezer, the Lutheran churches in the Salzburgers' communities lost much of their membership. An example of this outmigration was the subject of this study, Christian Herman Dasher. He lived on a farm in Goshen, an outlying community in Effingham County, and later moved to Lowndes County in South Central Georgia.

Second, the Lutherans in Georgia were hindered by extended European involvement in their affairs. The English Society for the Promoting of Christian Knowledge continued to sponsor the Lutheran preachers for the Salzburgers until the departure of Christopher F. Triebner at the end of the Revolutionary War. Strobel explained that the Salzburgers were

⁵⁰Strobel, Salzburgers, p. 91.

at this point "no longer 'British' subjects, and of course, were removed beyond the charities of the Society."⁵¹ Yet, after the war, the Salzburgers depended on the Lutheran hierarchy in Germany for "ministerial services" and "pecuniary aid" until 1785.⁵² Strobel, a Lutheran preacher, admitted that this extended European oversight hindered the Lutheran cause in Georgia. He frankly stated:

It is true, that when the descendents of the Salzburgers became able to support their pastors, at least to a considerable extent, they withheld their contributions, and relied too much upon the income of their funded capital.⁵³

Thus, through the desire of the English Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the ministry of the St. Anne's Lutheran Church in Augsburg, Germany, to assist the Salzburgers, these two groups almost completely destroyed the work among the Salzburgers in Georgia that they had sacrificed to build.

Third, the wounds of the severe internal conflict over the Revolutionary War between individuals and families were never healed. Charles W. Wilson stated,

The British occupation of Ebenezer during the Revolutionary War and the subsequent destruction wrought by antagonistic political factions among the Salzburgers caused the abandonment of the town and surrounding farms.⁵⁴

⁵¹Ibid., p. 216. ⁵²Ibid. ⁵³Ibid., p. 192.

⁵⁴George Fenwick Jones, ed., and Marie Hahn, trans., Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America . . . Edited by Samuel Urlsperger, vol. 3: 1737 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972), pp. 11-12.

A letter from Hermann Winde to E. Merton Coulter of the University of Georgia indicated that a survey of original German documents available to him in Halle, Germany, revealed that there were "much more personal difficulties in Ebenezer than hitherto [were] known,"⁵⁵ in the conflict with Triebner over the cause of independence. Demoralized by the horrors of a war that involved both the community and the Lutheran church, the people of New Ebenezer were unable to reunite and rebuild their community to its former prestigious position.

Fourth, the Salzburger Lutherans had maintained a spirit of isolationism prior to the war. They lived together in a separate colony and spoke the German language in the home, church, and school. This isolationism was challenged by the war. English troops moved into their community for more than three years. Refugees from other places who spoke English also made New Ebenezer their home during this period. A desire existed on the part of those Salzburgers who favored independence to Americanize, so that they could take their place as effective citizens of the emerging country. One of the Salzburgers, named John Adam Treutlen, succeeded in this mainstreaming process and became the first governor of the new State of Georgia. However, many additional years were required for the majority of the Salzburgers to become

⁵⁵Herman Winde, Halle/Salle, Germany, to E. Merton Coulter, Professor of History, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, May 2, 1960, in the Salzburger Files, Georgia Room, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

a part of the American culture. For example, the Salzburgers retained the use of the German language in their Lutheran churches until 1824.⁵⁶ At this late date, the Lutherans were never able to regain their former religious power.

Fifth, religious apathy was rampant throughout America during these post-Revolutionary days and New Ebenezer was not an exception. A study of the sociological cycle of church growth showed religious movements moving from vibrant organisms to lethargic denominations.⁵⁷ This was exactly what had happened to the Salzburgers. They were now three and four generations removed from those who had such strong religious convictions that they were willing to give up houses, jobs, families, and homeland in order to have freedom of religion. The forefathers of these post-Revolutionary Salzburgers were committed to the religion of Luther; those of this era were not committed. To many of this era, religion was just not too important.

Into this situation, the German hierarchy of the Lutheran Church imported a young preacher, named John Earnest Bergman. The date of his arrival in Georgia was the spring of 1785.⁵⁸ This young man was very talented in some respects and was highly educated. Upon his arrival in America,

⁵⁶Jones, Dead Towns, p. 42.

⁵⁷Elmer L. Towns, Is The Day Of The Denomination Dead? (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1973), pp. 98-100.

⁵⁸Strobel, Salzburgers, p. 220.

Bergman found New Ebenezer in a state of serious decline. Strobel recorded the findings of Bergman as follows:

The town of Ebenezer had been almost entirely deserted during the war, and many of the settlements were nearly broken up. The people, therefore, had to commence life almost anew; and, as a matter of course, their pecuniary circumstances were very much embarrassed. Besides this, the whole congregation had been in a great measure scattered; their records were either lost or very much mutilated; the members had not only greatly declined, but many of them had entirely departed from their Christian profession.⁵⁹

Bergman himself even doubted the possibility of reviving the old Salzburger religion of Lutheranism in Georgia. Strobel quoted Bergman as saying that he felt that the possibilities were remote "of restoring order and organizing the churches upon a permanent footing."⁶⁰ Bergman in fact said, "The whole Lutheran church in America needs a reformation."⁶¹

The general decline in religious interests among the Salzburgers in Georgia at this time corresponded to the pattern of decline throughout all of the United States after the Revolutionary War. The difference was that the Second Great Awakening that was experienced on the American frontier in the early nineteenth century seemingly did not reach Lutheranism in Effingham County, Georgia. As a result, the Salzburgers permanently affiliated themselves with other

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 220-221.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 221.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 239.

movements that were more strict morally and that were in general responding more effectively to the needs of the new American way-of-life.

Bergman, who was an excellent man in other ways, lacked the necessary ability and desire to meet the spiritual needs of the Salzburgers at this critical time of their history. His emphasis was upon the development of his literary interests. Strobel said that Bergman's interests were "very extensive, and embraced a wide field." Strobel itemized them:

History, philosophy, the various departments of natural science, classical literature, all engaged his attention, and in each of them he attained to a very considerable proficiency. As a theologian, he was especially well read, having acquired a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew, Arabic, and several other oriental languages.⁶²

Although Bergman was highly educated in all areas, he was woefully lacking in the practical side of his ministry. Strobel stated,

He lacked, however, one very important ingredient in the character of a minister, to make him successful. He had no knowledge of men and things. In other words, he was a perfect novice in all matters of business, and seemed not disposed to cultivate any intercourse with society, except in as far as he was forced to do so in the discharge of his duty. In his feelings he was too exclusive, and did not mingle enough with society to qualify him for very extensive usefulness. His books were like companions, and he sought his chief enjoyment in the retirement of his study.⁶³

⁶²Ibid., pp. 226-227.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 221-222.

Throughout the ministry of John Earnest Bergman, the Lutheran Churches under his charge continued to decline. He bemoaned "the fruitlessness of his labours, and seemed wellnigh to despair of ever accomplishing any permanent good."⁶⁴ Death came to Bergman on February 25, 1824.

The next Lutheran pastor was Christopher F. Bergman, the son of John Earnest Bergman. The younger Bergman⁶⁵ was educated by his father privately in his study. This education proved to be quite extensive. In reflecting on the ministry of the younger Bergman, Strobel said,

If there was any fault of which he was guilty, it was too close attention to his literary pursuits, to the neglect of pastoral visitations and the serious injury of his health. He evidently was a very close and industrious student, and he labored to acquire a thorough knowledge of every department of science and literature. He has left a number of treatises on various subjects, including botany, meteorology, astronomy, natural philosophy, history, poetry, belles lettres, & c. Besides which he kept a diary in which are carefully and minutely noted all the important events that happened in our own country and throughout the world, as far as they came to his knowledge. His acquirements in the languages and mathematics were extensive; and what is remarkable, his entire education was obtained in his father's study.⁶⁶

The anticipation was that, at the death of the father, his son who he had personally trained would become the

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 246.

⁶⁵Christopher F. Bergman will be called, "the younger Bergman," to distinguish him from his father.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 263-264.

Lutheran pastor to the Salzburgers. The truth was, however, that he too had become interested in a religion other than the Lutheran one. The younger Bergman had been reading the writings of John Calvin and had in fact been "duly licensed as a Presbyterian minister."⁶⁷ The Lutherans were not inclined at this point to lose another of their most promising young men to another religion. First, they offered him the charge of the St. Matthew's Lutheran Church and its parish in South Carolina, which he declined. Next, he was visited in New Ebenezer by Dr. John Backman, pastor of the Lutheran church in Charleston, who persuaded him to renounce the Calvinistic views of the Presbyterian Church and to become a Lutheran clergyman. After this visit, the younger Bergman became the pastor of the Jerusalem Lutheran Church at New Ebenezer and the Lutheran churches in its outlying circuit.⁶⁸

The main contribution that the younger Bergman made to reduce the decline of Lutheranism among the Salzburgers was to introduce the English language into all services of the Lutheran churches in the area.⁶⁹ However, at this date in mid-1820s, the mass departure from the Lutheran church had already taken place; nothing could now be done to regain the tremendous losses of membership that the Lutherans had suffered in the previous fifty years.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 251.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 252-253.

⁶⁹Jones, Dead Towns, p. 42.

The Predicament of Christian Herman Dasher

Into this state of declining Lutheranism was born the subject of this study, Christian Herman Dasher. The son of Christian Lebreth and Elizabeth Dasher, he was born in the year of 1786.⁷⁰ This young man developed in a family that had been Lutheran for several generations. His grandfather and great-grandfather had left Salzburg, presumably from the province of Gastein, as religious exiles and had paid their own passage to the colony of Georgia. The birth of Christian Herman Dasher came just after the close of the pastorate of Christopher F. Triebner, the Tory who had returned to England, and at the beginning of the thirty-nine year unsuccessful Lutheran pastorate of John Earnest Bergman. This means that Christian Herman Dasher came onto the scene at a time when the majority of the Salzburgers were leaving the Lutheran church for religious groups that were "distinctively American."⁷¹

Christian Herman Dasher married Elizabeth Waldhauer, who had been born in Effingham County in 1792 to John and Mary (Floerl) Waldhauer.⁷² This marriage was consummated on March 30, 1809.⁷³ To this union were born a total of fourteen

⁷⁰Georgia Salzburgers, p. 42.

⁷¹John F. Hurst, "The Salzburger Exiles in Georgia," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, August 1892, p. 397.

⁷²Georgia Salzburgers, p. 42.

⁷³Folks Huxford, ed., Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia, vol. 6 (n.p.: By the author, 1971), p. 97.

children, seven girls and seven boys. All of the boys were reported to have died either in infancy or at a very young age, except for one. The eight children who probably lived into adulthood were listed as follows: Sarah Ann, Margaret Amanda, Savannah Catherine,⁷⁴ William H., Susan, Ann Elizabeth, Georgia Ann, and Mary Gertrude.⁷⁵

The occupation of Christian Herman Dasher was primarily farming. Nevertheless, he served as Sheriff of Effingham County from November 7, 1809, to November 1, 1811.⁷⁶ Beginning in the year of 1812, he served a term as Justice of the Peace from the Ninth District of Effingham County.⁷⁷ From March 26, 1817, to May 16, 1820, Christian H. Dasher served as a major in the military from Effingham County.⁷⁸ Again he served Effingham County as Representative to the State Legislature in the 1817 session.⁷⁹

⁷⁴Savannah Catherine evidently died prior to marriage.

⁷⁵Huxford, Pioneers, 6:332-333.

⁷⁶"Commission Book (1811)," Executive Department, Record Group Number 1, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁷"List of Justices of the Peace (1799-1812)," Executive Department, Record Group Number 1, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Georgia, p. 884, and "List of Justices of the Peace (1813-1817)," Executive Department, Record Group Number 1, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Georgia, p. 147.

⁷⁸"Military Records (1808-1829)," Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Georgia, p. 13.

⁷⁹"Commission Book (1817)," Executive Department, Record Group Number 1, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Georgia.

Religiously, Christian Herman Dasher was reportedly to have been "christened in his infancy and brought up in the Lutheran faith."⁸⁰ J. A. Harding of Winchester, Kentucky, came to Valdosta seventeen years after the death of Dasher and became interested in the history of the church in South Georgia. After Harding had compiled the information that was available to him in 1883, he reported the following information concerning Dasher:

When, however, he arrived at manhood, and began to be impressed with the importance of uniting with the church, and of living the Christian life, he was perplexed by the existence of so many churches, and by the publication of so many doctrines. Fortunately instead of becoming an infidel, as so many do, under like circumstances, he turned to the Holy Scriptures for light.⁸¹

Thus began Dasher's life-long search of the Bible for religious truth.

Based upon his study of the Bible, Dasher was unable to locate Scriptural authority for the Lutheran practice of sprinkling for baptism. He became determined to be immersed. The finding of a person who would comply with Dasher's wishes was difficult. Popular opinion was on the side of sprinkling in Southeast Georgia at this particular point of history. To further complicate matters, Dasher lived in the Lutheran colony of the Salzburgers, where the Lutheran pastor was John

⁸⁰J. A. Harding, "The Church of God at Valdosta, Ga.," Gospel Advocate 25 (15 February 1883):104.

⁸¹Ibid.

Earnest Bergman. James S. Lamar, a graduate of Bethany College, who preached regularly in Valdosta at a later date, learned through friends of the late Christian Herman Dasher that he had "earnestly and repeatedly tried to induce his minister to immerse him, but in vain."⁸²

There were some Baptist churches being planted in the Southeast Georgia area contemporary with these events in the life of Dasher. Why did not Dasher request immersion at the hands of a Baptist preacher? J. A. Harding theorized,

But he could not go with the Baptists, as he could not tell the experience which they required; he had seen no marvelous sight, nor had he heard any inexplicable sound; he was by no means sure "that God had for Christ's sake pardoned his sins," though he did not then understand the doctrine of baptism for remission, as he afterwards did; nor did he think God demanded any such experience as a pre-requisite to baptism and church membership; he desired most ardently to become a Christian, believing in his heart that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of sinners, and being perfectly willing to take him as his guide and master. But there was no preacher within his circle of acquaintances who would immerse him upon the confession of such a faith; all demanded that he should profess to have experienced a mysterious and miraculous work of the Spirit within him, in taking away his heart of stone and in giving him a heart of flesh.⁸³

At this point, Dasher did not have a very thorough knowledge of the Bible's teaching on baptism. Yet, no evidence has been produced that he sought baptism at the hands of a

⁸²J. S. Lamar, "Georgia," in Churches of Christ, ed. John T. Brown (Louisville: John P. Morton and Company, 1904), p. 214.

⁸³J. A. Harding, "The Church of God at Valdosta, Ga." Gospel Advocate 25 (15 February 1883):104.

Baptist preacher. Possibly Harding's theory is correct.

Dasher's question, however, still remained, "Who will I find that will immerse me?"

CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF HIS SAVANNAH FRIEND

In his search for immersion, Christian Herman Dasher heard of a unique man in Savannah who became his very close friend in religious circles. This man's name was Sheldon C. Dunning. The theory was that he was told of Dunning by a woman probably named Mrs. Sarah Threadcraft¹ of Savannah.² However, an acquaintance between Dasher and Dunning would not have been difficult during this period, because both were prominent men in neighboring counties. In fact, in the January 2, 1810 issue of a local newspaper in Savannah, both men had advertisements on the same page--Dasher as Sheriff and Dunning as Auctioneer.³

¹Chatham County, First Baptist Church Register (Savannah Baptist) 1800-1946, laminated and bound by the Department of Archives, State of Georgia, and housed at First Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia.

²J. A. Harding, "The Church of God at Valdosta, Ga.," Gospel Advocate 25 (15 February 1833):104.

³The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 2 Jan. 1810.

Initial Contact with Dunning

As soon as he learned of Dunning's willingness to administer baptism by immersion upon a "simple confession of his faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God,"⁴ Christian Herman Dasher travelled to Savannah, "not more than fourteen miles distant"⁵ from his farm at Goshen.⁶ Immediately Dunning immersed Dasher!

The date of the baptism of Dasher by Dunning is uncertain. The traditional date is 1819. J. Edward Moseley, in his book, Disciples of Christ in Georgia, said that the baptism date was "about 1819, although it may have been earlier."⁷ No primary evidence was available to substantiate the 1819 date. The 1819 date could be either correct or erroneous. The correct date would obviously be somewhere between 1811 (the year of Dunning's excommunication from the Baptist Church in Savannah) and 1836-1838 (the period in which Dasher migrated to Lowndes County, Georgia).⁸

⁴J. A. Harding, "The Church of God at Valdosta, Ga.," Gospel Advocate 25 (15 February 1883):104.

⁵Ibid.

⁶The Georgian, 4 November 1831. This notice identified C. H. Dasher selling about 1500 bushels of good seed rice at his home in Effingham County, located sixteen miles from Savannah, near the Augusta Road.

⁷J. Edward Moseley, Disciples of Christ in Georgia (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1954), p. 64.

⁸The approximate date of Christian Herman Dasher's migration to Lowndes County was determined by an examination of recorded deeds in the Effingham County Court House.

If the Mrs. Threadcraft of the traditional story was Mrs. Sarah Threadcraft of Savannah, then evidence existed to prove that she was in Savannah from July 4, 1819, when she was baptized into the Baptist Church in Savannah, until May 3, 1823, when her name was removed by transfer of letter.⁹ Her contact with both Dunning and Dasher may have been during this period of time or before her Baptist baptism.

Since Christian Herman Dasher was the one who first planted the Lord's church in Effingham County, then his baptism by Dunning probably occurred prior to 1826, when a man by the initials of J. J. H. of Goshen District, Effingham County, Georgia, wrote to Alexander Campbell, stating that he had been "a subscriber for the Christian Baptist, and an attentive reader for two years."¹⁰ The date of the publication was September 3, 1828, indicating that the beginning of his reading of the Christian Baptist, was as early as 1826.

The writings of J. J. H., however, indicated that he was a Christian of considerable maturity in the faith. He stated that the Christian Baptist had been of greater help to him in enlightening his mind in the scriptures than any

Springfield, Georgia. On December 4, 1836, Christian H. Dasher of Effingham Co., transferred property to Henry McAlpin (Deed Book N, Page 447). On October 20, 1838, C. H. Dasher of Lowndes Co., transferred property to Godlip Dasher (Deed Book O, Page 58).

⁹Chatham County, First Baptist church Register (Savannah Baptist) 1800-1946), laminated and bound by the Department of Archives, State of Georgia, and housed at First Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia.

¹⁰J. J. H. "Letter to Mr. Alexander Campbell," Christian Baptist 6 (3 November 1828);87-88.

other paper that he had ever read.¹¹ The forthcoming statement from his pen indicated a clear understanding of the religious conditions of that day, growth of the Lord's church in that region, and its identifying marks. J. J. H. stated,

Light, we are happy to say, is springing up in these dark and benighted regions, notwithstanding the many oppositions of professors of every sect; notwithstanding the imprecations and persecutions thrown out against us, and received almost from every quarter. Several Baptists and nine Universalists in the above mentioned county and the county of Bryan have been willing to renounce their favorite isms; and do assemble themselves together on the first day of the week to read the scriptures, pray, break bread, exhort one another, attend to the contribution, and sing the praises of our once crucified and now risen Lord and Savior.¹²

Concerning the plan of salvation, J. J. H. explained that several persons had been "immersed upon the confession of their faith into the name of the Lord Jesus."¹³ This writer, Dasher's neighbor from Goshen, also discussed the organization of the church in Effingham County. His statement was,

Though we are not organized for the want of men possessing the qualifications as laid down by the Apostle Paul to Timothy and Titus, yet we anticipate the period not far distant when not only we, but every congregation scattered throughout the dominions of the King of righteousness, shall have faithful men--men capable of taking the oversight thereof willingly, not by constraint, nor for filthy lucre sake, no doubt (for experience has already taught) there would be more love, joy, peace, and long suffering among believers of the gospel of Christ than has been heretofore manifested.¹⁴

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

This statement indicated that this writer, J. J. H. was not a newly converted Christian. This would place a congregation of several years development in Effingham County in 1828.

Mrs. John Cook, chairwoman of the "150th Anniversary Year Committee" (1819-1969) of the First Christian Church of Savannah,¹⁵ believed that the year of 1819 was arbitrarily picked. She believed that this date was selected by people who did not know that Dunning was in Savannah prior to his involvement in the trans-Atlantic voyage of the steam ship, S. S. Savannah, in 1819.¹⁶ Since the name of Sheldon C. Dunning was easily documented with the famous sailing of this steam ship in 1819, she believed that this date was selected in order to have something concrete as a date of beginning for the restoration movement in Savannah.

The earliest known written source of the 1819 date was J. A. Harding's article, "The Church of God at Valdosta, Ga.," published in the Gospel Advocate in 1883.¹⁷ Harding had been visiting in Valdosta as an evangelist and had been given sketches of Georgia church history by various people with whom he had visited in Valdosta. Based upon these accounts, he proceeded to write the article which was published

¹⁵N. Robert Gill, 150 Years in God's Service (Savannah, First Christian Church, 1969), p. 69.

¹⁶Interview with Mrs. John Cook, Historical Committee, First Christian Church, Savannah, Georgia, 8 June 1979.

¹⁷J. A. Harding, "The Church of God at Valdosta, Ga.," Gospel Advocate 25 (15 February 1883):104.

in the Gospel Advocate. Harding never met Dunning or Dasher.¹⁸

Concerning the purpose of Dasher's baptism by Dunning, there was evidence that Dasher was baptized repeatedly for various purposes, including the remission of sins. The aforementioned baptism was not Dasher's only baptism. Strobel, the Lutheran historian, believed that Dasher had been baptized on multiple occasions. His statement was,

Mr. D____, who had once been sheriff of Effingham County, after being immersed some three or four times, connected himself with the "Bible Christians or Campbellites." He still lives, and is [a] man of great integrity, and possesses many fine traits of character.¹⁹

These words, written in 1855, indicated that the entire religious community was aware of Dasher's view concerning the purpose of baptism and the importance of its proper execution.

Lamar, who personally knew Dunning and preached in Valdosta after Dasher's death, also knew of Dasher's multiple baptisms. Lamar remarked,

Now and then these earnest men, feeling after the light, would reach a conclusion that their baptism had not been altogether up to the apostolic model; for instance had not been "for the remission of sins," and, not caring at all for what men might think or say, but caring everything for what Christ said, they would forthwith proceed to baptize each other again--Dunning immersing Dasher, and then

¹⁸The account by James A. Harding must be considered secondary source material, since he never knew Dasher or Dunning personally.

¹⁹Strobel, Salzburgers, pp. 255-256.

Dasher immersing Dunning; or their consciences would be disturbed by the fact that Saul was told to be baptized and wash away his sins, calling upon the name of the Lord--resulting in another solemn march to the canal and another reciprocal immersion.²⁰

Brethren in the North were not settled in their mind about baptism for the remission of sins until 1823,²¹ when Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott did special preparation for Alexander Campbell's debate with William L. M'Calla of Kentucky.²² However, the Northern brethren did not publicly preach baptism for the remission of sins until 1827, when Scott baptized William Amend for that specific purpose.²³

The influence of the Northern brethren on the baptisms of Dasher is unknown. In reviewing the circumstances of Dasher's baptisms, the possibility existed that Dasher was baptized for the remission of sins prior to 1827 during one of his many trips to the canal. The exact dates of Dasher's various baptisms by Dunning and the purposes of each are unknown. Absolute conclusions therefore are unattainable with the historical data currently available.

²⁰Lamar, "Georgia," p. 214.

²¹Earl Irwin West, The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1906, vol. 1: 1849-1865 (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1949), p. 82.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 84.

Immediate Reaction

Dasher's immediate reaction to his initial baptism by Dunning was to establish a church in his home in the Goshen District of Effingham County. While, at the same time, Dasher remained in close fellowship with Dunning and the small congregation that met with Dunning in Savannah. His first converts in Effingham County were his wife, his sister-in-law, and his sister-in-law's husband.²⁴ Others were also converted, including J. J. H., who wrote the letter to Campbell.²⁵ When Harding recorded the activities of this congregation, he wrote:

These "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers," meeting every Lord's day in the house of Bro. Dasher. The little church grew and prospered, being occasionally visited by Bro. Dunning, who assisted in building it up by his teachings and exhortations.²⁶

Dasher was not timid concerning his convictions after his conversion. He immediately desired to preach and to tell others what he had learned. There was at Goshen a denominational church building, used first by the Lutherans and later, after 1822, by the Methodists. Strobel related the following incident which occurred in the denominational church building

²⁴Moseley, Disciples, p. 67.

²⁵J. J. H. "Letter to Mr. Alexander Campbell," Christian Baptist 6 (3 November 1828):87-88.

²⁶J. A. Harding, "The Church of God at Valdosta, Ga.," Gospel Advocate 25 (15 February 1883):104.

in Goshen, but he did not date the event. He did, however, specifically identify the "Mr. D____," as the sheriff, which would have been Christian Herman Dasher. Strobel said,

Two gentlemen, Mr. D_____ and Captain W_____, labouring under a strange hallucination, imagined themselves called, by a special revelation from heaven, to preach the gospel. By dwelling too much upon this subject, they ultimately became somewhat monomaniac, and announced themselves respectively as John the Baptist and the Messiah. They made an appointment to preach at Goshen, but owing to their insane pretensions, the elders closed the church against them. Nevertheless, they attended at the church at the time appointed, and announced to the large congregation assembled, that, as an evidence of the divinity of their mission, the doors and windows would fly open miraculously, precisely at twelve o'clock. But their prediction was not verified, and they were compelled to leave the assemblage, being deeply mortified at their disappointment.²⁷

Dasher's New Friend

Who was Sheldon C. Dunning? He was born in the year of 1780,²⁸ in Welton Township, Fairfield County, Connecticut.²⁹ His parents were Episcopalians.³⁰ Moseley in his book, Disciples of Christ in Georgia, collected the following information about Sheldon C. Dunning:

²⁷Strobel, Salzburgers, p. 255.

²⁸Laurel Grove Cemetery, "General Keeper's Record Book 1852-1938" (Savannah: Works Progress Administration, 1939), under the name, "Sheldon Dunning." (Typewritten.)

²⁹Moseley, Disciples, p. 117. S. C. Dunning was a member along with Enoch Silsby, one of his business partners, of the New English Society of Georgia. This information would substantiate his New England "roots." See Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 29 May 1807.

³⁰Lamar, "Georgia," p. 214.

He was of medium height, stood quite erect. He usually carried a walking cane. He wore no beard and had a healthy, reddish complexion with abundant light hair. A charming smile, combined with a sense of humor, made him a delightful conversationalist.³¹

The first reference of a person by the name of "Dunning," being in Savannah (the future home of Sheldon C. Dunning), appeared in a Savannah newspaper in the year of 1794. The Georgia Gazette reported on November 13, 1794, that "Captain Dunning" had arrived from Philadelphia on the ship named Severd. The next reference in a Savannah newspaper to the Dunning name showed the arrival of Captain Dunning on March 18, 1796, on the ship named Brig Williams, arriving from Tortols.³³ This same captain "cleared out" of the Port of Savannah on the same ship on April 16, 1796, with a destination of St. John, Virgin Islands.³⁴ In the issue of August 21, 1798, of the Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, an article was reprinted from the Middlesex Gazette in which the "Ladies of Middletown" requested that Mr. Dunning, evidently the ship captain, convey certain information concerning their Fourth of July celebration in the state of Connecticut to a Mr. Cobbet.³⁵ The significance of this early article

³¹Moseley, Disciples, p. 117.

³²Georgia Gazette, 13 November 1794.

³³Ibid., 22 March 1796.

³⁴Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 22 March 1796.

³⁵Ibid., 21 August 1798.

was that the name "Dunning" was related to both Connecticut and Savannah. The man under consideration was evidently the "Captain Dunning" of prior references, who would have had the ability to convey messages from one port to another port as the result of his occupation.

Was this "Captain Dunning" mentioned in the late eighteenth century in Savannah newspapers the same man who became a close friend to Christian Herman Dasher? Probably not, although Sheldon C. Dunning was called "Captain Sheldon C. Dunning," possibly by error, at a later date.³⁶ The reasoning was that Sheldon C. Dunning would not have been permitted to hold the responsible and dangerous position of ship captain at the young age of fourteen. A possible explanation was that "Captain Dunning" was the father of the Sheldon C. Dunning of this study and that, through the influence of his father, he learned of the opportunities in Savannah during this era and chose to make Savannah his home.

Early in the nineteenth century the name of Sheldon C. Dunning definitely appeared in Savannah newspapers as a businessman and in the courthouse records of Chatham County, Savannah, Georgia. The first newspaper reference appeared on April 14, 1801, as a business advertisement for "Brooks and Dunning" at Bolton's Wharf.³⁷ The "Dunning" of this

³⁶Frank O. Braynard, S. S. Savannah: The Elegant Steam Ship (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1963), p. 30.

³⁷Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 14 April 1801.

partnership was identified in the Savannah newspaper on July 2, 1806, as "S. C. Dunning." The article that appeared on this day reported the dissolving of the partnership of "Brooks and Dunning" by mutual agreement, signed by Benj. Brooks and S. C. Dunning.³⁸ Another direct identification appeared in the Savannah newspaper on March 14, 1804, where "Shelton Dunning" was listed as a defaulter for the year of 1803 in local tax returns.³⁹

Courthouse records in Chatham County, Savannah, Georgia, showed the purchase of a slave, named Edward, by Sheldon C. Dunning, auctioneer of Chatham County, Savannah, Georgia, from Miss Eleanor Morgan, grocer of the same location. This transaction was executed on June 20, 1809, and was recorded on June 22, 1809.⁴⁰ The above listed transaction provided adequate evidence to affirm the residency of Sheldon C. Dunning in the City of Savannah at a date very early in the nineteenth century.⁴¹

Dunning's first business venture in Savannah operated under the name of "Brooks and Dunning." This business

³⁸Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 2 July 1806 and 2 August 1806.

³⁹Ibid., 14 March 1804.

⁴⁰Savannah, Georgia. Chatham County Courthouse Records, Book 2C, Folio 239.

⁴¹The popular view has been that Sheldon C. Dunning did not move from Connecticut to Savannah until about 1819, when his name was prominently associated with the steamship, named S. S. Savannah.

consisted principally of selling groceries, but also included a liquor business. Specific items advertised in the Savannah newspapers included the following: northern produce, liquors, madkika wine, half pipes, cotton cards, sugar, salmon, flour, and a general assortment of chandlery [candles],⁴² plus butter.⁴³ This business ended by mutual agreement on July 2, 1806.⁴⁴

Dunning's next business arrangement, also merchandising on a much broader scale, began on November 1, 1806. This was a partnership between Enoch Silsby and Sheldon C. Dunning and was an auction business in the "Vendue and Commission Line."⁴⁵ Advertisements listed the following items for sale: brandy, gin, Negro men, dry goods, plated wares, groceries, cider, apples, potatoes, cider brandy, lime, flour, West India Rum, chocolate, sugar, molasses, whiskey, beer, figs, bread, handkerchiefs, household furniture, linens, duck, sheeting, flannels, Malaga Wine, N. E. Rum, Cherry Bounce, cheese, tobacco, vinegar, butter, rum (4th proof), coffee, Rhode Island Hams, soap, cloth, crockery, Port Wine, boots,

⁴²Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 14 April 1801, 1 January 1802, 4 January 1803, 27 October 1804, and 5 March 1806.

⁴³Georgia Republican and State Intelligencer, 31 July 1804.

⁴⁴Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 2 July 1806.

⁴⁵Ibid., 1 November 1806.

slippers, suspenders, Northward Gin,⁴⁶ tea, raisins, salt, Northern Tow-cloth,⁴⁷ and other goods. This business also served Savannah as a travel agency for departing ships⁴⁸ and as a real estate broker for the transfer of property.⁴⁹ Additionally, on one occasion, this business auctioned the pilot boat of a schooner, named "Liberty" at the wharf of Dennis and Williams.⁵⁰

The next business with which Sheldon C. Dunning became associated began on October 2, 1810, and was named "Clay and Dunning," a partnership between Ralph Clay and S. C. Dunning. They stated to the public that they had "found a connection in the COMMISSION BUSINESS in New York" and that they were "thankful for any favors in the above line."⁵¹ Quickly, however, the trade name for this new business changed to "Dunning and Clay." This business seemed to have been a continuation of the previous business, operating under the

⁴⁶Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 5 November 1806, 8 November 1806, 12 November 1806, 29 November 1806, 17 December 1806, 3 January 1807, 7 January 1807, 25 February 1807, 9 June 1807, 10 November 1807, 17 November 1807, 1 December 1807, 4 December 1807, 2 February 1809, and 3 March 1809.

⁴⁷The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 2 January 1810 and 14 April 1810.

⁴⁸Ibid., 29 April 1809.

⁴⁹Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 2 February 1808.

⁵⁰The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 12 January 1809.

⁵¹Ibid., 2 October 1810.

name "Silsby and Dunning." The following items were offered for sale: salt, cotton, ham, French Brandy, Northern Gin, tobacco, cheese, allum salt, wine, N. E. Rum, sugar,⁵² coffee, twine, Madeira Wine, handkerchiefs, duck, rice, brandy (4th proof), tea, and a variety of liquors.⁵³ During this business venture, Dunning also sold at auction the ship named Goelet, at the wharf on December 15, 1812.⁵⁴

By the beginning of the year of 1817, Dunning had become a highly respected man in the Savannah business community. He was now in a sole proprietorship; business references were simply made to "S. C. Dunning" or "the store of Mr. S. C. Dunning."⁵⁵ His business continued on the same basis as it previously did, when it was a partnership. Services included auctioneering and retailing. He offered for sale the following items: coffee, muscovado sugar,⁵⁶ fifty hogshead of prime tobacco,⁵⁷ northern produce, cotton,⁵⁸ flour, white lead, crockery, gin, wood hats, Irish linen,⁵⁹

⁵²Ibid., 7 December 1811, 31 December 1812, and 16 January 1813.

⁵³Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 25 November 1811 and 18 May 1812.

⁵⁴The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 15 December 1812.

⁵⁵Columbian Museum and Savannah Gazette, 19 August 1817.

⁵⁶Ibid., 14 April 1817. ⁵⁷Ibid., 1 December 1817.

⁵⁸Ibid., 26 March 1818.

⁵⁹Savannah Gazette, 18 January 1817.

dry goods,⁶⁰ mustard, molasses, New England Rum,⁶¹ London duffil blankets,⁶² lumber and lime,⁶³ fruit,⁶⁴ beeswax and snake root,⁶⁵ sundry merchandise,⁶⁶ earthenware,⁶⁷ salt from Liverpool,⁶⁸ and assorted cargo from New York.⁶⁹ However, with the coming of the 1820s, Dunning's auctioneering and retailing business declined, as he became involved in other more demanding businesses.

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Sheldon C. Dunning became more and more prominent in the affairs of Savannah. On September 26, 1809, the local newspaper in Savannah said, "He is well known in town."⁷⁰ People in written communication now addressed him as "S. C. Dunning, Esquire,"⁷¹ further indicating that he had attained a degree

⁶⁰Columbian Museum and Savannah Gazette, 1 November 1817.

⁶¹Ibid., 5 May 1818.

⁶²Ibid., 26 September 1818.

⁶³Ibid., 24 November 1819.

⁶⁴The Daily Georgian, 1 February 1820.

⁶⁵Ibid., 29 February 1802.

⁶⁶Ibid., 8 March 1802.

⁶⁷The Georgian, 17 January 1822.

⁶⁸Ibid., 30 October 1822. ⁶⁹Ibid., 15 July 1824.

⁷⁰The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 25 September 1809.

⁷¹The Columbian Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 24 February 1817.

of prominence in the community. In 1811, when E. W. A. Bailey wanted to start a school, teaching "spelling, reading, and etc.," the name of S. C. Dunning was given as a character reference and endorser of the school. Parents were instructed to consult with Dunning about the terms of tuition.⁷² In February of 1822, when a Savannah man wanted to be out-of-town for a period of time, Sheldon C. Dunning, Esquire, was appointed to transact all of his business for him.⁷³ On December 24, 1812, Dunning was elected as a Director of "The Insurance Company of the City of Savannah."⁷⁴ On February 19, 1817, he was listed as a subscriber to the Hospital and Infirmary for Negroes.⁷⁵ On February 24, 1817, this man was named as a Director of the Marine and Fire Insurance Company of Savannah.⁷⁶ Another honor came his way on May 6, 1817, when he was named Director of the Bank of Georgia.⁷⁷ Again, public confidence was expressed in Sheldon C. Dunning when he was appointed to serve as chairman of the board of managers of

⁷²Ibid., 23 November 1811.

⁷³The Georgian, 23 February 1822.

⁷⁴The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 24 December 1812.

⁷⁵Columbian Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 19 February 1817.

⁷⁶Ibid., 24 February 1817.

⁷⁷Ibid., 6 May 1817.

the Savannah Poor House and Hospital.⁷⁸ As a public servant, Dunning served as a City Constable, beginning on January 15, 1822.⁷⁹ On March 6, 1822, he was appointed to the Board of Health, representing the Derby Ward of Savannah.⁸⁰ Later, he was asked to serve on the Council of the Fire Company of Savannah,⁸¹ and was appointed by the Legislature of the State of Georgia to be one of the three superintendents in charge of clearing the Ocmulgee and Altamaha Rivers in order to make them navigable for steam boats.⁸² These were some of the honors and responsibilities bestowed upon Sheldon C. Dunning in his earlier years.

Maritime interests became foremost in the business life of Sheldon C. Dunning in 1818. In that year, he was listed as one of the incorporators of the Savannah Steam Ship Company,⁸³ which was incorporated by the Legislature of the State of Georgia on December 22, 1818.⁸⁴ The purpose of this venture was to invent a luxury ship with a steam engine, capable of crossing the Atlantic Ocean. This was a pioneer

⁷⁸William Harden, A History of the Savannah and South Georgia (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company 1913), p. 332.

⁷⁹The Georgian, 15 January 1822.

⁸⁰Ibid., 23 March 1822.

⁸¹Savannah Georgian, 5 February 1825.

⁸²Savannah Republican, 29 December 1825.

⁸³Braynard, Savannah: Elegant Steam ship, p. 30.

⁸⁴Columbian Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 28 December 1818.

venture. On March 29, 1819 the S. S. Savannah left New York for delivery to its home port, Savannah, Georgia.⁸⁵ On May 22, 1819, this steam ship departed the Port of Savannah for Liverpool, England. The S. S. Savannah successfully arrived at its destination in twenty-nine days and eleven hours,⁸⁶ being the first trans-Atlantic voyage by steam power. This venture was one of the high points in the life of Sheldon C. Dunning.

Two other steam companies also looked to Dunning for leadership. He served both as President⁸⁷ and Director⁸⁸ of the Savannah Steam Boat Company, a local steam boat operation. The other steam company was the steam saw mill in Savannah, which was owned by Dunning.⁸⁹

Later, the business interests of Dunning turned to the insurance field. In 1825, Dunning was selling insurance as an agent for the Howard Insurance Company.⁹⁰ Thus, Dunning's versatility in the business world was evidenced.

⁸⁵Mrs. John M. Cook, "In the Beginning," One Hundred and Fifty Years in God's Service, ed. N. Robert Gill (Savannah: First Christian Church, 1969), p. 44.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 45.

⁸⁷Columbian Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 3 April 1820.

⁸⁸The Georgian, 11 May 1824.

⁸⁹The Daily Georgian, 8 March 1820.

⁹⁰Savannah Georgian, 21 December 1825.

Another significant area of interest in the life of Sheldon C. Dunning was travel. He travelled widely himself and arranged travel for others. Concerning his personal travels, the "Marine Journal" in a Savannah newspaper listed the arrival of "Dunning" from New York on March 9, 1811.⁹¹ "S. C. Dunning" departed from Savannah enroute to Havana on March 2, 1818;⁹² a "Mr. Dunning" arrived from Newport on November 21, 1822;⁹³ a "Mr. Dunning" arrived in Savannah from New York on January 23, 1824;⁹⁴ a "Mr. Dunning" arrived from Charleston on January 3, 1825;⁹⁵ and a "Mr. Dunning" arrived from New York on October 25, 1825.⁹⁶ Concerning travels that he scheduled for others, advertisements by Sheldon C. Dunning were found promoting trips to the following ports: New York,⁹⁷ Liverpool,⁹⁸ Havana,⁹⁹

⁹¹The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 9 March 1811.

⁹²Columbian Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 2 March 1818.

⁹³The Georgian, 21 November 1822.

⁹⁴Ibid., 23 January 1824.

⁹⁵Savannah Georgian, January 3, 1825.

⁹⁶Ibid., October 25, 1825.

⁹⁷Columbian Museum and Savannah Gazette, 10 May 1817 and 28 August 1817. Also, Daily Georgian, 16 May 1820.

⁹⁸Columbian Museum and Savannah Gazette, 27 May 1817; Columbian Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 6 May 1817, 1 January 1819, and 13 December 1820; and Daily Georgian, 7 December 1819, 13 December 1820, and 13 February 1821.

⁹⁹Columbian Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 4 March 1817 and 7 December 1810; and Daily Georgian, 7 December 1819.

Gibraltar,¹⁰⁰ Havre,¹⁰¹ Boston,¹⁰² and Matanzas,¹⁰³ and one-day pleasure trips to Tybee.¹⁰⁴

When Dunning had matured into adulthood and had attained success in the business world, he became interested in marriage and family life. On May 14, 1812, Dunning married Mrs. Gertrude Arnold Russell, former wife of Sylvester Russell.¹⁰⁵ The Savannah newspaper reported on May 12, 1812, under the heading of "Married," the following notice: "On Thursday evening, by rev. Dr. Kollock,¹⁰⁶ Mr. Sheldon C. Dunning, merchant, to the amiable Mrs. Russell, of this city."¹⁰⁷ To this union four children were born: a daughter,

¹⁰⁰Columbian Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette, 3 January 1818.

¹⁰¹Daily Georgian, 4 February 1820.

¹⁰²Ibid., 13 May 1820.

¹⁰³Ibid., 10 February 1821.

¹⁰⁴The Georgian, 20 April 1822 and 14 May 1822.

¹⁰⁵Records of the Penfield and Dunning families in possession of Mrs. Robert Billington, Savannah, Georgia, recorded in Mabel Freeman La Far, "The Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia: History, Records, and Register," in possession of First Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia. (Typewritten.)

¹⁰⁶Dr. Kollock was pastor of Savannah's Independent Presbyterian Church from 1806 through 1819. Many of this church's records for this early period were destroyed in a church fire in 1889. Records currently available in the archives of this church do not record this marriage. See letter from Mrs. Sandy T. Crews, Secretary, The Independent Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia, to John Mills, Eatonton, Georgia, 20 June 1979, in files of Oconee Bible College, Eatonton, Georgia.

¹⁰⁷The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 16 May 1812.

named Sarah, who became Mrs. Henry Davis Weed, the mother of Edwin Gardner Weed (1837-1924), an Episcopal bishop in Florida;¹⁰⁸ another daughter, named Gertrude;¹⁰⁹ and two sons --one, named William H.;¹¹⁰ and another, named Sheldon C., Jr.¹¹¹ Later in life, on July 24, 1836, Dunning married Eliza McAllister Osborne.¹¹² The place of residence for this family was reported to have been an unusual frame duplex of Colonial style, located at a corner on Broughton Street in Downtown Savannah.

Religiously, Sheldon C. Dunning was born into an Episcopalian family.¹¹³ When Dunning arrived in Savannah, an active Episcopal group, known as "Christ's Church of Savannah," was existent.¹¹⁴ No evidence has been indicated in this study to show that Dunning was ever affiliated with the Episcopal church in Savannah.

¹⁰⁸Moseley, Disciples, p. 117.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Laurel Grove Cemetery, "General Index to Keeper's Record Book 1852-1938," under the name of William H. Dunning. (Typewritten.)

¹¹¹Rhea Cumming Otto, ed., 1850 Census of Georgia (Chatham County) (Savannah: n.p., 1975), p. 30.

¹¹²Records of Penfield and Dunning families in La Far, "Baptist Church in Savannah," in possession of First Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia. (Typewritten.)

¹¹³Lamar, "Georgia," p. 213.

¹¹⁴Henry Thompson Malone, The Episcopal Church in Georgia 1733-1957 (Atlanta: The Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Atlanta, 1960), p. 53.

Tremendously important to this study, however, was the involvement of Dunning in "The Baptist Church in Savannah."¹¹⁵ On April 19, 1807, Sheldon C. Dunning was baptized at Pooler's Wharf by Henry H. Holcombe, the pastor of the Baptist Church in Savannah.¹¹⁶ Also, on this same occasion, Ralph Clay, a future business partner of Dunning, was baptized by Holcombe.¹¹⁷ This important information was also verified as correct by an examination of the Register of Members of the First Baptist church, Savannah, Georgia, from 1800 to 1946. Sheldon C. Dunning was registered as number 144.¹¹⁸

On the occasion of the baptism of Dunning and Clay, an additional eight persons were baptized. The minutes of the Baptist Church in Savannah recorded this occasion in the following words:

The spectators on this solemn occasion were more numerous than on any former occasion, a great number of distinguished personages were present. An unusual, solemnity pervaded the whole, and joy in many countenances seemed visible. In the afternoon the church met, and the house was filled with members and spectators,

¹¹⁵Manuel of the Baptist Church in Savannah, Ga. (Savannah: Edward J. Purse, 1860), p. 8.

¹¹⁶Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 19 April 1807. (Handwritten).

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Chatham County, First Baptist Church Register (Savannah Baptist) 1800-1946, laminated and bound by the Department of Archives, State of Georgia and housed at First Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia.

a number of our brethren from the Euhaw and Beaufort churches were present. Our pastor, who has incessantly labored in all the exercises of the day, full of the spirit of love and joy proceeded to administer the Lord's Supper to the members present. God was pleased to own him in all the performances of the day and we trust that he not only met with the cordial approbation of the members individually, but also of many of the Spectators present whose hearts we hope were truly touched with the abhorrence of Sin, and with the beauties of holiness.¹¹⁹

The Baptist Church in Savannah was young, having been constituted on November 16, 1800.¹²⁰ People were not accustomed to seeing baptism performed to adults by immersion. Therefore, many visitors were present on this occasion to witness the novelty of the event.

Additionally, in this research study, realization needed to be made that the Baptist Church in Savannah was relatively small at this time. Dunning was only the one hundred, forty-fourth person received into their fellowship. Many of the previous members were received into membership by means other than baptism, such as transfer of letter and by "experience."¹²¹ Thus Dunning was coming into an organization that was not fully matured and whose practices were not well-known.

¹¹⁹Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 19 April 1807.

¹²⁰Manuel, p. 1.

¹²¹Chatham County, Register, p. 10.

Following Baptist style, they immediately bestowed upon Dunning a position in the church. They first appointed him as treasurer of "the sale of the pews." This was not a literal selling of the pews in the church building, but was a fund raising technique to provide money for the salary of the pastor and for other expenses. By June 9, 1807, Dunning was actively involved in his job as treasurer, under the direction of the trustees, one of which was Benjamin Brooks, his former business partner. The Savannah newspapers carried the following advertisement:

NOTICE. The PEWS which were sold on Monday, the first instant, in the Baptist Church, that remain unpaid for, on Monday next, will be resold on Tuesday, 16th.¹²²

The notice was signed by the trustees, named as B. Brooks, J. Davis, and W. Patterson. A postscript was added, which said, "Payment will be received by S. C. Dunning, at the Exchange."¹²³ The next position that was bestowed upon Dunning was "assistant trustee."¹²⁴ The deacons automatically served as the trustees, according to the operations of their corporate charter.¹²⁵ Soon, however, Dunning was

¹²²Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser, 9 June 1807.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 10 July 1807.

¹²⁵Ibid.

appointed as a deacon. The minutes discussed "Brother Dunning who had for some considerable time acted as Deacon in the church."¹²⁶ Even before Dunning had been a member of the Baptist Church, he had for one year conducted the devotional service, prior to the preaching of the sermon by the Baptist pastor. The minutes of February 14, 1808, stated,

And in the Evening Brother Dunning went forward in Reading, singing, and prayer, and brother Williams closed the duties of the evening by expounding and exhorting to a very numerous Congregation.¹²⁷

Thus, in a short time, Dunning had developed to a point of exerting real leadership in the affairs of the Baptist Church in Savannah.

Period of Conflict

Sheldon C. Dunning and the Baptists of Savannah were pursuing a collision course that was destined to become the largest religious conflict in the early history of Savannah. Dunning was not a man of weak convictions. He examined the evidences in a case and strongly pursued the course that he believed to be right. His course was not charted by popular opinion or by what the preacher or the Manuel told him to

¹²⁶Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 12 April 1811.

¹²⁷Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 14 February 1808.

believe. Dunning believed the Bible and was a serious student of it. This course eventually carried him in a direction far away from the tenets of the Baptist Church of Savannah.

Dunning's first incident with the Baptist Church in Savannah involved a "Sister Morgan." She had owed an account to Brooks and Dunning for nearly two years and would not pay. In fact, Dunning said that she had "actually asserted a falsehood."¹²⁸ Dunning did exactly what the Bible taught; he brought it before the "church." The woman admitted guilt. Finally, on July 7, 1809, the matter was resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both parties.¹²⁹ Although the minutes do not record any major conflict over this matter, there was a spirit of indecisiveness on the part of the Savannah Baptists in their handling of this matter.

Trouble began in the Baptist Church in Savannah on Friday night, January 25, 1811, in a special business meeting. The following resolution was passed and recorded in the minutes:

Ordered that the clerk do write to our members who reside at a distance from us, and who do not usually attend our Church meetings, nor worship on the Lord's day, but especially who omit coming to our quarterly communion, that they do attend as soon as possible and state their reasons for such neglect, and if wholly inconvenient to do so, that we are ready to

¹²⁸Ibid., 7 April 1809.

¹²⁹Ibid., 7 July 1809.

dismiss them on application to any Church of the same faith and order with us.--They satisfying us that they are in order as members of this Church.¹³⁰

The clerk acted as authorized and appeared at the meeting of February 15, 1811, with eighteen letters which he had prepared for "distant members."¹³¹ The letters were approved and were to be "delivered to such members as could forward them."¹³²

The young unmarried Dunning happened to be in New York at this time on a trip. This was not unusual, since he was widely travelled for a man of his day. Since Dunning was in the business of selling, both importing and exporting, travel to other areas for purchases and sales seemed to have been a necessary part of his occupation. While he was in New York, Dunning received one of the eighteen letters.

Did he like it? No! He returned to Savannah from New York about March 9, 1811.¹³⁴ He proceeded to make an appointment with the Baptist Church to discuss the matter. At the meeting, which occurred on April 12, 1811, Dunning "requested that he might read a certain writing in excuse for his noncompliance with the Church's request as to his

¹³⁰Ibid., 18 January 1811.

¹³¹Ibid., 15 February 1811.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid., 12 April 1811.

¹³⁴The Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger, 9 March 1811.

applying for dismissal."¹³⁵ After debate, the decision was made for Dunning to read his statement. Dunning spoke for an hour and a half, according to the clerk. The clerk summarized his speech in the following words:

He [Dunning] denied that dismissal from one church to another was Scriptural and insisted that weekly communion was indispensable to the right administration of the Lord's Supper, founded on the apostolical practice, who derive their authority immediately from Christ, that churches who do not thus walk he deemed disorderly. Of course he had no hesitancy to say we were so, and that as a Church we acted contrary to the scriptures both in practice and in discipline, appointing other days besides the Lord's day, or first day of the week, for days of discipline contrary to the scripture, that in his mind he excommunicated us from his fellowship, nor did he consider himself a member of this Church, nor any way bound to it by its discipline.¹³⁶

The fury of Dunning concerning dismissal originated simply over his unhappiness that the Savannah Baptist Church would send to a man of his prominence a disciplinary letter, based only on his temporary absences, evidently for business reasons. In his rebuttal speech, Dunning took this occasion to espouse his views on weekly communion.

Dunning's background in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut seemed to be the source of his views concerning weekly communion. The Episcopalians in Colonial America and in the post-Revolutionary era did not generally have weekly

¹³⁵ Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 12 April 1811.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

communion.¹³⁷ The exception to this was in Connecticut and the immediately surrounding area during the post-Revolutionary era.

The origin of the unique Connecticut position concerning weekly communion was Samuel Seabury, their bishop.¹³⁸ During the Revolutionary War, Seabury had supported the English cause and had served as a chaplain for the Royal forces. After the conclusion of the war, the Episcopalians in America desired a bishop. A group of ten ordained ministers met in 1783 in Woodbury, Connecticut, and unanimously endorsed Samuel Seabury to be their bishop.¹³⁹ However, this was not official action; Seabury must take their recommendations to Europe and seek affirmation at the hands of church officials there.

The plan was designed for Seabury to seek affirmation first in England and, if unsuccessful, which was expected due to continuing strained relationships between England and the United States, to seek affirmation in Scotland at the hands of the non-juring bishops.¹⁴⁰ In spite of Seabury's

¹³⁷ William Wilson Manross, A History of the American Episcopal Church (New York: Morehouse Publishing Co., 1935), pp. 71, 77.

¹³⁸ William Stephens Perry, The Episcopate in America (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), p. 3.

¹³⁹ Perry, Episcopate, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ George Hodges, Three Hundred Years of the Episcopal Church in America (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs and Co., 1906), p. 80.

support of the Royal cause during the Revolutionary War, the difficulties were still insurmountable; at the end of one full year of effort, Seabury terminated his quest for English affirmation.¹⁴¹ Now Seabury pursued his second plan of action, moving his efforts to Scotland.¹⁴² Here Seabury's efforts were met with success because there were not any political overtones between Seabury and the non-juring bishops of the Church of Scotland.¹⁴³

These Scottish bishops gave Seabury their endorsement on November 14, 1784, in Aberdeen, Scotland,¹⁴⁴ based upon Seabury's agreement to adopt their views concerning the Eucharist¹⁴⁵ and to persuade the Episcopal Church in America to adopt the views of the non-juring bishops concerning the Eucharist (or the Communion Service).¹⁴⁶ Immediately, when Seabury returned to America, the ordained ministers who had endorsed him met and accepted the terms of agreement with regard to Seabury's endorsement.¹⁴⁷ Thus, Seabury was

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁴²Perry, Episcopate, p. 2.

¹⁴³Hodges, Three Hundred Years, p. 82.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵William Stevens Perry, The History of the American Episcopal Church (1587-1883), vol. II: The Organization and Progress of the American Church (1783-1883) (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1885), p. 194.

¹⁴⁶Hodges, Three Hundred Years, p. 82.

¹⁴⁷Perry, Episcopate, p. 2.

affirmed the bishop of Connecticut at Middletown, Connecticut, on August 2, 1785.¹⁴⁸ Immediately, Seabury's sphere of influence spread to all of New England and to the Middle and Southern States, since he was the only Episcopalian bishop in America in the post-Revolutionary era. In 1789, this leadership was officially recognized when Seabury was appointed the first presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States.¹⁴⁹

When Seabury undertook the work of his bishopric in America in 1785, he immediately proceeded to aggressively advocate weekly communion.¹⁵⁰ William Stephens Perry, the American historiographer of the Episcopal Church, said that Seabury instituted the "weekly eucharist" at the St. James Episcopal Church in New London, Connecticut, where he was the rector, and that,

by his discourses, as delivered on his visitations and subsequently published to the world, made the Church's [St. James Episcopal Church's] teachings and usage the rule of the diocese, and thus laid the foundation for the prevalence of that type of belief and practice which is known as "Connecticut churchmanship."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

Among Seabury's published works which reflect his views were the following titles: On the Conduct of the Clergy, the Religious Errors of the Times, and on the Holy Eucharist, written in 1786; The Communion Office; or, Order for the Administration of the Holy Eucharist, etc. With Private Devotions, written in 1786; and An Earnest Persuasion to the Frequent Receiving of the Holy Eucharist, written in 1794 and republished again and again.¹⁵²

Sheldon C. Dunning was reared in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut under the supervision of Seabury and the printed materials of Seabury would have been easily accessible to Dunning. When Dunning became disturbed with the Baptist Church in Savannah, the issue of weekly communion provided a battleground on which Dunning felt adept in debate, because of his prior training in "Connecticut churchmanship." Obviously, Dunning did not feel that Holcombe was capable of responding effectively to his arguments for weekly communion. Therefore, Dunning chose to pursue the issue of weekly communion.

Dunning's next episode with Savannah Baptists followed immediately. Dunning had been in a conflict with one of the Deacons, named Henry W. Williams, over a benevolent case involving a "Sister Mulyrne." Williams thought that Dunning ought to have loaned her the needed money, but Dunning thought that Williams ought to give her the money that she needed.

¹⁵²Ibid.

Dunning told Williams that the lady's boy was waiting for the money and that he could do as he pleased. Dunning departed by saying that "if a member stood in need, that any member who would not immediately go forward and relieve such member was not fitting for the office which Brother Williams held."¹⁵³ Deacon Williams was incensed at Dunning.

The next conflict involved an account of a "Brother Polhill," in which Deacon Williams and another Baptist member were appointed as arbitrators. The arbitrator's decision conflicted with the principles of commission merchants. Dunning said that he would not "abide by their decision."¹⁵⁴ Dunning further made Deacon Williams mad by saying that "if they had not been members of the church, he should have thought that they had colloqued with Bro. Polhill."¹⁵⁵

The next series of arguments involved Henry H. Holcombe, the former pastor who had recently moved to Philadelphia. Previously they had been engaged in a fund raising drive on behalf of the pastor. Deacon Williams objected because Dunning had pledged fifty dollars and then deducted the same amount from two of Holcombe's accounts, still leaving a balance owed by Holcombe. Instead of appreciating what Dunning had done for Holcombe, Deacon Williams objected by saying, "Brother Holcombe wanted money."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 12 April 1811.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

In reply, Dunning asked, "Do you think I am capable of making out false accounts?" Williams retaliated, "I do not know what to think, but it is so strange to me that I cannot understand it." Dunning said, "Since you think me capable of making false accounts, good morning to you," and he left the meeting.¹⁵⁷

In a special discipline meeting on April 21, 1811, the Baptist Church in Savannah accused Dunning of "immoral conduct towards Brother Hen. W. Williams," as a result of the previous outlined conflicts. They "unanimously suspended" Dunning "from the special privileges of this church."¹⁵⁸ Dunning was not inclined at this point to "repent" because he believed himself to be in the right. Therefore, after proper notifications, duly executed, Dunning was excommunicated on June 9, 1811.¹⁵⁹ The excommunication statement was recorded in the following words:

Bro. T. F. Williams announced the Church's act of excommunication against Mr. Sheldon-C. Dunning. Exhorted the church to take heed lest any should be overcome by Temptation and sin against Christ and wound the Brethren; he then prayed for a blessing on the means used to reclaim our late offending Brother.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 21 April 1811.

¹⁵⁹ Chatham County, Register, pp. 10-11.

¹⁶⁰ Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting 9 June 1811.

This was not the end of the matter, but only the beginning of more than twenty years of division within the Baptist Church in Savannah over matters pertaining to the authority of the Bible.

Ralph Clay also had a similar experience with the Baptist Church in Savannah. He too was out-of-town and received one of their letters recommending dismissal. Clay wrote Dunning a letter, which became publicly known in Savannah. The letter stated,

In reply to the request made by this Church that he should take a dismissal, he had already received one signed by our late Pastor in behalf of this Church, which rendered a second not necessary. That there were some Baptist Churches in that quarter whose standing was considered very respectable that did not require dismissal from members of other churches joining them, but merely wish to be satisfied with their general deportment as Christians. That though he did not feel disposed to treat this Church or any member of it with contempt, he must at the same time say that if he had not already obtained a dismissal, he could not consistently with his present views of truth ask one from any Church.¹⁶¹

Immediately the clerk of the Baptist Church in Savannah addressed a letter to Clay, explaining that they did not have any knowledge of Holcombe's letter to him and that they did not know of any Baptist churches that operated in the manner described by Clay. The clerk inquired,

What views you can have of Truth at present that would render this practice inconsistent with your duty we cannot account for.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹Ibid., 31 May 1811.

¹⁶²Ibid., 7 June 1811.

The Baptists closed their letter to him with the following warning:

You will also recollect that you are still considered as of our body until you have joined another church of the same faith and order with us.¹⁶³

The final decision was to remove his name by letter, but they chose to omit the date of issuance of this letter.¹⁶⁴

Two years elapsed and the Baptist Church chose to pursue further the case of Sheldon C. Dunning. This time they "grieved at the conduct of Sister Mary Dunning in withdrawing from the Church and communing with Mr. Sheldon C. Dunning, her brother."¹⁶⁵ Miss Dunning had a ready answer, as the minutes of April 30, 1813, showed:

Sister Dunning stated that this church acted contrary to Scripture and affirmed that she had a right to withdraw from us as she had done and that the church had no right to exercise discipline towards her nor would she abide by our discipline as a church, for that the Lord alone had had the dominion over her conscience.¹⁶⁶

The local Baptist church did not have a reply, so they decided on June 4, 1813, to refer the case to the association for

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Chatham County, Register, p. 11.

¹⁶⁵ Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 9 April 1813.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 30 April 1813.

"their decision and advice."¹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, Miss Dunning removed herself to Philadelphia and successfully obtained the sympathy of the Baptist pastor there, Henry Holcombe, formerly of Savannah, who requested that the Savannah Baptist let her leave them in peace. The Baptist Church in Savannah disagreed. They thought that she had "given cause to offend most of the church by saying that the church was disorderly and erroneous and that her brother was an innocent man."¹⁶⁸ They proceeded to vote on it, and succeeded in excommunicating her from the Baptist Church in Savannah on March 4, 1814.¹⁶⁹

Things continued to happen and another of Dunning's business partners, named Benjamin Brooks, who had also been one of their deacons, informed them of his withdrawal from their church. The clerk recorded this decision:

Brother Benjamin Brooks informed the church that he wished to withdraw his membership from this church and join that part of the church who had recently withdrawn from us and formed a body to worship in that way which their consciences dictated to them as he thought it more congenial with the principles he had of a long time imbibed.¹⁷⁰

Again, the new church in Savannah, which had separated from the Baptist, increased its membership with another prominent Savannah citizen.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 4 June 1813.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 4 March 1814.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 2 April 1815.

Dunning's lineage of converts continues to grow as the case of George A. Ash was added to the list. Mr. Ash was another who had been a member of the Baptist Church in Savannah. In an Extra Discipline Meeting on September 2, 1831, the Savannah Baptist decided to dismiss the Ash case and not take any further action on it. With that decision, Ash handed a note to the clerk and proceeded to immediately leave the meeting. The note, which was signed by Ash, said,

Permit me to ask of you a letter of dismissal, and I hope you may believe it to be consistant for you to grant it, and I shall ever pray for the welfare of the Church.¹⁷¹

The postscript added to the letter created even more curiosity.

The postscript said,

Should the above request for letter of dismissal not be granted, you will then confer a favour by receiving this as my resignation as a member of the Church, and I shall continue to pray for the prosperity of it.¹⁷²

This odd turn of events placed the Baptists in a difficult position. They had just determined him to be a member in good standing; therefore, they could not deny his request. They responded by appointing a committee to "ascertain from Bro. Ash to what church he wished a letter of commendation."¹⁷³

¹⁷¹Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, extra discipline meeting of 2 September 1831.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Ibid.

Several interviews were conducted between Ash and the appointed committee. The results of their findings were that the matter involved an incident in the past concerning the issuing of a "letter of dismissal to join Mr. Dunning's Church."¹⁷⁴ Ash further pointed out that he was not going to buy a pew during the next period of sales and that "if the church will not grant him a withdrawal, that no matter how painful, they can act as they please, should it amount to expulsion."¹⁷⁵

The list grew longer and the name of Miss Sarah Brooks was added to the list of those influenced by Dunning and now Alexander Campbell. The minutes said,

Miss Sarah Brook[s] has left the church and united herself with a body who hold the tenets of Alex. Campbell and having been admonished and cited to attend this meeting has refused to do so, at the same time expressing the expectation and propriety of this church dealing with her as one disorderly.¹⁷⁶

As Miss Brooks presumed, the Baptist church in Savannah quickly decided to exclude her from its fellowship.¹⁷⁷

The next issue that arose was concerning Thomas Adams. He had "attached himself to a Society who profess the

¹⁷⁴Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, discipline meeting of 12 September 1831.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Baptist church in Savannah, Minutes, discipline meeting of 25 April 1833.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

doctrines of Alexander Campbell."¹⁷⁸ This statement further confirmed the existence of the Lord's church in Savannah at an early date. The Adams' case was handled decisively by the Baptist. They resolved that "Mr. Thomas Adams be cut off from membership with this church."¹⁷⁹

The Savannah Climax

The climax to this two decade struggle between Dunning and the group that met in his house versus the Baptist Church in Savannah involved Andrew C. Marshall. Marshall was the pastor of the large First African Baptist Church of Savannah whose membership numbered as high as two thousand, seven hundred and ninety-five in 1831.¹⁸⁰ Through some influence, probably Dunning's, Marshall had espoused the principles of the restoration movement. In a letter from the white Baptist Church in Savannah to John P. Williamson, one of the trustees of First African Baptist, the white Baptist committee charged Marshall with having,

fully and now unequivocally, adopted the views and doctrines of A. Campbell which the committee considers destruction of vital religions and consequently ruinous to any people and which our Church has denounced as Heresy.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸Ibid., 24 June 1833.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰E. K. Love, History of the First African Baptist Church (Savannah: The Morning News Print, 1888), p. 18.

¹⁸¹Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 22 March 1833.

The white Baptist Church then referred the matter to the Sunbury Baptist Association. The result was the expulsion of the First African Baptist Church from the association on November 9, 1832.¹⁸²

One of the First African Baptist deacons, named Adam Johnson, who enjoyed the prestige of a position in this association, did not like the stigma of being excluded from his usual position. As a result, he withdrew and carried with him a small minority of one hundred, fifty-five persons,¹⁸³ who formed the Third African Baptist Church, whose name was later changed to First Bryan Baptist Church.¹⁸⁴ At the next session of the Sunbury Baptist Association, Deacon Johnson again was seated in his special seat. This time he represented the new Third African Baptist Church.¹⁸⁵

The real difficulty, however, proved to be from Dunning's old church, the Baptist Church in Savannah. By this time, they had become hardened to this restoration movement in Savannah. Several of their prominent members had been lost to it. Now the blacks were involved. Whereas they did not have any control over the prominent white members who chose to

¹⁸²Edgar Garfield Thomas, The First African Baptist Church of North America (Savannah: Edgar Garfield Thomas, 1925), p. 49.

¹⁸³Love, First African Baptist, p. 18.

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵James M. Simms, The First Colored Baptist Church in North America (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1888), p. 102.

depart from their number to worship with Dunning, they did have power to interfere in the religious affairs of the blacks, because these were still days of slavery.¹⁸⁶

The white Baptist church, which claimed to have supervision over the First African Baptist Church, demanded in the following words:

We are constrained by a sense of duty to request that you will for a time, have the first African Church Shut up,--untill the charges made against Andrew Marshall of preaching false doctrines shall be cleared up to the satisfaction of all concerned.¹⁸⁷

The black church did not obey, but they appealed to the Baptist principle of independence. Love said, "They insisted upon the right of the church to refuse whatever they considered not to be after the dictates of the gospel."¹⁸⁸

At its 1833 session, the Sunbury Baptist Association again considered the Marshall case. The following resolution was passed:

Resolved, That this Association, having undoubted testimony of Andrew Marshall holding the sentiments avowed by Alexander Campbell, now declares him and all his followers to have thrown themselves out of the fellowship of the churches of this Association, and it recommends all of its faith and order to

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁸⁷ Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 22 March 1833.

¹⁸⁸ Love, First African Baptist, p. 27.

separate from them, according to the advice of the Savannah Baptist Church.¹⁸⁹

The Baptist Church in Savannah was definitely convinced that Marshall was guilty of "Campbellism" and that the church which Marshall pastored was lost to the Baptist cause. They proceeded to press for separation and recommend that "all the disciples of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ of the Baptist faith and order," who were members at First African Baptist forward their names to them.¹⁹⁰ They in addition publicly stated, "It is hoped and expected that all those of a different faith and order will peacefully withdraw from the Church."¹⁹¹ The Baptists were tired of being confronted with their errors in doctrine and practice. Now they were anxious to purge themselves of all friends of Dunning and Campbell.

Sheldon C. Dunning was definitely involved in this episode between the white and black Baptists. The name "Mr. Dunning" was used repeatedly in the minutes of the Baptist Church in Savannah and in Love's History of the First African Baptist Church. The designation, "Mr. Dunning," had been used consistently in making reference to Sheldon C. Dunning since

¹⁸⁹Minutes of Sunbury Baptist Association (1833), quoted in James M. Simms, The First Colored Baptist Church in North America (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott Co., 1888), p. 103.

¹⁹⁰Baptist Church in Savannah, Minutes, meeting of 22 March 1833.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

his excommunication. Prior to that occasion, they had always made reference to him as "Brother Dunning."¹⁹²

Dunning was involved in the First African Baptist episode to the point of actually being accused of being a trustee of the black Baptist church. The white Baptist committee stated that Dunning had represented the blacks as their defense in the meeting between the two groups.¹⁹³ The white Baptist said that they "cannot recognize the authority of Mr. Dunning or any other self made trustee to interfere in this matter."¹⁹⁴ Williamson, one of the black trustees, retaliated that "the remark you made of Mr. Dunning's being a self constituted Trustee is incorrect."¹⁹⁵ Evidently the blacks wanted him to serve with them as a trustee because, later in the letter, Williamson stated:

Believe me I shall not stop to enquire whether you acknowledge Mr. Dunning as a trustee or not. It

¹⁹²Ibid., 7 June 1811.

¹⁹³Ibid., 22 March 1833.

¹⁹⁴W. W. Wash, Thos. Dowell, and O. M. Lillibridge, Committee, Baptist Church in Savannah, to John P. Williamson, Trustee, First African Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia, 22 July 1833, recorded in Mabel Freeman La Far, "The Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia, History: Records, and Register," in possession of First Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia. (Typewritten.)

¹⁹⁵John P. Williamson, Trustee, First African Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia, to Messrs. W. W. Wash, Thomas Dowell and Oliver M. Lillibridge, 26 July 1833, recorded in Mabel Freeman La Far, "The Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia: History, Records, and Register," in possession of First Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia. (Typewritten.)

will be my pleasure to act with him in that capacity together with Mr. Delyon.¹⁹⁶

Thus Dunning did everything within his power to influence the First African Baptist Church to sever all ties with the Baptist Church in Savannah.

Seemingly, the Baptists realized the importance of this controversy. Consequently they pressed a major battle to regain Marshall back into the Baptist fold. The Baptist preacher and historian E. K. Love, commented in the following words:

But for this great protest of the Baptist, white and black, it is quite likely that Rev. Marshall would have led thousands off after Mr. Alexander Campbell, and Savannah now, with her ten thousand negro Baptists, would have been a Campbellite city.¹⁹⁷

The stakes indeed were exceedingly large!

The conclusions to this series of events came in 1837. At the 1837 meeting of the Sunbury Baptist Association, Marshall bowed in submission to the white Baptist and renounced "holding the peculiar sentiments of Alexander Campbell,"¹⁹⁸ and the First African Baptist Church was restored to the fellowship of that body.¹⁹⁹ The question has been repeatedly asked, "If there had been a strong and influential white church

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

¹⁹⁷Love, First African Baptist, p. 16.

¹⁹⁸Simms, First Colored Baptist, p. 106.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 106-107.

in Savannah, as there was in Nashville and Lexington at the time, would the results have been different?"

This whole problem supposedly arose over a visit of Alexander Campbell to Savannah in 1832. The white denominational church buildings were reportedly closed against him; Andrew C. Marshall reportedly permitted him to speak in the building of the First African Baptist Church. After Edgar Garfield Thomas had reviewed the purchase of the old white Baptist church building in Savannah by the African Baptist group in 1832, he stated:

During the same year, 1832, a great confusion arose in this grand old church. Rev. Alexander Campbell, founder of the Christian Church, or denomination, came to Savannah advocating his new faith.²⁰⁰

Two other similar books, written by E. K. Love and James M. Simms, concurred in the view that Campbell had visited Savannah in the early 1830s and had become personally involved in this matter.²⁰¹ However, a question still exists as to the reliability of the reports that Alexander Campbell actually came to Savannah in 1832. If Campbell did actually come to Savannah in 1832, then he did not mention it in the Millennial Harbinger. Also, the Savannah newspapers did not mention a visit by Campbell to their city during 1832.

²⁰⁰Thomas, First African Baptist, p. 49.

²⁰¹Lowe, First African Baptist, p. 8, and Simms, First Colored Baptist, p. 93.

Campbell did have an interview with Marshall when he definitely visited in the home of Dunning in December of 1838.²⁰² Campbell does not indicate in the article that he had known Marshall prior to this visit.²⁰³ Nevertheless, the fact was that Alexander Campbell did have a prominent influence in the religious life of Savannah in 1832, probably through the distribution of his writings by Dunning.

An epilogue to this conflict with the Baptists came after the fully documented visit of Alexander Campbell to Savannah in 1838. Elijah Harris, a licensed Baptist preacher who had the endorsement of the Baptist church in Savannah and the Hepzibah Baptist Association in Augusta, attended the Savannah lectures of Alexander Campbell. On the Sunday that Campbell was in Savannah, Harris partook communion with the small church that met in a private house at night.²⁰⁴ As a result of this action, the Baptist Church in Savannah had a special meeting on February 5, 1839, and passed the following resolution:

Whereas Mr. Elijah M. Harris has forsaken the stated ownership of this church, as also the Faith and Practice of the Baptist denomination--therefore Voted that he . . . hereby is forbidden any more to Preach the gospel as a baptist member, and that his license to preach and commentory letter from this body be

²⁰²Alexander Campbell, "Incidents on a Tour to the South, No. 4," Millennial Harbinger, new series, 3(April 1839):188.

²⁰³Ibid.

²⁰⁴Ibid.

forthwith destroyed, and that he be excluded from all connection and privilege with this Church.²⁰⁵

Furthermore, they resolved to notify the Hepzibah Baptist Association in writing concerning their action against Harris. The Baptists then proceeded to have this letter published in the Christian Index, a state-wide Baptist publication in Georgia. In this letter, the Savannah Baptist said that Harris was, according to their information, "one of the class of Preachers called Campbellites."²⁰⁶ On February 21, 1839, Harris wrote the following to C. F. R. Shehane, editor of the Morning Watch:

I have been excommunicated from their communion, for the stupendous crime, of attending the worship of a body of the disciples of Christ, as you will perceive from the transcript.²⁰⁷

Dunning responded that he had a "perfect knowledge of the proceedings" of some of the Baptist churches,²⁰⁸ implying the Baptist Church in Savannah. Dunning stated,

For instance a Baptist church discovers that one of their members is absent from their meeting and attending another where the gospel is proclaimed, but should the speaker be A. Campbell, the delinquent is immediately marked with the patent Brand and summoned with due formality to appear before the Judge, to answer to the charge preferred against him, and if perchance he

²⁰⁶T. Dowell, "Mr. Elijah M. Harris," Morning Watch 2 (March 1839):90-91.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷E. M. Harris, "Letter to Bro. C. F. R. Shehane," Morning Watch 2 (March 1839):90-91.

²⁰⁸S. C. Dunning, "For the Morning Watch," Morning Watch 2 (November 1839):340.

should differ from the Judge in the article of Baptist Faith, he is forthwith expelled, and denominated a Campbellite, and in full costume this name appears in their Bulls of excommunication as a reason why such a one should be deprived of the fellowship of not only one Baptist church, but of all.²⁰⁹

After many years of conflict with the Baptist Church in Savannah, one can understand Dunning's bitterness and plain speech. In concluding his remarks concerning Harris, Alexander Campbell added the following words:

It is also, I learn, alleged against him, that he was seen walking in the street with brother Dunning! So Paul was beaten by the Jews because they had seen Trophimus walking with him in the temple; but the Baptists beat Trophimus and let Paul escape.²¹⁰

New Relationships

Sheldon C. Dunning was a well educated man who had travelled widely. In some of his travels and/or dealings, he had become acquainted with the restoration movement. This would not have been difficult for Dunning for several reasons. First, Savannah was a sea coast town of considerable prominence in America at that time. In fact, the early nineteenth century was its most glorious days. Dunning was from Connecticut. His sister moved to Philadelphia. He visited New York regularly. Interchange of religious ideas in Savannah on the national and international level would not

²⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 340-341.

²¹⁰Alexander Campbell, "Incidents on a Tour to the South, No. 4," Millennial Harbinger, new series, 3 (April 1839):188.

have been difficult during this period of time in this sea-coast port.

Second, the restoration movement had early roots in Georgia. Barton W. Stone had taught in Succoth Academy in Washington, Georgia, in 1795-1796, through the influence of one of his brothers at Lexington, Georgia.²¹¹ He probably wrote letters back to Georgia as the Western movement developed. About 1807, a group of Republican Methodists of the O'Kelley movement in North Carolina migrated to an area south of Athens, changing to "Bible Christians" in 1822.²¹² In Eatonton, a Christian Church existed in 1811. The date of its origin has not been determined. This group was evidently associated with the Northeast movement. One of the "christian Ministers" in Georgia, Issac A. Parker, wrote a letter to Elias Smith, editor of the Herald of Gospel Liberty. The letter, dated November 27, 1811, was from Eatonton, Georgia. The contents of the letter stated:

Our General Meeting commenced the Thursday before the third Sunday in the present month. We had a precious reviving, yea a glorious refreshing season; many were converted, some of whom had been ring-leaders in wickedness; it continued until Monday about 10 o'clock. Such a feast of love to God, and one another, I do not know that I ever saw before. Lord's day, we ordained three Elders or Preachers, viz.--Murrell Pledges, Peter L. Jackson, and John B. Perdue, the former broke off from the Methodists--the two latter were William Guirey's sons in the Gospel; they are liborious, useful

²¹¹Moseley, Disciples, p. 38-39.

²¹²Ibid., pp. 63-64.

men. The other Preachers that attended the meeting, were Joseph Echolls, Thomas Jordan, George L. Smith, Jacob Callahan, Coleman Pendleton, and myself.²¹³

The significance of these various movements was that Dunning could have obtained information from other parts of Georgia concerning the restoration movement at the time of his excommunication from the Baptist Church in Savannah.

Third, there is the possibility of the printed page, distributed to Dunning from the North by ship or gathered by Dunning in his travels, possibly with the view of resale for a profit, since this was his business. In summary, Dunning could have obtained information concerning the restoration movement at this early date through contact with Christians from other cities, either in Savannah or in other cities where he travelled; through contact with Christians scattered in other parts of Georgia; or through literature, such as the Christian Baptist, or through books, such as the debates of Alexander Campbell.

The probable common thread that attracted Sheldon C. Dunning and Alexander Campbell to each other was likely their mutual views concerning weekly communion. Although Dunning and Campbell were probably involved with each other at a much earlier date, their business transactions have not been documented prior to September 23, 1828.²¹⁴ One of the

²¹³Herald of Gospel Liberty, 31 January 1812.

²¹⁴Alexander Campbell, Ledger A, p. 46, housed in Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

ledgers of Alexander Campbell, housed at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville, Tennessee, had an account, headed with the name of S. C. Dunning. From the date of September 23, 1828, to March 16, 1830, Dunning purchased \$174.12 1/2 of miscellaneous items of printed materials. This ledger continued until March 7, 1833, showing purchases of a group of thirty debates, one debate on baptism, two sets of Christian Baptist (14 volumes), two Extras of Number 1, and more debate books, plus the money for many subscriptions to the Millennial Harbinger.²¹⁵ This represented only one ledger that has been preserved. Dunning likely had business dealings with Campbell prior to this time that were handled in a more informal way at the printing shop on his farm, prior to the opening of the larger printing business in Bethany.²¹⁶ "Ledger A" was definitely the first ledger of the new printing business in Bethany.

Dunning served as an "agent" for Campbell in Savannah and worked diligently in the dissemination of Campbell's writings. For example, in the March 2, 1829, issue of the Christian Baptist, there was a notice that New Testaments, evidently some of the New Testaments translated by Alexander Campbell, had been shipped to one of his larger

²¹⁵Ibid.

²¹⁶Many of the earliest records of Alexander Campbell are not extant, because they were intentionally burned by opposing factions of the Campbell family after the death of Alexander Campbell.

agencies in Savannah. Thus, Dunning's agency in Savannah was included in the list of larger agencies. (The fact that Dunning was his Savannah agent can be documented in several subscription lists to the Millennial Harbinger that are still extant.²¹⁷) Evidently, through this agency in Savannah, Christian Herman Dasher became acquainted with Alexander Campbell and became a subscriber to Campbell's religious publications, as certain extant subscription books indicated.²¹⁸

When Alexander Campbell made his first official tour to the South in 1838, included in his itinerary was a visit to Savannah. He wanted to visit with his outstanding agent, Sheldon C. Dunning, and the church there. After he had visited Augusta, Campbell proceeded to Savannah, arriving at nine o'clock in the evening in mid-December, 1838. Campbell's very valuable account of this Savannah visit was published in the April, 1839, issue of the Millennial Harbinger and was recorded as follows:

Early in the morning we were taken from the hotel to our good brother Dunning's, who received and lodged us as they were wont to do in ancient times. A little church, of about twenty members, meets weekly in that city in honor of the death and resurrection of the Messiah. Brother Dunning is one of the most uncompromising men in the world. He goes for the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, in all matters of Christian faith and manners, and is accredited by

²¹⁷ Millennial Harbinger, Subscription Book for the years of 1838-1843 and 1846-1848, housed in Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville, Tennessee.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

all men as an unexceptionable Christian; save that, as was said of some of the old Baptist, he is apt "to cram a text of scripture down the throat of any man that accosts him on the subject of religion;" and sometimes he scarcely waits to be importuned on the subject. So say his opponents.

All meeting-houses were shut against us in the city of Savannah, save the Unitarian. The heterodox are more liberal than the orthodox. So I have found them from Boston to Savannah. They permitted me, both in Augusta and Savannah, boldly to avow my sentiments in [opposition] to their Unitarianism, and to proclaim my views without restraint. We delivered five discourses in Savannah, and had a fair and attentive hearing.

The church met in a private house, after night, on the Lord's day, to break the loaf. We had a comfortable meeting

There is a colored church in Savannah, which counts some 1800 members, under the pastoral care of brother Andrew Marshall, a man of color. This worthy man, who, after buying his wife and all his children, and giving 600 dollars for himself, after he was 50 years old, is now worth some 20,000 dollars. I am told that, though eighty-one years old, he is, in truth, the ablest and best preacher in Savannah. I had the pleasure of an interview with him; and from all that I could learn from him and others, I conclude that he takes more care of his flock, and has them in better condition, than any other Baptist Pastor in the country. He has been much persecuted, shamefully persecuted, because he was said to be tinctured with something nicknamed "Campbellism." But no man or set of men has been able to put him down. He looks as though he might yet live forty years: a Moses in point of constitution. Take him all in all, he is an honor to the race to which he belongs.

From Savannah [we were] accompanied over the river by our good brother Dunning, with whom we parted in primitive style.²¹⁹

²¹⁹Alexander Campbell, "Incidents on a Tour of the South," No. 4, "Millennial Harbinger 3 (April 1839): 188.

The purpose of this trip to Savannah was to visit in person those people who he already knew by the medium of correspondence and who already had known him through the printed page. He did not come to visit strangers. Although Christian Herman Dasher had migrated to Lowndes County previously and probably did not visit with Campbell on this occasion, one must not misunderstand the influence of Campbell in Savannah for more than a decade prior to his important visit of 1838.

Another relationship also developed between Sheldon C. Dunning and the editors of the Morning Watch, John M. Barnes and Charles F. R. Shehane. This was an early restoration publication, published during the years of 1837-1839 in Evergreen, South Carolina. In fact, Dunning became a contributing author to this publication. On one occasion, Dunning reminded the editors of the Morning Watch of their neglect in dealing with certain matters of Baptist doctrine. Dunning wrote,

You have not said a word about "Mourning Benches," "anxious seats" and the prayers of "God's people." The altar has also been entirely overlooked by you; besides which you have forgotten the pressing invitations, to "get religion," that are frequently vociferated from the pulpit or stand (as the case may be) and to get it by coming up to the altar to be "prayed for." Hereafter I hope you will be more minute and attentive to these mighty matters.²²⁰

²²⁰S. C. Dunning, "To the Editors of the Morning Watch," Morning Watch I (May 1838):221.

Again, in the August, 1838, issue of the Morning Watch, Dunning contributed an article, entitled, "Is the Word of God A Dead Letter?" His attitude toward denominational preachers was reflected in the following article:

There is a report which is generally believed respecting a class of individuals professing to be teachers of the christian religion, that they habitually proclaim that the word of God is a "dead letter." Can this report be true?²²¹

Dunning proceeded to show that the men who taught the "Dead Letter" doctrine were false teachers. During the year of 1839, Dunning contributed two essays on the subject of church discipline, which were published.²²² Finally, in the issue of June, 1839, Shehane endorsed the prolific writing of Dunning when he asked:

Will Bro. D. favor us frequently with communications for the public eye? The spirit which his productions manifest cannot fail to have a salutary influence upon every Bible-lover who may chance to read them.²²³

Dunning gladly responded with more writings.²²⁴ Ties such as these with the Christian Baptist, the Millenial Harbinger,

²²¹S. C. Dunning, "Is the Word of God a Dead Letter," Morning Watch 1 (August 1838):302-304.

²²²S. C. Dunning, "Essays on Church Discipline," Morning Watch 2 (April 1839):113-115; and S. C. Dunning, "Essays on Church Discipline, No. 2," Morning Watch 2 (June 1839):183-185.

²²³C. F. R. Shehane, "Editor's Note," Morning Watch 2 (June 1839):185.

²²⁴S. C. Dunning, "For the Morning Watch," Morning Watch 2 (November 1839):340-341.

and the Morning Watch served to solidify the Savannah movement into the mainstream of the restoration movement in America.

Wider Horizons

As Dunning grew older and more experienced, he envisioned wider horizons for the spread of the restoration movement. With Christian Herman Dasher's removal to Lowndes County by 1838, Dunning could visualize the establishment of the church in South Central Georgia. The congregation in Savannah grew eventually to the point that they were forced to leave private homes because of insufficient space and move into larger quarters at the old Fireman's Hall, located on Oglethorpe Avenue at Abercorn Street, opposite the old Colonial Cemetery.²²⁵ With this progress of the restoration movement in Southern Georgia, Dunning sought expanded opportunities.

During the decade of the 1840s, Dunning formed a partnership with N. W. Smith of the Antioch church in Northeast Georgia in the preaching of the gospel. The Antioch church was the group from North Carolina of the O'Kelley movement who had migrated to Georgia in 1807 and had reorganized again in 1833 as Bible Christians.²²⁶ Smith had succeeded in

²²⁵The Savannah church, however, later ceased to exist after the death of Dunning and the removal of several families to other cities.

²²⁶Mrs. B. O. Miller, Antioch: The Mother Church (Atlanta: Georgia Christian Missionary Society, 1941), p. 4.

reorganizing this church again in 1842,²²⁷ bringing it into the restoration movement after considerable internal opposition.²²⁸ After Smith had successfully built the Antioch church into a substantial congregation, he and Dunning entered the field of evangelism as partners. On September 15, 1846, Smith wrote to the Millennial Harbinger:

In my late tour of four hundred and seventy-five miles, in Georgia and Alabama, I have had with me our beloved brother S. C. Dunning, of Savannah, Georgia. We have visited various places, and have endeavored to sow the good seed of the kingdom, and when we found any disciples brother Dunning laboured with them earnestly, entreating them to keep the ordinances as delivered--the order of the Christian Kingdom. 1st. The Apostles' doctrine. 2d. The fellowship, or contribution for the poor saints. 3d. The breaking the loaf. And, 4th. The prayers and exhortations, and etc. And I humbly trust his labor was not in vain, for he is greatly devoted to the word alone--possessing untiring zeal--well qualified to teach the saints. We had but few additions to the cause, but we trust these were of a noble character.²²⁹

In addition to N. W. Smith, Dunning also worked with others, including Dr. Daniel Hook, evangelist from Augusta and Louisville.²³⁰ Moseley said that Dunning tried to "follow the New Testament practice of every Christian being an evangelist."²³¹ Thus, the last fifteen years of Dunning's

²²⁷Ibid., p. 6.

²²⁸Ibid.

²²⁹N. W. Smith, "Letter from Watkinsville, Georgia," Millennial Harbinger, third series, 3 (November 1846):671.

²³⁰Moseley, Disciples, p. 118.

²³¹Ibid.

life were filled with evangelistic work each summer and part of the fall.²³²

The death of Sheldon C. Dunning came on April 2, 1858,²³³ as the result of a stroke of apoplexy.²³⁴ Lamar said,

He was an old soldier, who had faithfully stood in the front rank of many a sore conflict. Of him it may truthfully be said, "he fought a good fight." He was skilled in the use of all the weapons of the holy warfare, and never did he lay them aside.²³⁵

Alexander Campbell acknowledged the death of the great Dunning by writing that there was "not one doubt upon [his] mind of [Dunning's] godly sincerity and entire devotion to the Lord Jesus, his cause, and people."²³⁶

Dunning died without a will. His estate was transacted by Henry D. Weed, administrator. His personal belongings were appraised by three appraisers. Significant was the fact that his books and bookcase appraised for five times

²³²Ibid., p. 119.

²³³Laurel Grove Cemetery, "General Index," under the name of Sheldon Dunning.

²³⁴J. S. Lamar, "Letter from J. S. Lamar," Millennial Harbinger, fifth series, 1 (May 1858):293-294.

²³⁵Ibid.

²³⁶Alexander Campbell, "Obituary of S. C. Dunning," Millennial Harbinger, fifth series, 1 (May 1858):294.

more than the most expensive piece of furniture that Dunning had in his house at the time of his death.²³⁷

Dunning's collection of books told the real interest of his life. He was truly a disciple--a real student! This interest in books led him into a thorough study of the Bible and into an agency with Alexander Campbell for the distribution of literature of the restoration movement. This literature distributed by Dunning had a tremendous effect in the planting of the Lord's church in Georgia. This was the life of Sheldon C. Dunning--the man who had the greatest earthly influence on the life of Christian Herman Dasher.

²³⁷Chatham County, Order Letters Administration, Estate of Sheldon C. Dunning by Henry D. Weed, Administrator, 3 December 1867.

CHAPTER V

THE INFLUENCE OF HIS PERSONAL READINGS

Significant in the life of Christian Herman Dasher were his personal readings. Dasher was a man of above average educational attainments for his day. He could read and write effectively in an age when most did not exert the effort to learn these skills.

This ability to read and study matters of a religious nature for himself caused him to search the Bible for the answer to the Lutheran dilemma of the early nineteenth century in his community. From this study, Dasher realized that the Lutheranism of his day was not operating in accordance with the Bible. Dasher desired to be guided by the Bible in his life. Convictions gained through this Bible study led him in search for Scriptural baptism. This search resulted in the location of Sheldon C. Dunning and the ensuing friendship that was most productive to the planting of the Lord's church in Georgia.

This ability to read also led him into an appreciation of religious periodicals in the restoration movement. The reading of the Christian Baptist as early as 1826 in the

Goshen District of Effingham County¹ was probably the result of Dasher's acquaintance with Dunning. Dasher definitely was a subscriber to the Millennial Harbinger. The earliest subscription lists that are now extant list "C. Dasher" as one of the subscribers under the agency of S. C. Dunning of Savannah.² For example, Dasher's name appeared on the subscription list for 1842, 1843, 1846, 1847, and 1848.³ Other years are not available. Each list that was available showed "C. Dasher" as a subscriber.

In the October, 1853, issue of the Millennial Harbinger, the following query was included from the pen of C. H. Dasher:

Does it not appear, that before the Son of Man entered upon his mansion, he ascended to his Father, saw, and heard, and descended, and as a witness, testified to what he did see and hear? (See John 3:13, 31:32, 6:62).⁴

Campbell gave Dasher a two paragraph reply to his question. This question from "C. H. Dasher" positively identified Dasher as a reader of the writings of Alexander Campbell.

Christian Herman Dasher was also a reader of the restoration publication in South Carolina, known as the

¹J. J. H. "Letter to Mr. Alexander Campbell," Christian Baptist 6 (3 November 1828):87-88.

²Millennial Harbinger, Subscription Book, p. 424, in possession of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

³Ibid., pp. 424 and 439.

⁴C. H. Dasher, "Query," Millennial Harbinger 3 (October 1853):592.

Morning Watch. Dasher's insight into baptism for the remission of sins was reflected in the following question that he sent to C. F. R. Shehane, editor of this publication during the year of 1839:

If a man was to say to you that he knew nothing about believing upon testimony, neither did he know any thing about immersion for the remission of sins when he was immersed, but now he believes the truth and would ask you if it was necessary for him to be immersed for the remission of his past sins as though he never was immersed what would be your answer?⁵

The editor proceeded to answer Dasher and concluded his answer with the following statement: "I say that it is necessary for him to be immersed for the remission of his past sins as quick as possible."⁶ Again Dasher was found both acquainted with publications of the restoration movement and also familiar enough with them to write the editors, requesting the answers to his questions.

⁵C. H. Dasher, "Question and Answer," Morning Watch 2 (May 1839):154-155.

⁶C. F. R. Shehane, "Answer," Morning Watch 2 (May 1839):155.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Because of the far reaching effects of the two house churches, one in Effingham County and one in Lowndes County, that were developed by Christian Herman Dasher, researchers of today have needed to study into the influences that created a man of such unique capabilities. This study attempted to show that Christian Herman Dasher lived at a time when Lutheranism was in a period of decline and fragmentation in Effingham County. Whereas our subject's forefathers had firm convictions about the religion of Luther that caused them to leave their homeland of Austria in search of locations where they could practice the Lutheran religion, the membership of the Lutheran churches of Dasher's acquaintance was really not impressed with the degenerate form of Lutheranism that they knew. Although they had been sprinkled in infancy into the Lutheran church, the majority of the Lutherans of Dasher's day were looking elsewhere for a more vibrant form of religion.

This study has also attempted to show that Christian Herman Dasher was influenced in the direction of the

restoration movement by Sheldon C. Dunning, the Christian Baptist, Millennial Harbinger, and Morning Watch. This evidence has been presented.

In this study, the hypothesis, stated in its null form, was that there was no available evidence that Christian Herman Dasher developed significant restoration movements in both Effingham County and Lowndes County without the influence of others, such as Sheldon C. Dunning and Alexander Campbell. This assumption has been validated with the presentation of evidence of Dasher's personal friendship with Dunning, including their mutual labor together in the Lord's church, and of Dasher's personal correspondence with Alexander Campbell and other leaders of the restoration movement.

Conclusions

On the basis of the historical data assembled in this historical research study, the following conclusion concerning influences in the life of Christian Herman Dasher seem appropriate:

1. Christian Herman Dasher was not influenced in promoting the restoration movement in Georgia by his forefathers in Gastein, Austria.
2. The existence of a Church of Christ in Gastein, Austria, has not been documented.
3. The forefathers in Austria of Christian Herman Dasher were simply protestants who opposed Roman Catholicism.

4. Christian Herman Dasher matured into adulthood at a time when the formerly vibrant Lutheran religion in Effingham County had now reached the point of deterioration on the socio-religious cycle of church development.

5. The result of this decline in Lutheranism was the fragmentation of the membership of the various Lutheran churches in Effingham County. Some sought membership in the Baptist; some became Methodists; and others sought something else.

6. Christian Herman Dasher was among those who sought something else.

7. This search led him into an acquaintance with Sheldon C. Dunning, who became his mutual friend and advisor in religious matters.

8. This friendship with Dunning, who was widely travelled and who had a broader religious perspective, led Dasher into an acquaintance with periodicals of the restoration movement, such as the Christian Baptist, Millennial Harbinger, and Morning Watch.

9. Although Christian Herman Dasher was both a believer and student of the Bible, evidence indicated that he was influenced by others associated with the restoration movement in America through personal friendships and the printed page.

10. Based upon his dissatisfaction with Lutheranism and its sprinkling for "baptism," Christian Herman Dasher was first immersed by Dunning upon his confession of faith in Christ and was again immersed by Dunning at a later date for the remission of sins. Still later, Dasher was immersed by Dunning in order to have his sins washed away.

11. Christian Herman Dasher was still inquiring about baptism for the remission of sins as late as 1839, indicating that his mind may have still been unsettled concerning this doctrine of the Bible. This would support the position that Dasher did not independently develop the restoration movement in Southern Georgia.

12. The church formed in Savannah by Dunning immediately after his excommunication from the Baptist Church in Savannah was simply an independent Baptist church which at a later date became identified with the restoration movement.

13. Christian Herman Dasher did not establish restoration movements in Southern Georgia totally independent of other restoration leaders in other parts of America.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated, based upon the information obtained in this study:

1. A study tour of the valley of the Saltz River would be interesting, with special attention to the province

of Gastein, the homeland of the majority of the Salzburgers who migrated to Georgia, including presumably the forefathers of Christian Herman Dasher.

2. Additional study into the family history of Christian Herman Dasher could reveal information concerning the economic status of his ancestors, the exact location of their home in Salzburg, and the specific religious convictions that they espoused.

3. Application needs to be made to missionary endeavors today concerning the ineffective methodology of providing permanent missionaries for many years in the same field of labor, as was the practice of the English Society for Propagating of Christian Knowledge. The end product was almost total disinterest in Lutheranism among the Salzburgers, the opposite of their desired goal.

4. Preachers of today need to learn from the example of James Earnest Bergman and his son, Christopher F. Bergman, that church builders must discipline themselves into a proper balance between theological study and the "toil and tears" required to build the Kingdom of God. This validates the "cluster principle" of theological education, wherein Christians actually in the fields of labor devote a portion of their time to the pursuit of one or two courses of study.

5. The early childhood of Sheldon C. Dunning in Connecticut, including his family and religious history, would

provide additional insights into his influence on the restoration movement in Southern Georgia. An answer to the question of why he evidently did not affiliate with the Episcopal Church in Savannah needs to be sought.

6. Future historical findings may reveal the exact dates and purposes of Dasher's multiple baptisms by Dunning. Additional primary research findings in this area would be most valuable.

7. The origin of Campbell's views on weekly communion need study in relationship to the origin of Seabury's views concerning weekly Eucharist. Could the views of both men be traced to Scotland?

8. Was the issue of weekly communion the link of common interest that bound Sheldon C. Dunning and Alexander Campbell into a warm friendship?

9. An intriguing adventure in American church history would be the complete history of the restoration movement among blacks in Georgia, particularly involving Alexander Campbell.

10. Information, if available, needs to be sought concerning Sheldon C. Dunning's dealings with Alexander Campbell, prior to the opening of the new, enlarged printing business in Bethany.

11. Why did the two house churches established by Dasher grow and prosper exceedingly, whereas the single house church established in Savannah by Dunning ceased to exist soon after Dunning's death?

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