

A LIFE OF HUMBLE FEAR:
THE BIOGRAPHY OF DANIEL SOMMER,
1850-1940

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

The Graduate School
Butler University
In Cooperation with Christian Theological Seminary
Indianapolis
1975

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED TO
MY MOTHER AND FATHER
MR. AND MRS. JAMES H. WOLFGANG
TO MY GRANDMOTHER
LETHA F. WOLFGANG
AND TO THE MEMORY OF MY GRANDFATHER
JAMES O. WOLFGANG

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PREFACE

The notable American historian Allan Nevins, who through the years directed the research on literally hundreds of Master's degree theses at Columbia University, offered this sage comment to prospective students searching for research topics: "...if this exploration is carried out with zeal and alertness, the student will not need to find his subject; the subject will find him and refuse to let him go."¹

Since 1969, when this work on the life of Daniel Sommer was conceived in the author's imagination, his subject has indeed "refused to let him go," even in wee morning hours when it sometimes seemed that the mere mention of the man's name would push him over the brink of insanity! The obsession has persisted to the degree that, after more than 10,000 miles of travel, the expenditure of several thousand dollars (which includes mileage, long-distance telephone calls, postage, Xeroxing, and the purchase of numerous books and tracts relating to Sommer's life) the author is still not completely satisfied!

The mileage figure referred to above was incurred over a period of time while the author was living in Marion, Indiana; Atlanta, Georgia; Franklin, Tennessee, and Louisville, Kentucky. It includes numerous trips from those localities to Indianapolis, where the library of Christian Theological Seminary near the campus of Butler University houses a nearly

¹Allan Nevins, Masters' Essays in History: A Manual of Instructions and Suggestions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 5.

complete file of Sommer's paper (covering a period of nearly a hundred years) and where two of his children still live; and Nashville, Tennessee, where the superb facilities of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society are located.

In addition, the author's peregrinations have taken him to such places as Athens, Alabama; Athens, Georgia; Decatur, Olney, Robinson, Shelbyville, Springfield, and Windsor, Illinois; and Bloomington, Salem, and Sullivan, Indiana; all in search of some trace of Sommer's long life.

Besides the facilities mentioned above, the author has also used, at various stages in the writing and research of this paper, the facilities of Emory University in Atlanta; Vanderbilt University in Nashville; Indiana University in Bloomington; the excellent facilities of the Illinois State Historical Society (located under the restored Lincolnian Old State Capitol in Springfield); the Shelby County (Illinois) Historical Society Library at Shelbyville; the Shelby County Circuit Court and Illinois State Supreme Court archives; the Indiana State Historical Society and State Library, the Marion County Circuit Court archives, and the Indiana State Supreme Court archives, all in Indianapolis; and the Washington County (Indiana) Historical Society, located in the spacious new John Hay Center at Salem, Indiana. My acknowledgements and thanks are extended to the helpful staffs of all these institutions, especially to Ms. Doris Huffer of the Shelby County (Illinois) Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Ms. Jane Evans of the Illinois State Supreme Court Clerk's Office, Ms. Lulie Davis of the John Hay Center, and Ms. Jewell Sweeney of the Washington County Clerk's Office, all of whom helped immensely, beyond the limits of duty, in tracking down elusive trial transcripts. Above all, I am indebted to Les Galbraith, CTS Librarian, for the generous loan of volumes of Sommer's

paper from the Seminary's special collections. Ernest R. Sandeen has truthfully said that "librarians and archivists become the patron saints of all historians when, as so often happens, they serve far beyond the limits of simple competence."² These certainly fall within that category.

In addition to the court records alluded to above, I have made use of several hundred letters of Sommer's personal correspondence from the CTS archives and also those in the possession of Mr. William Wallace of Lufkin, Texas; the subscription lists of Sommer's papers, procured for me by Mr. L.A. Stauffer of Indianapolis, who also has been of great assistance in gleaning information from the remaining Sommer family; and the record book of the old North Indianapolis church, where Sommer preached for many years, obtained for me by my father, who is an elder in what was formerly the North Indianapolis church, now the Emerson Avenue Church of Christ.

Finally, I have attempted to make use of some form of "oral history," obtaining on cassette tapes a dozen interviews with people who personally knew Sommer, and utilizing the interviews and correspondence from others who knew Sommer recorded by Matthew Morrison in his work on Sommer's manner of preaching.³

²Ernest R. Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1950 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. vii.

³See Matthew Clifton Morrison, "The Preaching of Daniel Sommer," (unpublished M.A. thesis, Indiana State University, 1967); and *idem.*, "Daniel Sommer's Seventy Years of Religious Controversy," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, in speech Indiana University, 1972). Morrison has apparently found these letters and oral interviews to be more helpful than have I. While undoubtedly useful for describing Sommer's speaking mannerisms, these interviews have largely been with people who are now too old to clearly remember specific incidents clearly, or else were too young at the time to have paid much attention to specific doctrinal issues. There are obviously some exceptions to this, but by and large the oral interviews have been more useful to Dr. Morrison than to myself.

Three additional points should perhaps be raised and discussed briefly in this preface. The most serious of these pertains to the author's objectivity.

Earl West, an historian and preacher among the Churches of Christ, has stated that, because of Sommer's extreme theological positions and sometimes cantankerous disposition, "any estimate that one may place upon the life's work of Daniel Sommer will understandably be colored by the background of the biographer."⁴ This particular biographer's background is intimately connected with Sommer's work. He has from childhood attended, and in 1962 was baptized at, the Emerson Avenue Church of Christ in Indianapolis, which, as indicated above, is the old "Sommer church" moved to a new location. The author has for the past eight years preached for and among that segment of the Churches of Christ most closely associated with Sommer's positions and convictions, which one author says borrows its "polemic vocabulary from Sommer's arguments" ⁵ However, this thesis is not intended as polemicist propaganda; it is an honest effort by one trained in historical methodology to tell the story of one man's life and influence from a reasonably objective standpoint. To claim complete objectivity would be both foolish and futile. But while there are many times that I agree with Sommer and not a few times that I disagree with him, I have tried to avoid passing theological judgment insofar as is humanly possible. While there is nothing wrong with a

⁴Earl Irvin West, The Search for the -Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement, 1349-1906 (Volume II: 1849-1906; Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1955), p. 504. See also William E. Wallace, ed., Daniel Sommer, 1850-1940: A Biography (Lufkin, Texas (?): The Gospel Guardian Company (?), 1969), pp. 5-3.

⁵Morrison, "Daniel Sommer's Seventy Years of Religious Controversy," p. 189.

little healthy religious propaganda, and although I may choose, later and through another medium, to tell what I believe to be the "moral" of the story, this is neither the time nor place for an exercise in dogmatics.

The second point pertains to the nature of the study of history through biography. In the words of Woodrow Wilson's biographer, Arthur S. Link: "The biographer assumes the greatest obligations and responsibilities of all writers of history."⁶ Indeed, in the words of Henry Lee Swint:

Biography is one of the most difficult branches of the historian's art. The historian as biographer knows that however sensitive he may be...he must always admit his inability to comprehend the mystery of the human personality. Here is the peculiar fascination of biography] here, also, is its peculiar problem. The historian must rely on traces, inadequate as they are, and frequently they throw too pale a light on the personality of the subject of a biography.⁷

While acknowledging these special problems, the author submits that similar problems face any kind of historian writing about any area of the past; that the study of this particular subject is made possible by the relative wealth of material available; and that his influence on a significant American religious body merits the risk of such potential problems.

As to the novelty of a study of Sommer's life, some questions may arise when one looks at what has been written. During the last five years, while I was engaged in researching various aspects of Sommer's career, a number of works, including three Ph.D. dissertations, appeared which concern themselves, to one degree or another, with some part of Sommer's

⁶Quoted by Dewey W. Grantham, in "Foreward" to Arthur S. Link, The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson and other Essays (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), ixv.

⁷Henry Lee Swint and D.E. Mohler, "Eugene F. Falconnet, Soldier, Engineer, Inventor," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XXX:3 (September, 1962), p. 219.

life and work.⁸ However, none of them attempts, or even purports to, what we propose to do here: make a thorough and critical analysis of all facets of Sommer's career and its relationship to the Churches of Christ and religion in America generally. Wallace's work, which is poorly printed and admittedly incomplete, is merely a reprinting of about half of the autobiographical articles printed in Sommer's paper shortly before his death and continued afterward by his children. Bennett's dissertation, while containing by far the best critical analysis of several of Sommer's positions, considers him only as one of seven "Restoration figures," and spends only 35 pages out of more than 660 discussing Sommer's influence. Murrell's thesis, examining the "psychological" sources of division within the Disciple movement, offers some tantalizing tidbits and a few hints, but in emphasizing the role of David Lipscomb, which is admittedly necessary, he overlooks one of the greatest exhibits of his "inclusive negativism" in Daniel Sommer. Although he purports to deal with Sommer, his only real source material comes from one interview with Sommer's son! Finally, Matthew Morrison's Ph.D. dissertation, in speech, provides another good example⁹ of an otherwise fine dissertation in its assigned

⁸In order of publication, they are: William E. Wallace, op. cit.; Weldon Bailey Bennett, "The Concept of the Ministry in the Thought of Representative Men of the Disciples of Christ, 1804-1906," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Religion, University of Southern California, 1971); Arthur Van Murrell, "The Effects of Exclusivism in the Separation of the Churches of Christ from the Christian Church," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Religion, Vanderbilt University, 1972); and Morrison, "Daniel Sommer's Seventy Years of Religious Controversy."

⁹Another example of this kind of speech dissertation masquerading as history in the context of the Restoration Movement is William Slater Banowsky, "A Historical Study of the Speechmaking at the Abilene Christian College Lectureship, 1918-1961," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Speech, University of Southern California, 1965). For further discussion of this point, see the author's review of Morrison's work in the forthcoming issue of *Discipliana*, XXXV:3 (Summer, 1975).

field of specialty which, by attempting to go too far astray from the author's field of competence, irreparably weakens itself. Not contented with an excellent analysis of Sommer's speech habits and characteristics, his mannerisms and methods of audience appeal, his topics for speaking engagements, and other rhetorical strategies, Morrison attempts to give us an historical appraisal of Sommer's life based on a distended and disjointed patchwork of episodes and published sermons, which are then subjected to speech-technique analysis. Significant portions of Sommer's early preaching career and during his later years of activity (especially the significant decade 1930-1940] are overlooked or ignored entirely. The result is that when the author departs the boundaries of speech analysis and strays into historical narrative, he distorts factual material and betrays a weak historical research base, as well as an ignorance of fundamental concepts of American social history.

Let me conclude the preface by expressing my deep gratitude to the staff of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville, whose facilities have played a major role in this study. One American church historian has declared that "no Protestant communion in America has the equal of this magnificent historical library and museum,"¹⁰ and David Edwin Harrell, Jr., who, in the words of another well-recognized church historian "has unquestionably earned for himself the first rank among living historians of the Disciples,"¹¹ has said that "the magnificent facilities of the society are equaled only by the friendliness and com-

¹⁰James DeForest Murch, B.D. Phillips, Life and Letters (privately published, 1969), p. 114.

¹¹Ronald E. Osborn, review of Harrell's two-volume Social History of the Disciples of Christ in Church History, XLIII:4 (December, 1974), p. 552.

petence of the staff,"¹² adding that

The serious student of the restoration movement, whatever his theological posture, must ultimately wend his way to the Disciples of Christ Historical Society. In the past several decades, scores of young conservative scholars have undertaken the pilgrimage with considerable trepidation. They have left the Society with a feeling of warm gratitude for the professional hospitality of the staff of the Society...the most apprehensive visitor [becomes] conscious that the Disciples of Christ Historical Society intends to serve the interests of historians from churches of Christ, as well as all of the other segments of the movement¹³.

My personal appreciation is also expressed to Dr. Harrell; Dr. J. Harvey Young of the Graduate Department of History, Emory University; Dr. Richard C. Wolf, of Vanderbilt Divinity School; and Drs. Samuel T. McSeveney and Henry Lee Swint of the Graduate Department of History, Vanderbilt University, for advice and criticism of various portions of this work.

Of course, I am deeply indebted to Dr. Lester McAllister, my major professor at Christian Theological Seminary for his assistance, without which this work could not have been completed.

¹²David Edwin Harrell, Jr., Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866 (A Social History of the Disciples of Christ: Volume I); Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), p. xi.

¹³David Edwin Harrell, Jr., "Willis R. Jones from a Conservative Perspective," Discipliana, XXX:2 (Spring, 1970), p. 28.

CHAPTER I:

A RATIONALE

David Edwin Harrell, Jr., one of the leading historians of sectarian religion in America, and specifically of the Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ, has identified the so-called "middle period" of Disciples history—the period from 1865 to 1930—as "a crucial segment of Disciples history. These were years of spectacular growth (from around 200,000 in 1860 to 1,554,678 in 1900) and of complex internal tensions—one major schism was completed and another one begun."¹ Certainly one of the outstanding figures of this period was Daniel Sommer. His active career as a preacher spanned the years 1870-1940, and it was not by any means a pacifist career. In the words of one author, with reference to the separation of the Disciples of Christ, Sommer "precipitated inevitable division and thereby publicly defined two incompatible brotherhoods . . . seized the initiative—provided resolute leadership for his own people, and thereby bound together the Northern and Southern Churches of Christ who were ideologically committed to a strict restoration of apostolic worship and organization."² While we shall examine the claim of unification between Northern and Southern

¹David Edwin Harrell, Jr., review of William E. Tucker, J.H. Garrison and Disciples of Christ (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1964), in Journal of Southern History, XXXI:2 (May, 1965), p. 218.

²Matthew C. Morrison, "Daniel Sommer's Seventy Years of Religious Controversy," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in speech Indiana University, 1972), pp. 164-165.

segments of the Churches of Christ, it is nonetheless true that Sommer was the first and certainly one of the most prominent leaders in the Churches of Christ to encourage separation on a congregational level from what would become the Christian Churches. His address at Sand Creek, near Windsor, Illinois in 1889 predated even David Lipscomb's entrance into the arena of deciding when and where lines of fellowship should be drawn.³ He also went further than Lipscomb in proposing that Churches of Christ should legally protect property they considered to be rightfully theirs, engaging in numerous lawsuits over church property. In addition to several of his own debates with Christian Church preachers, he moderated for W.W. Otey in his debate with J.B. Briney in Louisville in 1908—probably the most famous and possibly the best representative debate between the two groups — and still in print after many editions. All the while, he kept up his running controversy with those in the Christian Church through the pages of his paper, the Review.⁴

"Since editors, to a certain extent, played the role of bishops among the Disciples,"⁵ Sommer was in a position to be influential from a

³Morrison says "Lipscomb did not fully discuss in his Gospel Advocate the question of fellowship with instrument-using churches until 1895-99. Even then he stopped short of urging Sommer's 'creed in the deed' proposal" (164); A. V. Murrell, "The Effects of Exclusivism in the Separation of the Churches of Christ from the Christian Church" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Religion, Vanderbilt University, 1972), p. 220ff.

⁴Before Sommer bought the American Christian Review, after his death, and during his active editorship, the name of the paper changed several times—from American Christian Review to Octographic Review to Apostolic Review and back to American Christian Review. Its readers often referred to it affectionately as simply "the Review," perhaps to avoid confusion, which will be our policy throughout this paper. Specific titles will be indicated in footnotes and where appropriate.

⁵Tucker, op. cit., p. 19. This comment is a paraphrase of W.T. Moore's dictum that "Disciples do not have bishops, they have editors" (Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ [New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1909J, p. 12).

point early in his preaching career—and once he became an editor, he wasted no time using his influence.⁶ The influence of editors among the Disciples has long been noticed by historians of the movement. At the turn of the century, William T. Moore stated that "there can be no doubt about the fact that, from the beginning of the movement to the present time, the chief authority in regard to all important questions has been the Disciples press."⁷ Winfred E. Garrison, one of the better historians of the movement, and himself a son of J.H. Garrison, one of the most influential editors during this "middle Period," stated that "on more than a local scale, the publication of periodicals was the chief means of developing and directing the common mind."⁸ Garrison's co-author, A.T. DeGroot, in their standard history of the Disciples, has characterized the Disciples as "a people who had always been guided more by its editors than by its ecclesiastics or its scholars."⁹

⁶Sommer's famous "Sand Creek Address" came less than three years after he ascended to the editorship of the Review.

⁷Moore, op. cit., p. 699.

⁸Religion Follows the Frontier (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), p. 148.

⁹Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred Thomas DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ: A History (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1948), p. 364. See also pp. 556-353 and 561-565 for a general discussion of the role of periodicals among Disciples. For other good studies along the same line see James Brooks Major, "The Role of Periodicals in the Development of the Disciples of Christ, 1850-1910" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Religion, Vanderbilt University, 1966); and David Edwin Harrell, Jr., "Editorial Leadership," in The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ, 1865-1900 (A Social History of the Disciples of Christ: Volume II; Atlanta: Publishing Systems, Inc., 1973), pp. 16-22.

Sommer's editorial career spanned more than half a century, and put him in a position of almost unique stature over a long period of time.

As we shall see, Sommer was also possessed of a "bright and incisive" intellect which allowed him to "analyze internal frictions in the church with more perception than the liberal leaders," and which made him "perhaps the most perceptive observer of the nineteenth-century evolution of the church."¹⁰ He clearly recognized the sociological sources of the movement's divisions to which many of his peers were blind and which some today profess not to see.

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of Sommer's life, and certainly one of the most interesting and perplexing, is the decade of the 1930's which saw Sommer attempt, in the last years of his life, to effect some sort of rapprochement with members of the Christian Church and with alienated leaders in the Churches of Christ. This aspect of his life alone would be both interesting and significant enough to justify a study of his earlier life. In an age of proposed ecumenicity, both in Protestantism in general and within the Churches of Christ and Christian Churches in particular, a glance over our shoulders at past efforts can only be enlightening.

In short, the significant years of Sommer's ministry, his influence in the separation of the largest indigenous American religious body, his position as an influential editor in the group, his insight into the nature of the division (which insight was all but unique among his contemporaries), and his later efforts at unification make Sommer

¹⁰Harrell, op. cit., pp. 18, 344.

not only interesting but rewarding to study as well. In fact, if one can understand Sommer, he has come a long way toward comprehending the thought of the conservative spectrum of the Disciple movement.

The biographer of another influential Disciple editor, J.H. Garrison, has said:

The years between the Civil War and 1930 constitute the most critical period in Disciple history, and yet little attempt has been made to understand the leading personalities of that era. Perhaps the reason is that historians of Disciples of Christ have been enthralled by Alexander Campbell and his generation. This is understandable, for historians are attracted to founding fathers. But now that many aspects of Alexander Campbell's career have been examined in detail and the origins of Disciples delineated in numerous monographs, it is time for historians to turn their attention to those men who linked the fathers to the present. Since the middle period of Disciple history was one of theological reconstruction and rapid institutional growth, it is doubly important the central figures in that era receive adequate treatment.¹¹

Thus a first rationale for a study of Sommer's life is his influential position of editor and preacher in an important era of Disciples history.

Sommer's life can also be related to the American religious scene at large. Not only did his life span what Henry Steele Commager has called "the watershed" decade of the 1890's,¹² but it reached into the twentieth century, embracing not only the social ferment of the Twenties but the Depression years of the Thirties as well. During a decade (the 1890's) in which, for the first time, a significant portion of America could be considered predominantly urban, it is not insignificant that Sommer moved (in 1894) to a large, midwestern city which grew from

¹¹Tucker, op. cit., p. 18.

¹²Henry Steele Commager, "The Watershed of the Nineties," in The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 41-54.

slightly over 100,000 inhabitants in 1890 to a population of nearly a quarter of a million twenty years later. ¹³ Nor did Sommer ignore the larger religious questions of his day—Darwinism, higher criticism, and the plethora of social issues which Protestantism faced at the dawn of the twentieth century and for years thereafter—urbanization, immigration, prohibition, feminism, war, racism, and a multitude of other related questions.

The noted American social historian, Merle Curti, and others following his example, have recently attempted to show that "American intellectual history must go beyond the study of the ideas of the intelligentsia and must seek to understand the thought of the masses of plain citizens." ¹⁴ Since, in the words of Henry F. May, expressions of American religious faith show us "a knowledge of the mode, even the language, in which most Americans during most of American history, did their thinking about human nature and destiny,"¹⁵ and since "it is not unreasonable to assume that the church members who paid preachers' salaries and the readers who financed editors' efforts generally agreed with the views expressed by these religious spokesmen," ¹⁶ then the thought of Daniel Sommer, expressed through the years

¹³Clifton J. Phillips, Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880-1920 (The History of Indiana: Volume IV; Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1968), p. 366.

¹⁴James Harvey Young, review of Merle Curtis' Probing Our Past (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), in Journal of Southern History, XXXI:3 (August, 1955), pp. 390-391.

¹⁵Henry F. May, "The Recovery of American Religious History," American Historical Review, LXX:1 (October, 1964), p. 79.

¹⁶David Edwin Harrell, Jr., Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866 (A Social History of the Disciples or" Christ: Volume I; Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), p. viii.

in his papers and correspondence, presumably representative of those among whom he worked,¹⁷ should provide a clear insight into the mind of a nineteenth-century American populace attempting to grapple with the stunning problems of twentieth-century life. Their reactions should be interesting and enlightening, to say the least. In the words of Ray Ginger, "our grandfathers lived among changes so swift and so basic that no one could grasp more than a fraction of what was happening. Their problems were so urgent and so complicated as often to overwhelm them. However forceful and intelligent a man might be, he frequently could not foresee the implications of his own behavior."¹⁸

Yet Americans, however forceful and intelligent, and even the most conservatively reactionary, did respond to the stimuli of social change. What those reactions were, for at least a portion of American society, is a part of the fabric of this story.

Daniel Sommer was a significant part of the response of the Churches of Christ to the growth of American society through the last century. In order to understand Sommer, one must have a basic knowledge of the nature of the division of the Disciples and Churches of Christ. This shall be the purpose of the next chapter.

¹⁷Sommer had an oft-quoted dictum which said, "I will not preach where my paper does not go."

¹⁸Ray Ginger, Age of Excess: The United States from 1877 to 1914 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 323.

CHAPTER II:
THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Archibald MacLeish once stated that he divides people into two classes: those who divide people into classes and those who do not.¹ The purpose of this chapter is to provide some background information on the Churches of Christ by demonstrating that they are the product of a religious movement which has been clearly divided into classes.

The Churches of Christ in America trace their heritage to the religious climate of the fervent early-nineteenth-century American frontier, emerging as an identifiable, independent body after the merger of two separate movements: the "Campbellites," led by the father and son, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, who (after an earlier defection from the Presbyterians) had maintained for several years a rather tenuous relationship with the Baptists; and the "Christian" movement under Barton W. Stone (former Presbyterian minister at Cane Ridge), which had now become an independent group remarkably similar to the Campbell movement. Largely under the influence of the preacher, debater, editor, author, and educator, Alexander Campbell, the group quickly became "one of the most rapidly-growing denominations in the West."² Biblical

¹Quoted in Liston Pope, "Religion and the Class Structure," ed., Ray Abrams. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 256, (March, 1948), p. 84.

²Emma Lou Thornbrough, Indiana in the Civil War Era: 1850-1880 (vol. III in The History of Indiana; Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1965) , p. 518.

literalists preaching a message of Christian unity, they sought this end by "the restoration of the ancient gospel". Proposing to return to the practices of the primitive New Testament church, their quasi-official central plea was "to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." Their fervency was grounded in their faith that this was the long-anticipated platform upon which Christian unity could be had and by which the millennium could be ushered in. The simplicity of the message, the fervency of the preachers, and a social situation which gave their message a favorable reception among their fellow American frontiersmen, contributed to an impressive success. On the eve of the Civil War (after only about thirty years of independent existence) the church had nearly 200,000 members; following the war, the group's growth continued unabated, numbering well over one million members by the turn of the century.³ However, this phenomenal growth was not accomplished

³Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ: A History (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1948), pp. 329, 402. Other useful general studies of the movement are James DeForest Murch, Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1962), and Earl Irvin West, The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement, 1849-1906 (2 vols.; Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1955). Garrison and DeGroot are liberal Disciples historians, Murch is an "independent" Christian Church minister, and West is a Church of Christ minister. While each of these works is a solid contribution to the movement's historiography, none is without evidence of theological bias. More objective, although written from the standpoint of a social history, is David Edwin Harrell, Jr., Quest for a Christian America: A Social History of the Disciples of Christ (Volume I: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1865) (Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), which also contains an excellent critical bibliography. Published recently was the second volume of Harrell's work, The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ, 1365-1900 (A Social History of the Disciples of Christ: Volume II) (Atlanta: Publishing Systems, Inc., 1975). Also, in progress is a new history of the Disciple: movement by Lester G. MacAllister of Christian Theological Seminary and William E. Tucker of Texas Christian University. Tucker's book, J.H. Garrison and Disciples of Christ (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1964), is one of the few works which demonstrate -any insight into

without serious internal tensions; by 1906 division on a local level had been a fact of life in many areas for several years and had become widespread enough for the federal government to seek separate statistics for its Census of Religious Bodies.⁴ Although the heirs of the Campbell movement are now divided into three major groups (the Christian Church—Disciples of Christ; the "independent" Christian Churches or the North American Christian Convention; and the Churches of Christ)⁵ and there are subdivisions in the Churches of Christ, taken together as a whole, they form the largest indigenous American religious body; "by 1968, its membership in all its fragmented divisions numbered over six and a half million communicants."⁶

These various divisions, especially the one recognized "officially" in 1906, have long been stereotyped by historians of the movement as being totally theological in nature. The enormous forces which were assaulting

the critical "middle period" of Disciple history, roughly 1865-1925, although it, too, clearly manifests its author's theological perspective.

⁴Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910, 1919, 1930, 1941).

⁵The problem of names is a confusing one. Throughout the group's history, the names "Disciples of Christ," "Christian Churches," and "Churches of Christ" have been used almost interchangeably, and in some places still are. Generally though, in the period under discussion, the name "Christian Churches" had come to be quasi-official among the "Progressives," or more liberal wing of the movement, while "Churches of Christ" became semi-official for the non-instrumental conservatives. Future references in this paper will be in accordance with these distinctions. The designation "Disciples of Christ," although now a part of the "official" name of the most liberal of the three groups resulting from the twentieth century divisions, is used in this paper to refer to the totality of the movement, i.e. the "Christian Churches" and the "Churches of Christ."

⁶Louis Cochran and Bess White Cochran, Captives of the Word (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969), pp. x-xi.

American society in the last half of the nineteenth century—beginning with the Civil War and including the massive expansion, industrialization, and urbanization of the nation—are dismissed (or more correctly, ignored) as formative influences on the nascent religious movement. In 1866, the widely respected editor, Moses E. Lard, replied to his own question, "Can We Divide?" with the bold assertion, "we can never divide."⁷ Not only has this erroneous interpretation that the Disciples "did not divide over the Civil War" been handed down by Disciples historians themselves, but it has overflowed into more general histories of American religion as well.⁸

⁷Lard's Quarterly, Vol. III (April, 1866), p. 336.

⁸Examples of this interpretation among Disciples are ample, beginning with an article by W.T. Moore in the June 1, 1899 Christian-Evangelist (J.H. Garrison's paper). Moore said, "Recently it has been intimated that the Disciples were practically divided during the war, although no formal division ever took place. This view of the matter is entirely erroneous ...There was never at any time the slightest possibility of a real division among the Disciples." (p. 680). Other similar interpretations may be found in Garrison and DeGroot, pp. 330-337; Winfred Ernest Garrison, Religion Follows the Frontier: A History of the Disciples of Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), pp. 179-180, 221-222; Alfred T. DeGroot, The Grounds of Division Among the Disciples of Christ (Chicago: Privately printed, 1940), p. 91; Oliver Read Whitley, Trumpet Call of Reformation (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1959), pp. 134-135; Tucker, J.H. Garrison..., p. 18; Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell (2 Vols.; Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1956), II, 534; Robert E. Barnes, "An Analytical Study of the Northwestern Christian Magazine," B.D. thesis, School of Religion, Butler University, 1951, pp. 95-98, 126-129; Robert O. Fife, "Alexander Campbell and the Christian Church in the Slavery Controversy," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1960, pp. 255-273; and Eileen Gordon Vandergrift, "The Christian Missionary Society: A Study of the Influence of Slavery on the Disciples of Christ," M.A. thesis, Division of Graduate Instruction, Butler University, 1945, pp. 80-82.

A.W. Fortune recognizes the sectional influence but says "that in a short time the sectional influence was forgotten" (The Disciples in Kentucky, n.p., The Convention of the Christian Churches in Kentucky, 1932, p. 367). West says, "The church...weathered the issues created by the war without any serious disruption" (Search, I, 350.)

More general histories of American religion which have borrowed this interpretation include Clifton E. Olmstead, History of Religion in the United States (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), which includes Disciples among those groups "unplagued by schisms

More recent scholarship "has presented well the evidence showing that actual division occurred,"⁹ and that "tensions arising out of the Disciples' response to prewar social problems, especially those of slavery and the issue of war, created an environment" in which the Disciples suffered "fundamental cleavages."¹⁰ To put it simply, "Lard was wrong in his church division prophecy. The church could divide and did divide. In fact, it was already dividing when Lard made his prophecy."¹¹

The truth is that the church was in the process of dividing into antagonistic factions at least as early as the 1850's ...the Civil War left deep geographic imprints on the ultimate nature of the schisms, and new issues and social forces in the postwar period brought the conflict to its final fruition.¹²

over slavery. . . The only schism which these churches experienced..was the political separation necessitated by war" (p. 383); and Winthrop S. Hudson, Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 203.

While it is true that there was no national organizational headquarters to decree division, this fact by no means precludes the de-facto bifurcation of the movement. The division which the government recognized by 1906 occurred within the same organization context; the church "structure" had not been altered—it was still a loose affiliation without national organization—yet this division is universally recognized.

⁹Walter B. Posey, review of Harrell, Quest, in Journal of Southern History, XXXIII (February, 1967), p. 101. For further documentation of this particular point, see Harrell, "A Social History of the Disciples of Christ to 1866," Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1962, pp. 233-344; idem., "The Sectional Pattern: Divisive Impact of Slavery on the Disciples," Discipliana, XXI (March, 1961,)pp. 6-11.

¹⁰James Findlay, review of Harrell, Quest, in American Historical Review, LXXIII (October, 1966), p. 302. See also Harrell, "The Sectional Origins of the Churches of Christ," Journal of Southern History, XXX (August, 1964), pp. 261-277; idem., "Disciples of Christ and Social Force in Tennessee, 1865-190(7)," Publications, East Tennessee Historical Society, No. 38 (1966), pp. 30-47. West partially recognizes the influence of sectional motivations after the war in his later book, The Life and Times of David Lipscomb (Henderson, Tennessee: Religious Book Service, 1954), pp. 104-109.

¹¹Harrell, Quest, p. 11

¹²Ibid., n. 105, p. 171.

Furthermore, "it is both naive and inaccurate to dismiss so lightly the impact of the great American sectional struggle on the Disciples of Christ. As a matter of fact,...the Disciples...were divided by the Civil War."¹³

Nor should this be surprising evidence. While the theological "issues" over which this sectional split occurred undoubtedly would have been a cause of division under any circumstances, it would be erroneous to ignore the sectional, economic, and social overtones of the division. To keep radical northern abolitionists and Southern fire-eaters in the same nation (or to cause their children to live together peaceably) was no greater task than retaining them as members of the same church. It is simply inconceivable that a social conflict which shattered every other major inter-sectional Protestant body would leave the Disciples unscathed.

It is equally evident that, while the issues of the postwar division were ostensibly the conservatives' in the Churches of Christ opposition to the use of instruments of music in the worship and missionary societies in the promulgation of the gospel, the division in fact occurred along clear sectional, economic, and class lines. While it is true that these issues were very real and were conscientiously debated by sincere individuals on both sides of the respective issues, it is also undoubtedly true that, had these issues not developed, very likely others would have arisen to provide occasion for the division, whose causes went far deeper than doctrinal controversy. Thus, other more meaningful yardsticks must be used to measure the controversy. As a recent historian of the movement has succinctly stated, "Schism was a

¹³Ibid., pp. 172-173.

result of differences far more complex than doctrinal disagreement . . . To state the truism that some people in the movement believed it was unscriptural to use instrumental music in worship services and to support missionary societies contributes little to an understanding of the origin of the Churches of Christ."¹⁴

The obviously sectional and socioeconomic nature of the division can be clearly discerned by consulting the membership distribution statistics recorded in the four twentieth-century government religious censuses (1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936).¹⁵

¹⁴Harrell, "Sectional Origins," 264.

¹⁵It readily becomes apparent that the figures available in the four government religious censuses are often sparse, and, in many cases, questionably accurate. While the Christian Churches had at least some organizational means of recording state-by-state membership figures, the Churches of Christ, being an extremely loose affiliation of autonomous local congregations, had no authoritative source of information. In the case of the 1906 Census, much of the statistical compilation for the Churches of Christ was done by J.W. Shepherd, with apparent assistance from David Lipscomb, editor of the leading Southern conservative paper the Gospel Advocate (see "P. L.," "Divisions," G.A., April 23, 1908, p. 265; and John T. Hinds, "Religious Census," G.A., October 28, 1909, p. 1375).

An excellent and quite sophisticated approach to religious geography in general, and which deals somewhat with the validity of the census figures in particular, is Wilbur Zelinsky, "An Approach to the Religious Geography of the United States: Patterns of Church Membership in 1952," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, LI (June, 1961), pp. 139-193.

According to Harrell, ". . . the figures are especially questionable when dealing with a group such as the Disciples where a grassroots division was in progress and where there was considerable confusion about titles" ("Disciples in Tennessee," n. 4., p. 33). Yet, "...although these studies are far from flawless . . . they are adequate" ("Sectional Origins," n. 4., p. 263), because, although the census figures are "not highly accurate, _____ the patterns of behavior within the Disciples movement are so clear _____ that these statistics are quite adequate" ("Disciples in Tennessee," n. 4., p. 33).

The author is indebted to Dr. Harrell for his suggestion of a similar approach while the author was researching the division of the Restoration movement in Indiana while a graduate student at Butler University in 1970 (see below at n. 18).

FIGURE 1:
CHURCHES OF CHRIST

1906

<u>TOTAL MEMBERSHIP</u>	<u>159,658</u>	
Membership in Confederate States _____	101,734	(63.7% of TOTAL)
Membership in Border States.....	30,206	(18.9% of TOTAL)
<hr style="width: 50%; margin-left: 0;"/>		
Membership in South.....	131,940	(82.6% of TOTAL)

1916

<u>TOTAL MEMBERSHIP</u>	<u>317,957</u>	
Membership in Confederate States.....	190,841	(60.0% of TOTAL)
Membership in Border States.....	71,418	(22.5% of TOTAL)
<hr style="width: 50%; margin-left: 0;"/>		
Membership in South.....	262,259	(82.5% of TOTAL)

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Census...Religious Bodies: 1906...(2 Vols.; Washington: 1910), 240, 243.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Census...Religious Bodies: 1916...(2 Vols.; Washington: 1919), II, .209, 249.

FIGURE 2:
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

1906

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP 928,701

Membership in
Confederate States.....138,703 (14.1% of
TOTAL)

1916

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP 1,226,028

Membership in
Confederate States.....185,144 (15.1% of
TOTAL)

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Census.. Religious
Bodies: 1906... (2 Vols.; Washington:
1910), 240, 243.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Census.. Religious
Bodies: 1916... (2 Vols.; Washington:
1919), II, 209,249.

According to the 1906 census, 101,734 (63.7%) of the 159,658 members of the Churches of Christ resided in the former Confederate states.¹⁶ Additionally, 30,206 (18.9%) lived in the border states of Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, and West Virginia, yielding a total of 131,940 (82.6%) members of the Churches of Christ who lived in the Southern portion of the United States (see Figure 1). Conversely, the church's membership was sparse in the states of the North—in fact, the only state north of the Ohio River with more than 5,000 members was Indiana (quite likely due to the influence of Sommer, who was to the Churches of Christ in the Midwest and North what David Lipscomb was to

¹⁶Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census Religious Bodies: 1906. Part I: Summary and General Tables; Part II: Separate Denominations: History, Description, Statistics. (2 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), II, 240, 243.

It is interesting to examine the 1916 census as well. Harrell notes that "in the case of the Disciples, the 1916 census figures have some advantages over 'the other censuses. The schism in the church was more open in 1916 than it had been in 1906; in fact, not until the census of 1906, which for the first time listed the churches separately, had a clear method of defining the break been established. Obviously, many churches were more careful about reporting their affiliation in the census of 1916 than they had been ten years previously" (Disciples in Tennessee," n. 4., p. 33).

(It should be emphasized that the division did not occur in 1906; it had been occurring for probably fifty years prior to that date. The census figures, however, constituted the first "official" recognition of the division.)

Between 1906 and 1916, the membership of the Christian Church increased 24.8% (Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census Religious Bodies: 1916. Part I: Summary and General Tables; Part II: Separate Denominations: History, Description, Statistics. (2 Vols.; Washington: The Government Printing Office, 1919), Vol. II, p. 248.) The percentage of that membership in the South increased by only 1%—from 14.1% to 15.1% (see Figure 2). On the other hand, while the membership of the Churches of Christ nearly doubled, increasing by 99.1% (Religious Bodies: 1916, II, 208), the percentages remained virtually identical. An even 60% of the membership remained in the former Confederate states, and with the addition of the border states, the total Southern membership in the Churches of Christ was 82.5% of the total membership—down 0.1% (See Figure 1).

the Southern churches, and who, in the words of one historian, "had his own Restoration movement in the North"),¹⁷ and even in Indiana the membership was centered largely in the Southern counties (obviously due to infiltration of members from Kentucky and Tennessee who comprise the population of that part of the state—see Figures 3 and 4); furthermore, the Churches of Christ were outnumbered by the Christian Churches in Indiana by more than 10 to 1.¹⁸ The sectional bifurcation becomes even more comparatively impressive in view of the fact that only 14.1% of the members of the Christian Churches resided in the Old Confederacy (see Figure 2).

In fact, so clear are the patterns revealed by the census figures that, a quarter of a century after the last government census had been taken in 1936, and expert in American religious geography still referred to the Churches of Christ as a "predominantly Southern group," despite¹⁹ 25 years of migration of the Southern population (including many members of the church) from the South in search of a better life. (See also Figures 5 and 6).

But the division had not only sectional overtones, but social and class distinctions as well. The 1926 religious census, which reported rural and urban memberships and is "generally believed—to be the most

¹⁷ Earl West, private conversation with the author, Indianapolis, Indiana, June 10, 1972.

¹⁸Religious Bodies: 1906. II, 209, 249. See, in this respect, the author's study of Indiana as an anomalous state, "The Division of the Christian Churches and the Churches of Christ in Indiana: A Comparison of Late-Nineteenth-Century National Patterns with the Hoosier State," unpublished manuscript, Butler University, 1971.

¹⁹Zelinsky, 143.

complete and successful in the series,"²⁰ shows that over half (54.6) of the Northern-dominated Christian Churches were urban; at the same time in the Churches of Christ, 75.9% of the members and an even higher percentage of the churches were rural²¹ (the lower percentage for members undoubtedly attributable to the urbanization of the South and the solid stream of Southern church members Northward). Furthermore, a perusal of these rural and urban statistics demonstrates that the small percentage of the Christian Churches' membership in the Southern states was overwhelmingly urban (Figure 7 clearly points this out, showing that the concentration of Christian Church members in the South were centered largely in cities such as Little Rock, Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville, Birmingham, Atlanta, Jacksonville, Tampa, and Miami); on the other hand, among the Churches of Christ, rural membership outnumbered urban membership in 10 of 11 former Confederate states, the only exception being South Carolina, which reported a total membership of only 325 members.²²

Additionally, there were economic overtones to the division, and again, the census figures are both enlightening and impressive. For example, the 1926 statistics show that the average value of a Christian church building was \$16,676 (which figure means little today except as a standard of comparison), compared with an average value of \$3,223 for a typical Church of Christ edifice (if indeed one existed, which, in many

²⁰Ibid., pp. 141-142.

²¹Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census... Religious Bodies: 1926. Part I: Summary and General Tables. Part II Separate Denominations: History, Description, Statistics. (2 Vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1950), II, 394.

²²Ibid., II, 396.

cases it did not).²³ Examinations of figures for parsonages and preachers' salaries would show similar patterns.

To summarize, if a Southern member of the Disciples movement spoke of the "damn Yankees," he probably meant it literally. To him, a blossoming segment of the movement—an affluent, somewhat sophisticated, and usually educated group of individuals—sharing a common heritage with him had separated itself, was hell-bound and fast moving in a direction (usually North) which was anathema to him. And, in the context of a group of people ostensibly divided over theological differences of doctrine, these statistics raise numerous intriguing questions: Why did most Southern brethren oppose the playing of instruments in worship while most Northerners thought it was permissible? Why did the wealthier brethren propose these "innovations" while the less affluent opposed them? Why did the city church-goers favor these items while those concentrated in rural areas stood in opposition? Obviously, the division was more than simply theological.

Since the time of separation, both groups have gone their own ways and have grown considerably. The Christian Churches have moved steadily away from the Southern sectarianism of their nineteenth-century background to full-blown denominational status, shedding whatever conservatism remained after 1906 in a later division over "cooperative" versus "independent" missionary work, thus yielding the more conservative "Independent" Christian Churches and the theologically liberal "Christian Church—Disciples of Christ" (although here again it is likely that this division was not wholly theological).²⁴ During the same time, "the

²³Ibid., II, 395, 467.

²⁴Harrell, "Sectional Origins," nn. 35 & 37, pp. 272-273.

Churches of Christ have not remained an economic and cultural unit since 1906."²⁵

In the course of the twentieth century a large segment of the Churches of Christ has begun the transition toward middle-class denominationalism. Economic improvement and the urbanization of the South have brought inevitable changes in the life of the church. A new division is taking place between "liberals" and "conservatives" in the Churches of Christ. The "issues" are new ones but the basic attitudes and sociological motivations are the same as those of the nineteenth century.²⁶

Thus, "the sociological and economic elevation of a portion of the membership of the church, especially since World War II, has motivated a large part of the church to begin the transition toward denominationalism."²⁷

The numerical growth of both (or all three) of the twentieth century divisions of the Restoration Movement has continued. The Churches of Christ is the largest of the three groups, containing about 2,350,000 members²⁸ (and is thus characterized by an historian of the movement as "the largest religious group indigenous to America")²⁹ and is "the largest of the Southern sects."³⁰ (See Figure 8). The other portions of the movement have reached an organizational level sophisticated

²⁵Ibid., 277, n. 58.

²⁶Idem., "Disciples in Tennessee," n. 41., p. 47.

²⁷Harrell, "Sectional Origins," n. 58, p. 277.

²⁸Lauris B. Whitman, ed., Yearbook of American Churches (New York: Council Press, 1969), p. 178.

²⁹William S. Banowsky, "A Historical Study of the Speechmaking at Abilene Christian College Lectureship, 1918-1961," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1963, p. 694.

³⁰Harrell, White Sects, p. 25. See also Kenneth K. Bailey, Southern White Protestantism in the Twentieth Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 152, nS9; p. 166.

enough to be classified with the mainstream of American denominationalism.

However, as interesting as these recent developments may be, they do not fall within the scope of this study (although latent tendencies of the ultimate economic growth and educational sophistication of the Churches of Christ, as well as other un-sectarian sociological characteristics, can be seen even during Sommer's last years). During that period, although smaller in number (the 1926 census showed them to have over 433,000 members—a conservative figure due to the unwillingness of some members to report; a group spokesman estimated the strength of the membership at over 500,000)³¹ the Churches of Christ provide a classic example of sectarian religion.³²

In order to more fully understand the significance of Sommer's response, and the impact that response had upon the Disciple movement, one must understand something about the nature of the group and how it eventually divided. This has been the purpose of this chapter.

³¹See H. Leo Boles, "Query Department," Gospel Advocate, LXIX, January 20, 1927, p. 62; and G.A. Dunn, "Brother Batsell Baxter's School," Firm Foundation, XLII:50 (July 28, 1925), p. 3.

³²While this is not the place for a broad treatment of the sociology of American religion, some comment should be made about the use of the sociological terms "sect" and "denomination." Since the pioneering work of Ernst Troeltsch's The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, trans., Olive Wyon (2 Vols.; London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), religious historians and sociologists of religion have attempted to clarify the complex relationship between religious and social thought. While terminology sometimes differs, the basic concept is that religious expression can be categorized, and to a certain extent, identified in terms of socioeconomic characteristics. In Europe, these categories can be defined as the "Church," "ecclesia," or major ecclesiastical body; the independent body or "denomination"; and the "sect," or radical "left wing" of the Christian movement. In America, as H. Richard Niebuhr has developed the concept in its peculiarly American flavor, the "denomination" is the "natural state" or final condition of fully developed religious bodies, there being no "state church" as in some European countries. However, there are the radical left-wing sects and cults and some have also

suggested an intermediate stage, the "institutionalized sect." See H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1929), and J. Milton Yinger, Religion, Society, and the Individual (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1957), for further developments of these concepts. Also fundamental to American religious sociology is the concept that "sects" tend to evolve into "denominations," some attaining full-fledged denominational status and others stopping somewhere between the two and assuming the form of the "institutionalized sect." This process normally takes two or three generations (although it sometimes occurs in one generation or even less) and usually leaves behind it a small "residue", or minority which clings to the old sectarian tenets upon which the group was originally founded. That the history of the Churches of Christ and related bodies fall neatly within this framework should be obvious to anyone remotely familiar with the group's development. For good analyses of these principles with relation to the Disciples movement and the Churches of Christ, see Oliver Read Whitley, Trumpet Call of Reformation (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1959), pp. 21-23; and David Edwin Harrell, Jr., Quest For a Christian America: A Social History of the Disciples (Vol. I: Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866; Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), pp. 11-18;; and idem., White Sects... , pp. 3-16. Other useful general works dealing with these concepts which should be consulted include David O. Moberg, The Church as a Social Institution (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962); and Liston Pope, Millhands and Preachers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942) .

CHAPTER III:

THE FORMATION OF A MILITANT DISCIPLE: ADOLESCENCE, EDUCATION, AND CONVERSION

The family origins of this one, Daniel Sommer, who was to become so prominent in an important religious movement, are rather obscure. According to Sommer himself, his parents were German immigrants who "reached this country about 1835 and were married in or near Washington, D.C, about 1840."¹ He also stated that his father, John (or Johann) Sommer, "was a Hessian; my mother (Magdalena Wyman) came from Bavaria."² A distant relative who has done extensive genealogical research into the family's past has found that

John Sommer m. "Helena" Wyman (or Weimann"—SW) July 1838 according to D.C. court records. I suspect that this Helena was in fact Magdalena.³

A portion of the obscurity may be due to a "family tradition" which has been promulgated by at least two recent authors who have

¹ A Record of My Life—No. 1," AR, LXXXIII:47-48 (November 21, 1939), p. 1-

² Ibid.

³Warren Sommer (graduate student in historical geography at the University of British Columbia and a distant relative of Daniel Sommer's who pursues genealogical research as a hobby), copy of enclosure sent with a letter to the author, May 24, 1974. Mr. Sommer also commented: "I can't find an immigration record for John Sommer ---Baltimore was the likely port but the records are missing for the relevant years. Will instead seek a naturalisation record...I do have a marriage record for a "Helena" Weimann & John Sommer in Washington D.C. 1838 (close to Daniels [sic] 1840 date 5 location)—but she would have been only 15 yrs --- perhaps why no children until mid 1840s?" (Warren Sommer, letter to author, May 24, 1974, p. 2).

published works dealing with some phase of Sommer's career.⁴ According to this tradition, Daniel Sommer's grandfather is purported to have arrived in America on August 28, 1750, aboard the ship "two brothers" from Rotterdam.⁵ The author is dubious of this "family tradition," and concurs in Warren Sommer's opinion of this highly suspect piece of information:

I find any version other than the main body p. 12 [in William Wallace's book quoted above--SW] of his memoirs difficult to accept...Simple comparison of dates + generations makes it all quite strained (ie 1750). Why would someone come to Pa., return to Germany, have a descendant come over later? Trans Atlantic trips in the 19th c. were only one way.⁶

Although these details may never be known with certainty, it is known that Daniel Sommer was born of these two German immigrants on January 11, 1850, in St. Mary's county, on the southern tip of the state of Maryland.⁷ At some point in the next few years, the family moved some miles north to Mitchelville, in the same state, and then, in 1855, to "a small village on the west bank of the Patuxent River, about thirty

⁴William E. Wallace, Daniel Sommer, 1850-1940: A Biography (Lufkin, Texas [?]: Gospel Guardian Company [?], 1969), p. 12, n. 1; Matthew C. Morrison, "Daniel Sommer's Seventy Years of Religious Controversy" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1972), p. 1, n. 2.

⁵Morrison cites an oral interview with Daniel Sommer's son, Allen, on June 8.; 1970, as the source of his information. However, in repetitive oral interviews with the author (on June 14, 1972; July 15, 1973; and December 28, 1973) Allen Sommer could not provide information on any such tradition. Warren Sommer, seeking the roots of the same tradition, has said that Allen "was unable to provide a source. Nor was Wm. Wallace " (letter to author, May 24, 1974, p. 2). Wallace offers no reference in his quotation of the tradition. However, among the voluminous material which he graciously loaned to the author there is a small slip of paper dated December 25, 1965, which contains this same information. It is apparently in Wallace's handwriting, and adds the information that Sommer's grandfather supposedly came to Pennsylvania.

⁶Warren Sommer, letter to author, May 24, 1974, p. 2. .

⁷"A Record of My Life—No. 2," AR, LXXXIII :49-50 (December 5, 1939), p. 3.

miles eastward from Washington, D.C.," named Queen Ann, in Prince Georges county.⁸

Daniel was proud of his German heritage,⁹ although one stereotypical characteristic of his Hessian father, a proclivity for the consumption of liquor, was to become a strong negative factor in Sommer's life. Looking back on his life over a span of more than three quarters of a century, he was to recall:

When my father died she [Sommer's mother—SW] was left almost penniless...Though not a drunkard, yet he was addicted to drink; and thus many dollars of his hard earnings were squandered. Here is one reason why I have always abhorred strong drink. It damaged my father and thus impoverished my mother!¹⁰

Daniel's father had contracted some kind of "pneumonia or pleurisy," apparently while moving his family to Queen Ann.¹¹ A blacksmith by trade, he had been assisted in his work by his wife, who used "the sledge hammer much of the time besides managing her household affairs, taking care of the babies, and working her garden."¹² Sommer's own assessment of his parents was that they were "humble, industrious, and strictly honest."¹³

After her husband's death, Sommer's mother took work as a seamstress and the family remained in Queen Ann for the next two years. Sommer

⁸"A Record of My Life—No. 1," op. cit., p. 2.

⁹For instance, in his first full public religious discussion, Sommer opened the debate with a German Baptist preacher by openly declaring "I claim to be a thoroughbred German" (Miller and Sommer Debate [Mt. Morris, Illinois: The Brethren's Publishing Company, 1889], p. 5; for a discussion of this debate see chapter VI). However, with the onset of World War I, Sommer declared that he was "ashamed of being a German when the Kaiser said the contract he signed with other nations was only a piece of paper" (quoted in Morrison, p. 193). See also "Of the Greatest Conspiracy," AR., LX:11 (March 13, 1917), pp. 1, 8

¹⁰ "A Record of My Life—No. 1," op. cit., p. 1.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 2.

described this village as "a God-forsaken place" which consisted of "about twenty houses with a varied population" which engaged in "swearing, gambling, fighting, shooting, horse-racing, fox hunting, dog-fighting, rooster fighting and drinking." ¹⁴ During this period, at the age of six, Daniel made friends with "a mulatto boy...about twelve years old" who taught him "how to fish, rob bird's nests and use bad words."¹⁵

Perhaps to remove her family from such an environment, Daniel's mother relocated them several miles from town in a log cabin, "no doubt built for negroes" which "had but one room down-stairs and one upstairs ...no weatherboarding without and no plastering within."¹⁶

The Sommer family lived in this location for the next "six or seven years," and it was while living here that Daniel began to receive a sporadic formal education. Sommer's best recollection of his early school days was that he "did not learn much." His own sister dubbed him a "blockhead," and Sommer himself confessed that his "memory held what was said in books about as well as a sieve holds water." However, after two or three years of such efforts, Sommer had "learned to spell, read, and write accurately," although he "was not quick in figures, and geography always worried me." While his "memory of details was still very defective," requiring "from one to three hours to commit a short rule in either grammar or arithmetic," he discovered that he "began to understand things" so that

¹⁴Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶"A Record of My Life—No. 2," *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4. Another, perhaps more fundamental reason for moving into such surroundings was that the family could live there without paying Tent. (*Ibid.*, p. 3.). By the time they moved, the family consisted of Daniel, his mother, an older brother and sister, and a younger brother and sister. Four other children had died in infancy. . "A Record of My Life—No. 1," *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 2; Warren Sommer enclosure with letter to author, May 24, 1974. •

he "did not have to depend altogether on memory," and thus "became a success in all departments that were not wholly dependent on memory." He discovered that he "could slowly work out a problem," and began attending school (on rainy days when only a few would be present. The school-room was on such occasions more quiet than usual, and my slow thinking power could work well. I had commenced to be a student, and the ambition to excel had commenced to show itself."¹⁷

One of the reasons for Sommer's progression through these difficult years of acquiring a basic education was the influence of one particular teacher, a Scotchman by the name of Hector Home Munroe. More than thirty years later Sommer characterized him as

the most learned, witty, jovial, vigorous, and sensible man whose acquaintance I was privileged to form in early life. How much of my success in after years may be justly attributed to the impressions received from him cannot be correctly estimated."¹⁸

Later still, Sommer reiterated that "that noble Scotchman... made impressions for good on me which still remain."¹⁹ Under Munroe's guidance, particularly in grammar, which Sommer identified as coming "nearer to being my delight than any other study . . . could handle any sentence from the simplest prose to Milton's 'Paradise Lost'" by the age of twelve.²⁰ Sommer opinioned that "had I been sent to college at that time, I might have graduated in the ordinary classical course by the time

¹⁷"A Record of My Life—No. 3," AR, LXXXIII:51-52 (December 19, 1939), p. 4.

¹⁸Daniel Sommer, Hector Among the Doctors: or, A Search for the True Church: A Volume of Thoughts for Thinkers (Indianapolis: by the author, 1889), pp. 251-252. Munroe obviously served as the model for the hero of this novel (one of several which Sommer wrote), who was characterized as a "Veil read, honest man seeking for the true church among sectarian preachers" (Hector..., "Introductory").

¹⁹"A Record of My Life—No. 3, op.cit., p. 5.

²⁰Ibid., p. 4.

I reached sixteen years of age." ²¹ But Sommer's education was abruptly curtailed in 1862, and he would not go to college, or receive any other formal education, for that matter, for the next seven years or more.

Since his father's death, Sommer had done what little he could to help provide for the family. In company with his older brother, Frederick, he would hunt for game (mostly rabbits) with a dilapidated "old flintlock musket." Years later, he recalled that "while my older brother remained about home, he was the shooter; but after he was hired out by the year, then I had a chance to shoot. And I did! The gun, defective as it was, soon became ray companion. . .As a result, I became something of a marksman." Sommer also became adept at trapping rabbits, often snaring

fifty rabbits in the course of a fall season...Some of these rabbits we would sell and thereby get money to buy ammunition for hunting. But most of them served as meat for the family: In course of the latter part of each year we seldom had any other kind than wild game. Of that kind we never grew tired...Wild meat and corn bread—who could not thrive on such diet? Certainly I did, and so did the mother and the younger children... Blessed are those who are poor and have food and health!²²

By the time Sommer was nine years old, he followed his older brother in hiring out to do labor for wages. Although there was a law prohibiting such work by children under ten years of age, "arrangements were made with Haswell Magruder, district supervisor, to take me on the public highway to work in mending and making roads." Sommer acknowledged that he was at "a tender age, but I was a rigorous, well-grown boy...and the supervisor was a friend of the family, and so he ventured on -his own responsibility to take me. That was the beginning of sorrows—rather, of labors. I had worked before, but never all day for wages." ²³

²¹ Ibid.

²²"A Record of My Life—No. 2," op. cit., p. 4.

²³ Ibid.

Sommer described his "beginning of sorrows" with these words;

Sometimes we (my older brother and I) had to walk five or six miles to the place of working. We would start early...and take our breakfasts as well as dinners with us. When we reached the place we would first eat breakfast and then go to work. We were generally held at work until sunset, and then walked home . . . This continued two years, working from one to five days at a time in company with my brother Fred. I began that work in the spring after I was nine years old, and ended it in the autumn before I was twelve. On an average I probably worked thirty-five or forty days in the course of each season, and went to school in the intervals—that is, when there was a teacher. ²⁴

At the end of the school season during the winter of 1861-1862, however, Sommer abandoned his schooling completely in order to work on the farms and plantations as his brother did, "for the sum of '\$4 a month and board.'"²⁵ Although Sommer regretted abandoning his schoolwork under Hector Munroe, he later affirmed that "I would not exchange the lessons I learned in course of those years for the best university education our country can afford!" ²⁶

During the year 1862 Sommer worked on a plantation "about five miles from the old historic town of Blandensburg," near the nation's capital; Sommer recalled that he "once went to the great city of Washington, to take in some produce" during that year. ²⁷ The following year Sommer took work at another farm, and his wages were increased to "six dollars a month." ²⁸ In 1864 he was employed by Oden Bowie, railroad magnate who was elected governor of Maryland in 1867.²⁹

²⁴Ibid., p. 5.

²⁵"A Record of My Life—No. 3," op. cit., p. 6.

²⁶Ibid..

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸ "A Record of My Life—No. 4," ACR, LXXXV:l-2 (January 2, 1940), p. 5.

²⁹"A Record of My Life—No. 5" ACR LXXXV:3-4 (January 16, 1940) pp. 2-3.

Although Maryland was the scene not only of several notable Civil War battles but of considerable troop, munitions and armament movement as well, Sommer says nothing of this in his memoirs, and Earl West's opinion that "although the war raged about him, Sommer lived in almost complete oblivion of it" ³⁰ would seem to be correct.

The cessation of hostilities found Sommer still at work as a farm hand, whose wages for the year 1865 were "a hundred and fifty dollars, and the rations formerly allotted to slaves --- three pounds of meat, a dozen salt fish and a peck of corn meal." ³¹ At the end of the year the Sommer family left Prince Georges county and moved northeast to Harford county. It was here that Sommer first came in contact with the religious group which would occupy his attention for nearly three-quarters of a century.³²

At the age of 13, while still in Prince Georges county Sommer had attended a Methodist Sunday school taught by a young lady, Louise V. Harwood, who was to leave a lasting impression upon the young boy, Sommer experienced a religious "conversion" which produced moral reform in his life, and while he later came to regard this as a doctrinally invalid experience, he also said that his "life-long conflict with the devil had commenced, and has never ceased..."³³

Sommer soon began to realize that his moral reformation would have to be a continual process. "Before 1864 closed," he said, "I had become careless in my religious duties," but continued that "in the course of the

.....³⁰ Earl Irvin West, The Search For the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement, 1849-1906 (Volume II: 1866-1906; Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1254), p. 294.

³¹"A Record of My Life—No. 5," op. cit., p. 4.

³²"A Record of My Life—No. 6," ACR, LXXXV:3 (January 30, 1940), p. 5.

³³"A Record of My Life—No. 4," op. cit., p. 8.

year 1865 I became more earnestly religious...Early in '65 I recovered from that careless condition and renewed my vows of allegiance. Since that time I have never faltered. Daily reading of the Scriptures and prayer have been the order with me from that time . . ."34 Sommer continued in the practice of the Methodist religion, and although he "had never seen a 'strange light,' nor heard a 'strange sound,' nor felt a 'strange feeling,' he attended various Sunday schools from time to time.³⁵

This was Daniel Sommer's religious condition upon arriving at his new home in northeastern Maryland. He worked at first on another farm, for "sixteen dollars a month and board," and chopped cordwood often, especially during the winter. As was his work, so his religion was to him "an every-day affair." My mind, my heart, and life had been thoroughly changed and I struggled daily to keep myself unspotted from the world. As a result, my joys were daily and constant—moving onward like a deep and mighty river."³⁶

At this time, however, Sommer became employed by John Dallas Everett, a devout member of the Disciples of Christ. During the latter part of 1866, Sommer had his first exposure to the Disciples when he witnessed a baptismal service conducted by the notable Disciple evangelist, D.S. Burnet.³⁷ During 1868 and 1869, while in Everett's employ, Sommer became converted to the Disciples doctrine of adult baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. After a time of being "filled with

³⁴"A Record of My Life--No. 6," op. cit., p. 4.

³⁵Ibid., p. 5.

³⁶"A Record of My Life—No. 7," ACR, LXXXV: 4 (February 13, 1940), p. 9.

³⁷Ibid., p. 7. For further information on this important figure in Disciple history, see Noel L. Keith's fine volume, The Story of D.S. Burnet: Undeserved Obscurity (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1954). Burnet had an ironic relationship with Benjamin Franklin, soon to become Sommer's model as a preacher (see Keith. pp. 108. 144. and 174-175).

anxious thought" about the validity of his Lutheran baptism by sprinkling while still in infancy, Sommer said, "I yielded."³⁸ He was baptized during a protracted evangelistic meeting held in 1869 by Elder A.T. Crenshaw, of Middletown, Pennsylvania.³⁹ The effects of this submission were far-Teaching. Years later, Sommer recalled for readers of his paper the reasoning which led him to become a preacher of the gospel.

After uniting with the Church of Christ..., I saw more clearly what should be my life's work. I tried to satisfy myself with some secular calling, but could not. 'To what shall I devote my life?' This was the great question with me...As I looked abroad on the world of mankind, I discovered that people generally were unhappy,—and wealth was not what they needed, as it could not produce happiness. But I had learned sufficient of the religion taught in the New Testament to know that it would give...peace and rest to the unhappy and oppressed mind or spirit...Reflecting on this subject led me to this conclusion: I must devote my life to the work of making mankind happy!...Then the question arose: What course shall I pursue in order to accomplish this end? The answer soon came clear as light; I did not reflect long before I came to this conclusion: Preach the Gospel of Christ⁴⁰

However, Sommer's "deficiency in education and . . . natural slowness of speech came up as an argument against" becoming a minister of the gospel — -but only temporarily. Sommer "recollected that when I did go to school I made good progress, and I thought my speech might be quickened."⁴¹ The obvious solution was to return to school, and the brethren in Harford county suggested that Sommer attend Bethany College, the closest institution of higher learning operated by the Disciples of Christ. Sommer's mind having become fully convinced of the rightness of his course, he departed for Bethany, West Virginia.

³⁸"A Record of My Life—No. 8," ACR, LXXXV:5 (February 27, 1940), p.8

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 9,

CHAPTER IV:

BETHANY COLLEGE

Shortly after Sommer's conversion and affiliation with the Disciples of Christ and his subsequent decision to preach, he entered Bethany College, founded in 1840 by Alexander Campbell.¹ Even though Campbell had died three years before (in 1866), Bethany was still "the most illustrious" of the Disciples colleges.² West describes it, perhaps best, in these words: "Alexander Campbell's memory hovered spirit-like around it. His son-in-law, W.K. Pendleton, was now its president.

C.L. Loos, a highly-respected educator, was connected with the school. Robert Richardson [Campbell's biographer—SW],³ although growing old, was still there."⁴

Sommer described the situation at Bethany in his own words years later: "The regular course required that each student take three studies. So I took up Latin, Greek, and Algebra."⁵ However, due

¹For an excellent discussion of the founding, early days, and later influence of Bethany College, see Perry Epler Gresham, Campbell and the Colleges: The Forrest F. Reed Lectures for 1971 (Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1975).

²Earl Irvin West, The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1906 (Volume II: 1866-1906); Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1955), p. 296.

³See Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell... (Reprint Edition, 2 Volumes; Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1956).

⁴West, op. cit., p. 296.

⁵"A Record of My Life—No. 9," American Christian Review (hereafter ACR), LXXXV-6 (March 12, 1940), p. 8. This record of Sommer's life was

to trouble with his eyesight, he soon dropped the algebra, adding rhetoric in its place, later in the year when his eyes recovered.⁶ "Those three studies—Greek, Latin, and rhetoric—I continued to pursue until the first collegiate year ended."⁷

Study was hard for Sommer. By his own admission, "I had not learned to study, did not like to study, and I presume never will."⁸ This, plus a proclivity to daydreaming and a poor memory, made college life hard on Sommer. Even later in his life he made numerous references to his lack of ability to memorize the Scriptures.⁹ This, as we shall see later, had a profound influence not only on Sommer's manner of preaching, but also on his disposition toward institutions of higher learning.

Additionally, Sommer entered Bethany at a marked disadvantage to the other students in terms of preparatory education. Years later, he surmised,

Probably no young man ever went to college for the purpose of taking a course of study who was more ignorant than I was when I reached Bethany. My early education was meager, and I had been out of schools nearly eight years. Throughout that time I had mostly associated with negroes and unlearned white people...But I had read a few books, and had tried to read with care. Still I knew little or nothing about textbooks. What I had learned in earlier life concerning arithmetic I had forgotten almost entirely, and the same was true with reference to grammar. So when I reached Bethany College I did not know the difference between the subject and object of a verb...Declensions and conjugations had all left

published posthumously in the Review from 1940-1943. Parts of it have been published in Wallace, op. cit., and a typescript of about a third of the articles was made by Dr. Claude Spencer at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville. I am indebted to Les Galbraith, Christian Theological Seminary Librarian, for making available to me the complete files of the Review.

⁶Ibid. ⁷Ibid. ⁸Ibid. ⁹Ibid., pp. 8-9.

me, and I was very nearly as innocent of the construction of words and sentences as though I had never looked at the pages of a grammar.¹⁰

Yet by diligence, perseverance, and a willingness to endure the barbs and gibes of his fellow-students, Sommer slowly made progress. He recalled,

When I did blunder, it burnt me so deeply—made such a lasting impression--that I seldom repeated the same mistake. Reflecting on this I once remarked in the presence of several students that I learned more by my mistakes than I did by anything else, whereupon one of them quickly responded, "Why don't you make mistakes all the time, then?"¹¹

By this painstaking process, Sommer was able to earn satisfactory, passing marks. In Sommer's words,

I did not make the progress I desired to make, but I did my best. At the conclusion of the first year, I had an interview with my Professor in Greek and Latin. He said, "Mr. Sommer, I do not wish you to regard it as a matter of flattery, but as a matter of fact, when I say that, considering where you began, you have made more solid progress than any other young man under my instruction." He then explained, and I understood him...There were four or five others, in the class of about twenty, who were still in advance of me, but they had begun with great advantages over me. I began at the bottom, and with an untrained and uninformed intellect...In September of 1870 I returned to Bethany College; continued my Greek and Latin, and as memory serves me, I began Algebra and English Grammar...I pursued my Greek, Latin, and Algebra with diligence. I managed Algebra well...and received a "perfect" mark.¹²

Sommer also continued to do well in the classical languages he studied, earning marks of "about ninety" percent.¹³ Near the end of his second year at Bethany Robert Kidd, the elocutionist, came to teach at

¹⁰Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹"A Record of My Life—No. 10," ACR, LXXXV:7 (March 26, 1940), p. 6.

¹²"A Record of My Life--No. 9," op. cit., p. 8.

¹³ "A Record of My Life--No. 10," op. cit., p. 6.

Bethany. His presence was to have a profound effect on Sommer, not only during his collegiate career, but throughout the remainder of his life. In his own words,

Before leaving the subject of my studies for the second year, I will mention that I finished Algebra and took up Geometry. Near the close of the term, Prof. Robert Kidd came to Bethany to teach Elocution. I became so much interested in his instructions that I neglected my Geometry, so that when examination day came I failed to pass, and so was thrown back to go over it all again. I never went back, but abandoned the Mathematical course.¹⁴

Kidd, who was the author of a textbook on elocution, Vocal Culture and Elocution with Numerous Exercises in Reading and Speaking,¹⁵ impressed Sommer from the very first day on the Bethany campus, when he spoke in the chapel session. With these words, Kidd impressed the young farm boy with the necessity for fluency and clarity in public speaking:

It is important for you to have knowledge, and to know how to write a speech; but if you do not know how to deliver a speech, you will with the finest mental attainments make a failure. After you have finished your collegiate course, you will likely be called to deliver a Fourth of July speech at some place where your friends will be gathered. Then if you have not secured control of yourself, and developed your vocal organs to considerable strength and power, you will make such a failure, and be so ashamed of yourself, that you will be tempted to commit suicide!¹⁶

Sommer was enthralled! Later he was to recall:

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Robert H. Kidd, Vocal Culture and Elocution with Numerous Exercises in Reading and Speaking [Cincinnati, 1857]. For a discussion of this and other nineteenth-century elocutionary works, see Matthew Morrison, op. cit., p. 17, and Ward Rasmus, "Voice and Diction: Historical Perspective," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLVII:3 (October, 1961), p. 255, cited in Morrison, p. 17.

¹⁶"A Record of My Life—No. 10," op. cit., p. 7.

That speech captivated me! ...Prof. Robert Kidd was the man above all others whose acquaintance I wished to form, and under whose instructions I wished to place myself. Students and professors all sank into insignificance when compared with him. I beheld in him the one who could do me more good . . . than could all others whom I had met. Accordingly I was ready to slight any other department of study...I gave Professor Kidd's instructions my best attention.¹⁷

Sommer returned home briefly after the end of the second year at Bethany, arriving at Baltimore to find a telegram waiting for him, stating that his mother was dying. By the time he arrived at the family's residence, his mother was dead. Overcome with grief, Sommer turned his mind and heart to preaching, utilizing the skills developed by Kidd, at Rockville, in Montgomery county, Maryland. Returning to Bethany that fall, he began to preach for the rural Dutch Fork church, across the state line in Washington County, Pennsylvania, not far from where many of the restoration ideas of Thomas and Alexander Campbell •were first expressed nearly three-quarters of a century before. Meanwhile, he continued his studies:

During the first four months of my third collegiate year I studied four languages, namely: Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and German__ my average grade was 'nearly ninety'. When Christmas came I dropped the Greek and Latin and continued the Hebrew and German till close of recitations at the end of the session. Then I became engaged in a protracted meeting at Dutch Fork which continued through the period of final examinations for that session. It resulted in twenty-one additions to the church; nineteen by baptism. In consequence, I stood no examinations. As I never entered the college again, I left it without graduating in any department. I studied Greek and Latin nearly two and a half collegiate years of nine months each; Hebrew and German a year each; went through Algebra, and half through Geometry; studied Rhetoric four or five months, and English grammar two or three months...and studied theoretical chemistry four or five months.¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid. ¹⁸Ibid., p. 8.

Years later, after becoming embroiled in numerous controversies with other members of Churches of Christ over whether or not it was scripturally permissible for the churches to financially support such colleges, Sommer reflected that

I know that the crowding of pupils through a multitude of books is unfavorable to education, as far as it means training of the brain. And, after spending three collegiate years at Bethany—studying Greek, Latin, Hebrew, German, English, mathematics and chemistry--I decided to leave without graduating in order as I stated 'to have time to think.' And I have never regretted leaving at the time I did, for a diploma was something I knew I did not need as a preacher of the Gospel. But, after leaving Bethany, I secured a copy of William Hamilton's lectures on Metaphysics, also of his lectures on Logic. In them I found most exquisite enjoyment, and I might say I delighted in those writings...Then I turned from mental philosophy and devoted myself to the Bible, almost to the exclusion of everything else, for many years. Next I studied English as never before, and later, studied church history. Of course, through that period I was a constant student of conditions in the disciple brotherhood.¹⁹

Sommer's education in various languages, especially Greek and Latin, stood him in good stead in future years of Bible study, preaching, and debating. In his personal copy of the Braden-Hughey debate,²⁰ now in the possession of Matthew C. Morrison, he corrected one of the participants thus: "Kataduo is intransitive in nearly every if not altogether

¹⁹ "Items of Interest," Apostolic Review LXXIII:21 (May 27, 1930), p. 12. Sommer's personal copy of Hamilton's book, long in the possession of his daughter, Bessie, is now in the possession of L.A. Stauffer, preacher for the Emerson Avenue Church in Indianapolis (the old "North Indianapolis" church). See also Miller-Sommer Debate, reported by James Abbott (Mount Morris, Illinois: The Brethren's Publishing Company, 1889), p. 148 and letter from Sommer to Kershner, March 9, 1937, in Frederick D. Kershner papers, Archives, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis; Series X, Folder 132, Box 38.

²⁰Braden-Hughey Debate on the Action of Baptism, etc. (Cincinnati, 1870), pp. 13-14. The writer is indebted to Matthew C. Morrison for allowing him to examine this work now in Morrison's possession

every signification and hence could not have been used in such a connection as is baptizo. The same is true of duplo and duo." ²¹ Morrison, in his fine analysis of Sommer's speech characteristics as revealed in his published sermons, concludes that, "In explaining the meaning of a scripture, Sommer infrequently employed his knowledge of Greek and Latin,"²² although he adds, "Sommer evidently knew far more Greek than he revealed in his sermons to revival audiences," ²³ perhaps due to the composition of his audiences.

Three final episodes from Sommer's Bethany career will serve to enlighten later occurrences in his long life. It was at Bethany that Sommer began his experience as a debater. On one occasion, he debated Champ Clark, who graduated the following year, 1873, with "first honors."²⁴ It is significant that the topic for the discussion was "the Liquor Traffic," a topic that was often given attention, among other social issues, in Sommer's later years. Although Clark makes no reference to the debate in his autobiography, ²⁵ Sommer later received a letter from him, shortly before his death, in which the former Speaker of the House of Representatives recalled the discussion.²⁶

The second incident, while perhaps trivial in and of itself, is reflective of Sommer's developing views of the disciple brotherhood. During Sommer's second year at Bethany, some of the sisters of the

²¹Morrison, op. cit., p. 79.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 20.

²⁵Champ Clark, My Quarter Century of American Politics (2 Vols.; New York, 1920), I, pp. 97-100 (cited in Morrison, p. 20).

²⁶"A Record of My Life—No. 12," ACR, LXXXV:9 (April 9, 1940), p. 10.

Disciple church in Bethany formed what they termed a "Mite Society," which began as an informal hour of conversation during one night of each week, and at the conclusion of which each one present was expected to contribute a small offering (as the widow's mite of Mark 12 and Luke 21) to be used to repair various portions of the church property. Although Sommer had reservations about this kind of arrangement from the beginning and did not attend the meetings of the "Mite Society," he said nothing about it. However, during his third year, when C.L. Loos, preacher for the church, was away from the Bethany pulpit temporarily while dealing with a problem in the church at Wellsburg, West Virginia, Loos arranged for W.K. Pendleton to preach each Sunday morning and for a student to deliver the evening sermon. By this time, the "Mite Society" had achieved more a social than a religious standing, presenting plays and other frivolities to raise money. When Loos asked Sommer to preach one Sunday evening in his absence, Sommer at first declined, then accepted. ("I told him that I knew not that I could say anything of interest to such an audience as assembled there. 'Give them anything that's got religion in it—anything that's got religion in it!' was his reply").²⁷ Sommer seized this opportunity and prepared a sermon extolling the virtues of the spiritually-minded man, using the First Psalm as his text. He recalled,

As I neared the conclusion of my discourse I began to exhort the people to take the Bible as the man of their counsel. In so doing I lifted the pulpit Bible up with both hands and continued thus: "Take this Book...as the guide of your life! Take it with you to your place of business! Take it with you on your journeys! Take it with you to your closets! Take it with you to your Mite Society!" I paused—then remarked that as that institution...had been mentioned, I would give it

²⁷"A Record of My Life—No. 11," ACR, LXXXV:8 (April 9, 1940), p. 10.

a brief examination. I did so, and was not exceedingly careful to select smooth language.²⁸

This episode launched Sommer down the path of opposition to anything he considered inimical to "apostolic simplicity" in the church. His reasoning, explicitly stated in his memoirs, illustrates much of his future disposition concerning related matters:

This account of the Mite Society in Bethany Church has been given somewhat in detail because it reveals the condition of things with which I was confronted at Bethany during my early years, and reveals also that from the first of my discipleship I was clear concerning the simplicity of the worship and work of the Church. When I became convinced the New Testament was complete and needed no appendage as the mourner's bench, then I was also convinced it needed no such addition as the Mite Society. In point of principle there is no difference between a mourner's bench arrangement for confessing Christ, and a Mite Society for raising money for Christ. Both are human appendages and entirely without Divine warrant. The caste of mind which will condemn the mourner's bench and yet advocate the Mite Society (or any other human appendage to the gospel) I do not understand. Such reasoning as will condemn the mourner's bench because unauthorized, and yet endorse a Mite Society though it too is unauthorized, is contrary to all logic and even common sense of the most common kind.²⁹

Shortly after Sommer's address, one of the girls at Bethany composed and "Obituary of the Mite Society," stating the date of birth, length of existence, and lamenting that it passed out of existence after receiving "a shock from the Bethany pulpit."³⁰

The third salient incident occurred when the editor of the American Christian Review, Benjamin Franklin, held a protracted meeting at Wellsburg, seven miles from Bethany. Sommer heard him preach several times and was impressed with the "grand old man."³¹ He said, "I heard

²⁸Ibid., pp. 7-8.

²⁹Ibid., p. 8.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

him...and learned that in the Gospel he was certainly a master. I was most favorably impressed with him, and he seemed not to forget me."³²

Recalling his years at Bethany decades later, Sommer revealed how much of a formative influence, though perhaps in a largely negative way, those years were to have on his career:

Early in my life at Bethany I saw there was a difference between disciples and disciples. It became evident that some disciples were of the primitive or apostolic type, while others were of a modern or plastic type. Those constituting the former class I saw had stability, while those constituting the latter class had flexibility. The former disciples held that the world should bend to the church; the latter disciples held that the church should bend to the world...Hence I was compelled to recognize that there was a difference, and that two classes of characters were found among disciples...The word "Disciple" then came to have a two-fold meaning. It thenceforth meant professed Christians who were entirely satisfied with what was written in the word of God, and professed Christians who were in certain respects unsatisfied with what was therein written.³³

How this early perception of differences among the Disciples was to blossom into full-scale antipathy to a significant portion of the Disciples will be the subject of succeeding chapter.

³²Ibid. For an analysis of Franklin's preaching see Ottis L. Castleberry, They Heard Him Gladly: A Critical Study of Benjamin Franklin's Preaching (Rosemead, California [?]: Old Paths Publishing Company, 1965).

³³"A Record of My Life—No. 11," p. 6.

CHAPTER V:

A PREACHER AND A FAMILY MAN

I remained at Bethany through the summer and fall of 1872, and fulfilled my engagements with churches at Dutch Fork and Independence in Washington County, Pa. When the year 1873 began I turned my face back toward my native state. So I packed my trunk and went by stage to Wellsburg, and there crossed the Ohio River in a rowboat when the water was high and dangerous by reason of floating ice...All was managed well, and I landed safely. There I took a train for Baltimore, Md. and safely reached that city next day.¹

When Sommer left Bethany College late in 1872, he was motivated not only by disillusionment with his college courses, but by something somewhat stronger. Years later he was to recall:

But I did not tarry long in Baltimore, for there were other attractions farther on. In the course of a few days I took a train for Harford county of the same State...There I was met by an old Quaker in a rockaway carriage, who conveyed me... to his home...(near) Forest Hill... That old Quaker was named Francis Way, and he had two daughters, the youngest of whom was named Katherine, commonly called "Kate."²

Sommer proceeded to describe the object of his affection, and their developing relationship, in the cold, unemotional and businesslike manner which was to characterize him throughout the remainder of his life:

I had seen her three times before I went to Bethany, and several times in the course of my first and second vacations from college. Besides, we had exchanged many letters. I did not regard her as beautiful, nor even handsome. She was a plain-faced country girl, weighing about a hundred and forty-five pounds...She was quick-witted and mischievous. Having lived in the country all her life, she was not perverted by fashionable folly.³

¹Daniel Sommer, "A Record of My Life—No. 13," American Christian Review, LXXXV:10 (May 7, 1940), p. 3.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

Notwithstanding this romantic and attractive description, Sommer "saw something which would make a woman of energy and decision;" ⁴ consequently, they were married on January 28, 1873. ⁵ Kate was twenty-two; she immediately accompanied her twenty-three-year-old husband to Baltimore, where he assumed the preaching obligations at a small church. Sommer later recorded the impressions of an older preacher who chanced to hear several of his sermons.

On one occasion Bro. Austen . . . heard me speak twice. He went home on Monday and wrote to me a letter. Therein I found the following: 'Your morning discourse was only tolerable. At night I knew you had made a mistake as soon as you took your text. Your intonations were forced and unnatural; your gesticulations were awkward; your outlines only ordinary, and the filling-up was miserable!' (I laughed over this letter, showed it to a friend and his wife--and then seriously reflected that it contained an unfortunate amount of truth. Hence, instead of becoming offended by reason of such criticism, I deemed it wise to profit thereby).⁶

Austen was later to become one of several of Sommer's financial benefactors .

The Sommer family moved back to the Way farm for the winter months, during which time their first child, Fred, was born (on December 9, 1873). In the spring, they returned to Baltimore to resume work with the church, and in August of 1874 received an invitation to move to Kelton, in Chester county, Pennsylvania, to work with another church.⁷

⁴Ibid.

⁵Letter and enclosure to author from Warren Sommer, May'24, 1974. Mr. Sommer, a graduate student in historical geography at the University of British Columbia at Vancouver, pursues genealogical studies as a hobby, and is now at work on a survey of the entire Sommer family. I am indebted to him for his time in assisting me and providing me with much useful information.

⁶Daniel Sommer, op. cit., p. 4.

⁷Everett Ferguson, Tom Olbricht, and R.L. Roberts, Jr., "The

These were to be trying years for the young preacher and his family. In the financially depressed years following 1873, the small congregation was not able to pay its preacher a living wage. In a public record, Sommer would say

Brethren in Chester County, Pa., never were able to support me properly, and some, of course, did not appreciate the importance of doing what they could . . . I worked five days in the week and preached three times each Lord's day. In addition to this I generally worked in the harvest field each year, and thereby made a few dollars to help take care of my wife and

Journal of the Church of Christ in Kelton, Pennsylvania," Restoration Quarterly, XIII:4 (1970), p. 226. This article reports the finding of the church journal at Kelton. These authors give a date of 1875 for Sommer's move, but since the journal ends at 1873, they are obviously relying on some other source, unspecified, for their opinion. While there are some discrepancies to be accounted for by accepting the 1874 date, since Sommer himself specifies it several times, and lacking hard evidence to the contrary, it appears to be the more acceptable date. See Sommer, "A Record of My Life—No. 14," ACR, LXXXV:11 (May 21, 1940), p. 6; "A Record of My Life—No. 16," ACR, LXXXV:13 (June 18, 1940), p. 10; and Sommer's personal journal, p. 13, entry dated February 13, 1880. This journal, now in the possession of Mr. William E. Wallace of Lufkin, Texas, is an invaluable primary source, recording Sommer's reflections at or very near the time of several major events in his life. It can thus be checked against his recollections, which were begun in the 1890's and discontinued until 1935. However, it should be noted that a comparison of the two sources shows Sommer's recollections to be very much in accordance with the record of the journal; indeed, it is likely that he referred to his diary while writing the memoirs. Mr. Wallace collected many of Sommer's personal belongings from the Sommer family in the course of preparing the articles for book publication. He has graciously committed to me not only the journal but several filing cabinet drawers full of Sommer manuscripts for my use, and has indicated an interest in donating them to the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville (as I am doing with all Sommer material which has come into my possession in the last five years). I have retained a Xerox copy of the journal (hereafter referred to merely as "Journal"). The title of Wallace's book is Daniel Sommer, 1850-1940: A Biography (n.p., 1969).

With respect to Sommer's appointment at Kelton, it is likely that it came about through the influence of George Austen, who helped "set the church in order." (letter to Benjamin Franklin from Sommer, dated-April 20, 1878, in ACR, XXI:20 (May 14, 1878), p. 157; Ferguson et. al., p. 225-226).

little ones. But with all I did and all the church did, it would have been impossible to meet demands, had it not been for Bro. George Austen (and others—SW)...They often sent a contribution which greatly assisted me. But even with this we would have been oppressed, had not my wife been most economical in managing food and clothing.⁸

Privately, Sommer lamented the lack of financial support from the churches he served (Sommer began walking to a small country church, Chestnut Grove, until such time as he was able to purchase a horse); he recorded the following in his private journal:

The church at Chestnut Grove has given me but little. One time the treasurer handed me \$4.00 at another time two, at another time one dollar, seventy five cents, and at another time (last Lord's day) he gave me one dollar.

I have no special stipulation with the brethren, and ask none, but I am ashamed of the way and extent in which they abuse the liberty which they have in Christ.⁹

Sommer was led to depend very heavily on the good graces of the brethren in other places, and what he called "the providence of God." In fact, it was due to his having received, on several occasions, an unsolicited amount which exactly met the need of the hour that he was constrained to begin recording daily events in a journal from 1879 to 1883.¹⁰ He began the first entry on January 1, 1879, in this fashion:

On the first day of the new year I begin a record of the Lord's dealings with me. In the course of the past year I have been led to consider the subject of God's special care for his children in a special manner. My conclusion has been that I should trust him each day for my temporal support. For some time past I have done this. The Lord has tried my faith, at times severely, but he has confirmed it by answers to prayer.¹¹

Speaking of his debts as "those great enemies to my happiness and

⁸Sommer, "A Record of My Life—No. 15," ACR, LXXXV:12 (June 4, 1940), p. 10.

⁹Journal, p. 9, dated June 11, 1879.

¹⁰See footnote 7 above.

¹¹Journal, p. 1, entry dated January 1, 1879,

usefulness,"¹² Sommer recorded that they had been primarily "incurred by **not** receiving sufficient remuneration for my preaching to support ray family and myself."¹³ He added:

This lack of remuneration I now believe has been the result of my not putting my trust wholly in the Lord and by not looking to Him to supply my wants. Hereafter I shall trust him altogether for my daily sustenance and pray Him to deliver me from my debts, so that I may keep the command which says, 'Owe no man anything, but to love one another.'¹⁴

The young preacher recorded several weeks later that "the Lord has been dealing graciously with me. He has severely tried my faith and has also strengthened it with answers to prayer."¹⁵ After listing a series of unsolicited gifts received through the mail, he said:

For such kindnesses they all have a deeper hold on my heart than ever before, and I am trying to be more and more grateful to my God in whom I trust.¹⁶

On a later, similar occasion, he wrote, "Blessed be the name of Him by whom their hearts were moved to contribute to my necessity. It is blessed to trust in God continually."¹⁷ The journal is replete with statements such as:

I am still living a life of faith in God and still have great reason to be grateful to him. Health and strength of both my family and self still continue, also we are supplied with temporal necessities . . . I purpose still to continue trusting the Lord for temporal support..I find that a life of simple trust in God is most blessed as it leads to a life of humble fear.¹⁸

¹²Ibid., p. 3, entry dated January 25, 1879.

¹³Ibid., p. 2, entry dated January 2, 1879.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 2, entry dated January 20, 1879.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 5, entry dated March 1, 1879.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 6, entry dated March 10, 1879.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 9, entry dated August.16, 1879.

This existence of poverty, simplicity, and financial humility was to characterize Sommer all his life, which spanned the three major depressions of the 1870's, early 1890's and 1930's. During the "Great Depression" Sommer developed a warm friendship with Frederick D. Kershner, Dean of Butler University's College of Religion; Sommer was often an invited speaker at Butler, and corresponded frequently with Kershner. He often spoke of his work "among God's poor,"¹⁹ describing on one occasion a family with whom he had stayed who formerly had worked in "the oil fields, but the depression had brought him down to a farm owned by a bank. My own inconveniences," he said, "are of the pioneer order, but I am feeling well and am delighted."²⁰ He acknowledged a subscription to his periodical from the College library by calling it a "pleasing surprise," and saying that in "such times as these (we) are grateful for all assistance."²¹ An honorarium for \$30.00 was acknowledged several months later as another "pleasing surprise, for several reasons, one of which was I needed it."²² In the same letter he indicated that he was receiving only half of his customary financial support due to the depression; however, although he reported that after "a tour of four months into Missouri and Kansas I found much anxiety among the people as well as increasing disquiet with the management of affairs in Washington," he was content (if not "delighted") with his circumstances. After a lifetime of financial hardship, he concluded:

¹⁹Letter from Sommer to Kershner, January 12, 1935, in Frederick D. Kershner papers, Archives, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis; Series X, Folder 132, Box 38. (Xerox copies of all Sommer-Kershner correspondence in possession of author).

²⁰Ibid., July 24, 1934.

²¹Ibid., April 1, 1932.

²²Ibid., July 19, 1932.

My chief satisfaction in regard to my life's work as a preacher is that I have tried to serve as an (itinerant—SW) evangelist, and among God's poor, and have never complained.²³

Sommer's situation at Kelton was made known to the "Disciple brotherhood" through the pages of several religious journals, notably the American Christian Review, edited by Benjamin Franklin.²⁴ Probably typical of the way in which Sommer came to be supported without direct solicitation is the example of O.M. Benedict, of Ionia, Michigan. Sommer made a notation in the first entry in his journal that "the Lord put it into the heart of brother O.M. Benedict of Ionia, Mich, to send me a check for five dollars. This brother had never seen me, and had no idea who I was, only he had seen my articles in the American Christian Review, over the signature "Evangelist," for which paper I commenced to write over six months ago."²⁵ Benedict would later send him a biography of Benjamin Franklin whom Sommer deeply admired.²⁶

Sommer's first article, which appeared in the May 14, issue of the Review, was actually in the form of a reply to an invitation from Franklin to move to another location at a higher level of remuneration. Sommer

²³Ibid., January 12, 1935.

²⁴For perhaps the most perceptive short discussion of Disciple periodicals, see "Editorial Leadership," in David Edwin Harrell, Jr., A Social History of the Disciples of Christ (Volume II: The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ 1865-1900); Atlanta: Publishing Systems, Inc., 1973), pp. 16-22. See also James Brooks Major, "The Role of Periodicals in the Development of the Disciples of Christ, 1850-1910," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1966.

²⁵Journal, p. 1, entry dated January 1, 1879.

²⁶Journal, p. 11, entry dated October 22, 1879. Franklin (the Restoration preacher, not the Philadelphia inventor and statesman), was the founder and editor of the Review. The book referred to is Joseph Franklin and J.A. Headington, The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin (St. Louis: John Burns, 1879).

declined by saying:

The proposition you make offers me a support at least double what I am now getting. But I came among the brethren here, because the congregation was too weak financially to support another preacher. I remained because they were weak, and intend to continue with them until they grow strong, however much sacrifice it may yet require. While the field is open and still opening here for work, I cannot get my consent to leave, because the church here is financially weak, and go where it is stronger. In mildest English, I have no sympathy with the spirit which allows preachers to pass by the weak or waste places.²⁷

This attitude met with Franklin's approbation, and he published Sommer's letter with the following warm commendation:

In another place, the reader will find a letter from Bro. Daniel Sommer, of Kelton, Chester Co., Pa. We like this letter ...It is in the spirit of the pioneers of our great work, and of the primitive men in the Church. The question with Bro. Sommer is not how much money he can make out of his fine gifts and the gospel, but how much he can do in the great work of saving men. He declines to be moved from his work where he is to another place that will pay double the money, and we have since learned that will pay more than double; almost three times as much, and the living equally cheap. But he is right in declining, and the Lord will bless him and hold him up, and bless the noble people among whom he is laboring, and build up the cause...We were anxious to get a preacher for the place in question, and when we thought of Bro. Sommer, we thought he was the man. So he was, but, like good men generally, he was engaged. ²⁸

Beginning with the October 29, 1878 issue of the Review, Sommer published a series of articles on "Educating Preachers," ²⁹ over the pseudonym "Evangelist." Although no one could know that this was Sommer from reading the paper, Franklin himself held a meeting where Benedict

²⁷Daniel Sommer, untitled letter dated April 20, 1878, ACR, XXI:20 (May 14, 1878), p. 157.

²⁸Benjamin Franklin, "The Right Idea," ACR, XXI:20 (May 14, 1878) p. 156.

²⁹The topic of Sommer's motivation in writing these articles, his relationship with Franklin, and his attempts to purchase the Review immediately after Franklin's death in November of 1878, fall more appropriately under the scope of another chapter.

worshipped, and disclosed the identity of the anonymous writer. Nearly a decade later, after Franklin's death and on the occasion of Sommer's assumption of the editorship of the Review, Benedict wrote:

It is with unfeigned pleasure that we notice the name of our esteemed brother, Daniel Sommer, at the head of the REVIEW as 'proprietor and publisher'...we have learned to regard him as one of God's noblemen...It may be of interest to know, that some twelve or fourteen years ago, when attending a meeting in Detroit, Michigan, conducted by the lamented Franklin, during a conversation, the name of Daniel Sommer was mentioned. Bro. Franklin said: 'I consider Bro. Sommer as one of the most promising young men in my whole acquaintance. God has given him a grand physique, a strong, grasping mind, a sharp pen, a fairly ready tongue, and his heart is attuned to the principles of this great Restoration Movement.'³⁰

During the period that Sommer spent in *Chester* County, the churches there were built up, both physically and numerically. Many years later Sommer could look back and recall that

My labors at Chestnut Grove resulted in doubling the membership at that place. I do not mean it was doubled in every respect. **Yet** in numbers and financial ability it was probably doubled before I left those parts. Besides, the old stone meeting house was torn down and a neat frame chapel was erected, though not finished before I left Pennsylvania in the spring of 1880. All heavy timbers necessary for the building were donated by members and friends. As memory serves me, only a few members had any timber to give, but there were persons outside the church who permitted us to go into their woods and take a few trees. In company with several members of the church I went into the woods and helped. Indeed, I did much chopping and most of the hewing. It was my old trade and I enjoyed it! Besides, I always thought since I left manual labor that I was doing good for myself when I engaged in severe exercise. After the hewing I helped haul considerable timber to the place of building . . .³¹

³⁰ O. M. Benedict, "To the Readers of the Review," ACR, XXX:1 (January 6, 1887), p. 5. This was the highest compliment one could pay Sommer, as he revered Franklin; see Earl Irvin West, The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement, 1849-1906 (Volume I: 1849-1865; Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), p. 104. See also Sommer, "A Neat Compliment," ACR, XVIII:24, June 1875, p. 189.

³¹Sommer, "A Record of My Life—No. 15," ACR, LXXXV:12 (June 4, 1940), p. 10. Years later, Sommer complained that most of the church

Sommer also reported the growth of the church at that time through the Disciple journal, the Christian Standard. In a report dated September 24, 1877, Sommer reported that

Seven united yesterday, and three more made the good confession. Up to date, twenty-two have united with the congregation...The financial strength of the church is increased, and I am in hopes will be doubled before the meeting closes...This is the sixth week of the protracted effort. Half the time should have sufficed to have brought in double the number; but the people move slowly. May those who have moved remain steadfast... Three times yesterday the house was crowded, and last night we could scarcely find seats for all. ³²

Another version of Sommer's relationship with the Kelton church is told from a different perspective by three contemporary members of Churches of Christ who discovered the record book of the Kelton church while doing graduate study in the Philadelphia area:

Daniel Sommer came to Kelton in August, 1875, for a meeting and stayed. Kelton was his first place to do sustained work, and he built the church up. There were fifty members in 1875 and only one elder. Sommer was appointed an elder at Kelton in 1877. In the same year a Sunday school was begun. He worked as a carpenter in the day and would walk at night to his preaching appointments. The stone meetinghouse was too small and in poor repair. Sommer hewed the timber for a new building which was erected in 1879 and was still the meeting place for the church in the 1960's. In 1879 there were seventy members.

Daniel Sommer converted the Negro Samuel Ruth, who started the work among the blacks in Eastern Pennsylvania...Sommer moved from Kelton to Ohio in 1880, but he returned for meetings (for example, in 1901)...Sommer continued to be revered in Kelton,

houses erected "by Churches of Christ in the past twenty-five years have been spoiled" by architects who ignored acoustics. He was tempted to conclude that such architects were "in league with the devil to defeat the gospel," and objected particularly to the fact that the ceilings were "from three to ten feet too high," producing "a hollow sound." Instead of such an "abominable plan," Sommer suggested the following: "Let the height of the ceiling be one-half of the width, and one-third of the length: that is, if a congregation needs an auditorium to seat three hundred, it should erect a building thirty-two feet wide, forty-eight feet long, and not over sixteen feet from floor to ceiling." ("Concerning Meeting Houses," Apostolic Review, LXII:42 (October 21, 1919), p. 1)..

³²"From the Field," Christian Standard, XII:40 (October 6, 1877), p. 317.

and his influence was strong among the Pennsylvania churches still in the mid-twentieth century.³³

One other incident of significance which occurred at Kelton should be related. In January of 1879, Sommer was bitten by his dog and contracted what was diagnosed by himself and several other "paramedical" and medical personnel as hydrophobia. Sommer described the incident in detail both at the time (in his journal) and later, as the introduction to a book, Hydrophobia and its Cures.³⁴ The journal entries and the first portion of the book serve as vivid descriptions not only of the disease but of the nineteenth-century medical procedures (such as the "mad stone" cure, the elecampane cure, and the lobelia cure) used to treat it. The last portion of the book is a discourse by Sommer on what he termed "spiritual hydrophobia," or the aversion on the part of many people to be immersed for the remission of sins, which in Sommer's conception of the Bible was an essential element in one's salvation.³⁵

Sommer apparently felt that by now the churches in Chester County were sufficiently self-supporting that he might be more useful elsewhere. According to his journal,

³³Ferguson, et. al. 226-227. For Sommer's own account of Ruth's conversion and activities, see "A Record of My Life--No. 15," ACR, LXXXV:12 (June 4, 1940), pp. 10-12. Late in life, Sommer continued to return to Kelton for evangelistic work. He wrote to Frederick D. Kershner under date of May 7, 1935, saying, "One week hence I shall, the Lord willing, start for Eastern Pennsylvania where I commenced to preach in 1870. The church there was established 99 years ago and is still apostolic. I may be gone from this city (Indianapolis--SW) about six weeks." Kershner papers, Series X, Folder 132, Box 38.

³⁴See Hydrophobia and its Cures (By One Who Was A Victim) (Indianapolis: Daniel Sommer, 1895) pp. 1-15; Journal, pp. 4-7, entries dated March 1, 10th (?), 1879.

³⁵Hydrophobia . . . , p. 16ff.

Early in Nov. '79 the church at Reynoldsburg, Ohio sent for me to hold a meeting at that place. Accordingly I went and began the meeting Nov. 3th. It continued over five weeks & was successful. The brethren generally agreed that it was the best meeting they ever held at that place and so published it in the Review. They then began to consider the question of employing me for the next year, which they have since agreed to do for one-half my time. The church remunerated me liberally for my services, giving me \$130.00, the which left me about one hundred, after traveling expenses were taken out.³⁶

The report Sommer referred to was written by A.E. Sprague, and appeared in the American Christian Review for January 27, 1880. It said, in part:

The Church of Christ commenced a meeting Nov. 8, 1879, and closed Dec. 14, assisted by Daniel Sommer, of Kelton, Pa...Our audiences grew large and most profoundly attentive. Our house is large and commodious, yet several times all could not be seated. We have had many good meetings, but this is regarded as one of the best, all in all, we ever held...Sixteen were added by obedience, three by letter, and one reclaimed; total, twenty...

One word about Bro. Sommer. He is a young man not yet in prime of life; his voice is strong and clear; his enunciation exceedingly good; his knowledge of Scripture rarely excelled; his energy untiring; his manner and address pleasing; all these, together with his exemplary walk, and great reverence for the word of God, makes him a man of no ordinary ability.

He came as an entire stranger, save as known by his pen, but has endeared himself to all. ³⁷

Sommer labored here from May of 1880 until August of 1884, at which time he moved for a brief period (about nine months) at Martel, Ohio, moving from thence on to Richwood, Ohio. ³⁸ While at Reynoldsburg, he had become the editor, with L.F. Bittle, of a paper known as the

³⁶Journal, p. 15, entry dated November 3rd, 1880.

³⁷A.E. Sprague, "Daniel Sommer at Reynoldsburg, O.," ACR, XXII:4 (January 27, 1880), p. 30.

³⁸"A Record of My Life—No. 16," ACR, LXXXV:13 (June 18, 1940), p. 10; "A Record of My Life—No. 17," ACR, LXXXV:14 (July 2, 1940), p. 9; "A Record of My Life—No. 19," ACR, LXXXV:16 (July 30, 1940), p. 10; "A Record of My Life—No. 24," ACR, LXXXV:24 (October 9, 1940), p. 10.

Octograph ("writings of eight," after the authors of the New Testament epistles), and upon moving to Richwood, the opportunity presented itself for the purchase of Franklin's former paper, the American Christian Review, which Sommer gladly did.³⁹

G.W. Rice, one of the proprietors of the paper when Franklin was living, left the staff of a rival paper to return to the Review when Sommer assumed its oversight. He reported to the readers of the paper the situation at the editorial offices, and in the process provided a good description of life in a small midwestern town in the late nineteenth century.

I have spent one week in the REVIEW office at Richwood . . . things are in a very satisfactory condition. Mailing of the paper is seldom behind time; not oftener than occurs in large city offices. The composition, the proof reading and revising are all commendably accurate, far more so than I expected to find it, much fewer corrections, than I have seen elsewhere in older and larger offices...Bro. Sommer has three sons type setters in the office—Fred, Frank, and Chester--each one of whom can sometimes set three columns per day and distribute their own type...They all take great pleasure at the work put into their hands, and whenever it becomes necessary, help at anything, such as feeding the press, folding, wrapping, and mailing. While other boys are in the streets, out fishing or ball playing, the Sommer boys are at their cases setting the type...They are remarkable boys for whom both father and mother may well be thankful. There is no coercion, no driving by either father or mother. Their work is done cheerfully and willingly.

The impression on the minds of nearly all the Review's readers is, that Richwood is a small and insignificant village of about 500 inhabitants. I must say that was my impression until I came here and saw the place for myself. It is much larger than I had pictured in my mind...it appears to be quite a business town: much buying and selling is going on in all branches and departments of trade. There are here carriage shops, flour and feed mills, saw mills, and manufactories of several kinds are running all the time. Two banks always open for the accommodation of the merchants and citizens generally.

There are many large and well-built dwelling houses here, some

³⁹See Sommer, "History," ACR, XXX:9 (March 3, 1887), p. 65. The details of the purchase will be discussed in the next chapter.

surrounded by large yards, side, front and rear, ornamented with shade trees and well trimmed lawns. All the streets are unusually wide, with fine growing soft maple trees on both sides, which cast down a very refreshing shade during the hot summer months. The water is cool and good. The health of the town is excellent...The New York & Pa. railroad runs through the town, connecting it with the east and west...

The town is spread out over a large area of ground, and surrounded by a well to do farming community. I...would say there are 2,000 inhabitants in Richwood. Churches and schools are at hand to accommodate the wants and necessities of the people. In short, it is a handsome and convenient town where everything that any one needs can be had...⁴⁰

By the time Sommer settled at Richwood, he was a well-established younger preacher with a reputation widely known in the Disciple brotherhood (at least, the conservative element). At thirty-five, he had already formed a number of opinions about the nature of things religious which would lead him down the pathway of religious controversy. He had assumed the editorial mantle of one of the leaders of the movement's earliest history. In the words of one historian:

The tradition of the American Christian Review continued when Daniel Sommer purchased the journal in 1887. Sommer issued his paper under a number of titles,...but he always considered himself and his papers the successors of Franklin and the Review. Sommer was an intense admirer of the "grand old man" Benjamin Franklin and reflected much of the older editor's character. He was bright and incisive—the (sic) frequently analyzed internal frictions in the church with much more perception than liberal leaders—but he was also crude and caustic. Sommer, and his Review, continued to influence conservatives in the church, especially in the Midwest...⁴¹

Perhaps the single most perceptive comment by a contemporary observer of the division of the Restoration Movement in the late nineteenth century was Sommer's comment in 1897; in the words of one whose work "has earned him the first rank among living historians of the Dis-

⁴⁰G.W. Rice, "My Impressions," Octographic Review, XXX:24 (June 30, 1887), p. 1. See also, Rice, "Why I am Now on the Review," ibid.

principles,"⁴² Sommer "saw the sociological roots of the division very clearly."⁴³ He explained the division thusly:

As time advance such of those churches as assembled in large towns and cities gradually become proud, or, at least, sufficiently worldly-minded to desire popularity, and in order to attain that unscriptural end they adopted certain popular arrangements such as the hired pastor, the church choir, instrumental music, man-made societies to advance the gospel, and human devices to raise money to support the previously mentioned devices of similar origin. In so doing they divided the brotherhood of disciples.⁴⁴

In Sommer's mind this pride in worldly accomplishments was the root of much theological evil. Thirty years later, he described those whom he considered the elect of God, referring to them as "plain and humble people. They are of the humble classes, and the apostle James declares, 'Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him.'⁴⁵ Nor was this just the bitter rantings of an aged man contemplating his mis-spent life. While yet a young man, Sommer observed with respect to the editorial staff of the Christian Standard that "they were a little too nice and possessed as many of them seemed to think of too much polite learning to feel comfortable in association and under instruction of coal diggers. When persons of the poorer classes would obey the gospel, they would some of them make use of reflecting wonder about the kind of material they were getting."⁴⁶

⁴²Ronald E. Osborn, review of Harrell's two-volume Social History of the Disciples of Christ, Church History, XLIII:4 (December, 1974) p. 552.

⁴³Ibid., 345.

⁴⁴Sommer, "Signs of the Times," OR, XL (October 5, 1897), p. 1.

⁴⁵"A Record of My Life—No. 37," ACR, LXXXVI: 7 (April 3, 1941), p. 11.

⁴⁶Journal, p. 26, entry dated July 3, 1883.

During the first year of his editorship of the Review, he complained that the editorial tendencies of the Christian-Evangelist "constantly tends in the direction of robbing the poor." Furthermore, he complained that

As those possessed of pride...have come into formal fellowship of the Church costly meeting houses have been erected, church choirs have been established, the one man pastorate has been inaugurated, man-made playthings, in the shape of musical instruments, have been introduced into the worship, money basis societies have been organized.⁴⁷

"The reason why city churches gape for flutes, horns, and organs," he explained, "is because the opera...has educated them to it."⁴⁸

With such an outlook, Sommer assumed the editorship of an influential brotherhood journal, and faced a future in which his editorial policies were to contribute to the division of one religious body and the solidification of another.

The first public call for division in which Sommer was a major participant will be considered in a following chapter.

⁴⁷Sommer, "The Great Robbery," OR., XXXI (July 12, 1888), p. 1.

⁴⁸Editorial item, OR., XXX (October 13, 1887), p. 4.

CHAPTER VI:

BROTHERHOOD EDITOR

One of the early historians of the Disciple movement perceptively commented that "there can be no doubt about the fact that, from the beginning of the movement to the present time, the chief authority in regard to all important questions has been the Disciples press..."¹ One of the most perceptive historians of the Disciples has recently added that "The simplest, and probably the best, way to trace the course of Disciples history is to study the editors and periodicals of the church... From an institutional point of view, the history of . . . the papers is pretty largely the history of the movement."² Still another historian (himself the son of one of the most influential editors in the "middle period" of Disciples history) explains: "In the absence of any general organization and of any opportunity for face-to-face contact... on more than a local scale, the publication of periodicals was the chief means of developing and directing the common mind."³

One of the better discussions of the role of periodical influence among the Disciples asserts that, "By 1866, and perhaps for several years

.....¹William Thomas Moore, A Comprehensive History of the Disciples Of Christ (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1909) p. 699.

.....²David Edwin Harrell, Jr., The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ, 1865-1900 (A Social History of the Disciples of Christ, Volume II; Atlanta: Publishing Systems, Inc., 1973), pp. 16-17. Harrell stated that W.T. Moore's "summary of the papers is still the best" (n. 65, p. 355).

³Winfred Ernest Garrison, Religion Follows the Frontier (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), p. 148.

before Alexander Campbell's death, the most influential Disciples journal was the American Christian Review, edited by Benjamin Franklin." ⁴ In the opinion of the Churches of Christ preacher and historian, Earl West, Franklin was "doubtlessly, the most popular preacher in the church after Alexander Campbell."⁵ Franklin had founded the Review in 1856, and continued as editor until the time of his death at Anderson, Indiana, on November 23, 1878.

Franklin's influence on his young protege, Daniel Sommer, has been discussed previously. ⁶ After Sommer declined Franklin's offer to recommend him to a church offering a significantly greater amount of financial support than Sommer was receiving at that time, Sommer received a letter from Franklin, dated May 30, 1878 which contained this advice:

I am aiming to open the way for some one to get ready to fill my place when I am gone...I am not certain the man has appeared for the place. Of course, I mean my place in the Review.

I know one man in whom I have the fullest confidence, who has the education, the reading and ability, but I doubt his having the endurance for the amount of labor it would involve. When I say "in whom I have the confidence," I mean a man who will stand to the original—the apostolic ground. I allude to Bro. Bittle.

The only thing I can now do is to open the way for a man to make himself a record, to write himself into the confidence of the friends of the truth . . . so as to be ready when I go hence to take the helm. I have recently thought of you as follows:

1. You are young—twenty-eight years.
2. You have the appearance of good health—a good bodily frame for endurance.
3. You have the energy and industry, the perseverance and determination.
4. You have sufficient education.
5. You have had severe experience for one your age.

⁴Harrell, p. 17.

.....⁵Earl Irvin West, The Search For the Ancient Order: A History of The Restoration Movement, 1849-1906 (Volume II; 1866-1906; Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), p. 157.

⁶See Chapter III at pp. 30, 31, and Chapter IV at pp. 24-28.

6. I believe you intend to maintain the faith.

I have nothing to propose, only this, that you commence writing with a view to making yourself a writer; and, as I said above, write yourself into the confidence of the brethren, so that they may look to you to defend the faith. You know, of course, that I am not a proprietor in the Review concern, but simply edit for a salary and for the good of the cause. Bro. Rice is not a proprietor, but only a clerk. The real proprietor is silent...

If you can commence to write so as to make an impression, to call attention and gain confidence, you can soon command some support...It will take time . . . take and maintain the most radical ground, you will succeed. I do not mean to be an extremist or an ultraist, but most decidedly a gospel man, as I think you are. Take hold of departures wherever you see them. In a word, defend the truth.

You might write some essays...; but keep your eye on living issues. Write on things as they come up...Try your hand and see what you can do. Be true, and you shall find in me the abiding friend on whom you can rely.

As ever, yours,
BENJ. FRANKLIN⁷

Franklin's reference to the silent proprietor was an allusion to the fact during the financial panic of 1873, the Review had been purchased by a Cincinnati businessman, Edwin Alden, to keep it from being swamped with about \$15,000 of indebtedness. He was to have no say in the editorial affairs of the paper, but could advertise freely in its pages, provided such advertisements were in harmony with general principles of morality and good taste. Historian Earl West, who gives a detailed account of the intricacies of the purchase, states that "This arrangement proved very satisfactory. In spite of the fact that he was not a member of the church, his relations to Ben Franklin and Rice during those years was very cordial."⁸

Naturally, Sommer proceeded to follow Franklin's advice with all diligence, and submitted to Franklin a series of articles entitled

⁷Franklin to Sommer, May 50, 1878. This letter was published by Sommer in the Review, soon after he assumed the position of editor. See "History," ACR, XXX;9 (March 3, 1887), p. 65.

⁸West, II, 306.

"Educating Preachers." Before the articles were published, however, Franklin died—well before the brethren's confidence in Sommer as a future editor had been widely established.⁹ After Franklin's death, Sommer began correspondence with G.W. Rice, who then occupied the position of "publisher" of the Review, to establish what Sommer assumed to be his claim to the editorial chair, complete with Franklin's approval. Rice replied, on November 11, 1878, and confirmed Franklin's comment about Alden's relationship with the paper:

Mr. Alden has nothing to do with the editorial management of the A.C.R., that matter is in my hands; and he does not interfere with my arrangements in the management of the paper.¹⁰

Rice then disclosed the delicateness of his position, stating that "Bro. Franklin's death placed me in an unpleasant relation to the brethren who have been contributing, for several years, as assistant editors," and stating that the rivalry between John F. Rowe and J.A. Headington was severe enough that if either one was appointed as editor that the other would resign from the paper.¹¹ A week later, Rice further revealed that "the future of the Review is at present uncertain. . . There are many rivals in the field."¹² At this time Rice declined to include

⁹These articles commenced with the issue dated October 29, 1878. By that time, Franklin had been dead nearly a week.

¹⁰Rice to Sommer, November 11, 1879, published in Sommer, "History," p. 65. See also Rice, "Bro. Franklin's Successor," ACR XXI:46 (November 12, 1878), p. 364.

¹¹Rowe would continue as staff writer on the Review until his attempt to buy the Review in 1886 failed and he started a rival paper (discussed below at nn. 21-23). Headington was one of Franklin's biographers.

¹²Rice to Sommer, November 18, 1879. This letter was not published with the remaining correspondence in Sommer's article on "History," but is in the material received by the author from William E. Wallace, which is now at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

Sommer, even as assistant editor, but also included the information that "Headington I think will withdraw" but that Rowe was not considered a suitable alternative. Rice said:

Rowe can write a very readable sketch, after he has got the materials, many of which he got out of books already in print, and he can write readable articles . . . But that is far short of what is expected and indeed demanded of the chief writer of the Review. There are controversies to manage, upholding the right against the wrong and many other things to attend to as we go along week by week. It is not an easy and enviable task...I doubt Bro. Rowe's ability at present to equal these things . . . he is not fond of controversy . . .¹³

Six months later, Rice repeated similar sentiments about Rowe, saying that

. Bro. Rowe, the chief writer,-thinks he could do better [as editor—SW] but from my long acquaintance with him, I think he can't. He has nothing to do with the making up and other management of the concern...I pulled him down off the fence about missionary societies, and conventions and the organ question . . .¹⁴

L.F. Bittle, who according to Franklin's May 30, 1878 letter to Sommer would have been his choice to succeed him had he been sufficiently healthy, recalled years later that, after spending "two weeks in company with Bro. Franklin shortly before his death," Franklin had sent Bittle a letter which revealed his state of opinion at that time. In the letter, dated September 21, 1878 (only a month before Franklin's death), Franklin charged that "Rowe is the same color of the bush he is in."¹⁵

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Rice to Sommer, May 3, 1879, quoted in Sommer, "History," p. 65.

¹⁵L.F. Bittle, "The Conspiracy," ACR, XXX:8 (February 24, 1887), p. 60. According to Earl West, Rowe had by 1895 adopted the insipid position that he would "worship with a 'small organ,' but not, 'O ye Gods,' said Rowe, a large one"! (II, 315). This attitude, according to West, was the reason for Rowe's being placed by Franklin at the "foot of the list," after Bittle, Sommer, Headington, and others, as candidates for the assumption of the Review's editorial responsibilities (ibid.)

Bittle admitted that "four or five years before his death Bro. Rowe was brother Franklin's choice to succeed him," but that it was also true that Franklin, shortly before his death, "wrote Br. Rowe a strong appeal—a letter of exhortation - - - in which he says: 'I have had confidence in you as I never had in any other man.'" ¹⁶ Bittle then proceeded to relate things that he had "kept concealed," charging that letters written by Franklin were "manipulated into an immediate endorsement" of Rowe, thus allowing Rowe to assume Franklin's editorial mantle, ostensibly with the departed editor's blessings. Bittle explained that he had kept silent in the interim because "we did not wish to seem to be in Bro. Rowe's way," and that he was "willing to condone everything if the future would prove that John F. Rowe would be true to the Review, and to the best interests of the kingdom of God." He added that he "did not seek" the editorship of the paper, stating that "the onerous and responsible work editing a paper in this carping age was gladly left to other hands."¹⁷

Thus, despite the deep-seated reservations of Rice, Bittle, and others close to the inner workings of the paper, Rowe became Franklin's replacement as editor, with the acquiescence of Daniel Sommer.¹⁸

From The Octograph to the Octographic Review

Sommer's move from Pennsylvania to Ohio has been briefly recounted.

¹⁶Bittle, op.cit., p. 60.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸See Daniel Sommer, "The Present Editor," ACR, XXXI:48 (November 26, 1878), p. 377, in which Sommer said of Rowe: "...treat him fairly and the merit of his pen will, at least, command the respect of those whose affections it may not win. As for *my own* part, I fully propose to increase his number of readers whenever I can, and assist him in filling his columns with the clearest, concisest, soundest articles which my youthful pen can produce."

In 1883, he and L.F. Bittle began a small monthly paper which Bittle titled Octograph (from the Greek, "writings of eight") a reference to the eight authors of the New Testament which he felt would indicate its authors' intentions to heed Franklin's advice and stand "on apostolic ground."¹⁹

By 1886, Edwin Alden had lost enough money on the Review enterprise (\$15,000 according to one historian)²⁰ that he sought to sell it. Without consulting either Rice or Rowe (which he was not obligated to do as owner of the paper) he began negotiations with two other businessmen who were not associated with the Restoration Movement. Feeling that they had been slighted, Rowe and Rice somehow induced a Presbyterian preacher in Cincinnati to write an editorial accusing Alden of manipulating the paper and embezzling money. Perhaps the only plausible explanation for this action is that provided by Earl West: to see it as an attempt by Rowe to pressure Alden into selling him the paper for \$9000, considerably less than its worth.²¹ The editorial appeared in the August 26, 1886 issue, and within three weeks (in the September 16 issue) Rice announced that, rather than achieving his end, Rowe had been removed as editor.

When an Indiana, native, W.B.F. Treat, was announced as the new editor with the next issue, Rowe proceeded with all deliberate speed to found a new paper, the Christian Leader which appeared for the first time dated October 7, 1886, and identical in appearance and physical lay-out to the Review. He also took with him the subscription lists, and several of the Review staff, including Rice and Alfred Ellmore, a staff writer of long standing. J. L. Richardson, brother of Alexander Campbell's biographer,

¹⁹"United," Octographic Review, XXX:12 (March 24, 1887), p. 89.

²⁰West, II, 306.

²¹Ibid.

Robert Richardson, was listed as the publisher.²² Several other staff writers took similar positions with other papers, urging readers to discontinue their subscriptions and subscribe instead to the alternate journals. Needless to say, this did not promote peace and brotherly kindness among the former co-workers on the Review.²³

Ironically, the proposed sale which ignited the feud did not materialize, and Treat announced in an editorial item in December that a "prominent evangelist" was engaged in negotiations with the owner in an attempt to purchase the Review. The issue of December 23 carried a large picture of Franklin on the front, and contained the news that his young protege, Daniel Sommer, had purchased the paper. His name appeared on the masthead as "proprietor and publisher."²⁴

Sommer did not wait long to make significant changes in the Review. Beginning with the March 24, 1887 issue, Sommer changed the name to Octographic Review,²⁵ and in an attempt to "clean up" the paper, removed

²²Ibid. See also Sommer, "Journalistic Judgement," ACR, XXX:9 (March 3, 1887), p. 65, and Alfred Ellmore, "Wheat and Chaff," Christian Leader, 1:11 (March 15, 1887), p. 4.

²³W.H. Krutsinger, of Ellettsville, Indiana, had written Indiana Church news for the Review on several occasions. When he transferred to the Gospel Advocate and urged Review readers to do likewise, he became embroiled in a controversy between Sommer and several members of the Advocate staff, which will be discussed later. Earl West records that "the Christian Messenger, Published at Bonham, Texas, carried an article directing the old readers of the American Christian Review to subscribe to the [Christian—SW] Leader [Rowe's new paper—SW], a statement that solicited strong resentment from Treat. These petty differences, however, were indicative of things to come" (II, 509) .

²⁴Sommer's own account of the acquiring of the Review is from the perspective of twenty years later. It was printed and reprinted in the Review several times, and is recorded in William E. Wallace, Daniel Sommer, 1850-1940: A Biography (n. p., 1969), pp. 159-162.

²⁵Sommer felt that the name "Christian" was too sacred to use with reference to any human enterprise and that "American" was too local. The

all of the advertising which had filled its pages during the days of Alden's ownership. With the previous issue (March 17, 1887) the Review bade

farewell to all patent nostrums, and patent rights generally; farewell to bogus land companies, bogus physicians, and bogus arrangements generally; farewell to . . . beautiful prophecies about gray hair or a bald head; farewell to corsets for binding women's bodies, . . . farewell to every advertisement that will make an editor shrug his shoulders, a publisher's conscience twitch, a reader shake his head.

The Review likewise bids farewell to slang, ridicule, burlesque, scurrility... We hope the next number will be so beautifully free from everything objectionable that its readers will not be ashamed of it, even on Sundays.²⁶

The only exception to this policy would be railroad timetables, and these "will be expunged if deception can be therein found."²⁷

But even before Sommer changed the physical makeup of the Review, he waded into controversy with his brethren on other journals, waging war on several fronts.

Allusion has been made to the fact that the Review lost many staff members when Rowe departed. George W. Rice was quickly reclaimed,²⁸ but

change of name elicited this sarcastic comment from the editorial staff of the Christian Standard, with whose personnel the Review staff would soon be in combat, "It is to be hoped that none will claim that this is the outcome of seeking Bible names for Bible things." (CS, XXII:17 [April 23, 1887], p. 133).

²⁶"The Review's Farewell," ACR, XXX:11 (March 17, 1887), p. 81. To underscore his point, Sommer printed several complaints from patrons who had been taken in by the false promises of such advertisements ("Secular Advertisements," OR, XXX:16 [May 5, 1887], p. 1, and OR, XXX:23 [June 23, 1887], p. 1). Sommer also re-emphasized his position on slang by warning prospective contributors to the Review's columns that such would not be tolerated. While "the office editor and publisher of the Review does not claim entire sanctification for himself on this question," he warned that "neither slang, nor slangy utterances of any sort" should be used "by those writing for the Review's readers." Particularly abhorrent was the use of "balderdash" ("What We Find," ACR, XXX:1 [January 6, 1887] p. 1).

²⁷Editorial item, ACR, XXX:11 (March 17, 1887), p. 81; and "The Review's Farewell," ibid.

²⁸See Rice, "Why I Am Now on the Review," and "My Impressions," OR XXX:24 (June 20, 1887), p. 1.

Sommer wasted no time in pursuing those others whom he felt had wronged the Review in departing.

John F. Rowe was his first target. Armed with a knowledge of the conditions which allowed Rowe to assume the editorship more than eight years before, and spurred by Rowe's charges that the Review was still under "Outside control" and that Sommer had been deceived in thinking he was sole owner,²⁹ Sommer launched forth with the accusation that Rowe had stolen the subscription list of the Review. Sommer wrote to a number of religious and secular papers, stating his version of the story without naming Rowe specifically, and published the replies of the various editors.³⁰ Sommer then proceeded to publish past correspondence which passed between himself, Rice, Bittle, and others shortly before and after Franklin's death.³¹

David Lipscomb sought to act as the peacemaker by suggesting that the Leader and the Review were needed too much in the North and Midwest to damage their influence by a perpetual feud,³² opining that even the combined subscriptions, of the two could not support one paper.³³

²⁹West, II, 310-311.

³⁰See "Journalistic Judgement," ACR, XXX:9 [March 3, 1887], p. 65.

³¹Sommer, "History," op. cit.

³²That Sommer did not intend a perpetual feud is evidenced by his public apology for accidentally allowing something to be printed in the paper after promising to let the matter with Rowe and the Leader cease. Said he, "Our readers will pardon this. We propose to be true to our promise to let the controversy end. The Review's duty with reference thereto is done, and we rest the case" (Editorial item, ACR, XXX:10 [March 10, 1887], p. 73).

³³In this opinion Lipscomb was manifestly incorrect. A perusal of the subscription list for the year 1887, obtained for the author by L.A. Stauffer of Indianapolis from Daniel's daughter Bessie (who was the office manager of the Review for many years) indicates that Sommer purchased a

However, not all of the members of the Advocate staff were as conciliatory. When Sommer discussed two alternative ways of dealing with the use of instrumental music, stating that he would go anywhere to preach, even where the instrument was used, so long as he could preach his convictions, James A. Harding, a senior member of the staff and prominent evangelist, launched into a vitriolic review of Sommer's suggestion.³⁴ Lipscomb printed Harding's comments, on the front page of the Advocate, even though, in the words of his biographer, "Lipscomb advocated the same" position as did Sommer.³⁵

Fuel was added to the fire as the two men exchanged articles.³⁶ In the meantime, a former contributor to the Review, W.H. Krutsinger of

list of over 8,000 subscriptions—a reasonably good list, even when compared to like papers published among Churches of Christ today. The fact is that both the Review and the Leader survived and grew during the ensuing years. According to a tabulation of the subscription list for the 1924 Review, the paid subscriptions approached 10,000—indicating a much larger reading audience. When Sommer first aspired to the editorship of the Review, he was told by its founder that "if there are 8,000 subscribers, there are not less than 24,000 readers" (Franklin to Sommer, May 31, 1878, reproduced in Sommer, "History," op. cit.). Lipscomb's article was titled "A Friendly Suggestion," (GA, XXIX:4 [January, 26, 1887], p. 54).

³⁴Sommer, "Which is the More Excellent Way?" (ACR, XXX:5 [February 3, 1887], p. 33; Harding, "A Very Dangerous Article," GA, XXIX:10 March 9, 1887, p. 145; and "The More Excellent Way: A Reply to Bro. Sommer," (GA XXIX:11 [March 16, 1887], p. 173. "Knowing that nothing so clearly approximates the power of truth as persecuted error, we will preach . . . any . . . place this side of the very door of Hades or the brink of Gehenna. But we will not go there to make a display of "magnificent English",...we will go to preach the unsearchable riches. In a Romish cathedral, or a Free-thinkers Hall, or a court-house, or a senate-chamber, or even a lager-beer saloon - - - anywhere on God's footstool—we will go as a door is opened, and preach the gospel, organ or no organ." Strangely, however, when Sommer "commenced preaching" at Richwood, Ohio, where he then lived, "for some reason the organ ceased sending forth, its melodious sounds."

.....³⁵West,II, 315. For West's full-length biography of Lipscomb see The Life and Times of David Lipscomb (Henderson, Tennessee: Religious Book Service 1954; originally a Butler University School of Religion thesis) .

³⁶Sommer replied to Harding's objections in "Publisher's Paragrams," OR, XXX:13 (April 6, 1887), p. 1. For the view of the matter from Harding's

nearby Ellettsville, Indiana, added his own opinion that

There is no more any American Christian Review. The paper that Franklin founded and run (sic) until his death is a thing of the past. The best you can do now- is take and read the Gospel Advocate. Try it once. It is only \$1.50 per annum.³⁷

This, of course, was one of the unkindest things one could have said about Sommer and his paper, as he fancied himself as Franklin's successor. Sommer replied by referring to this as a "peculiarly unfortunate" instance of a "flagrant" violation of brotherly courtesy produced of "an evil inference;" but he concluded with these words:

In conclusion we wish to say that for the senior editor of the 'Advocate' we have...a very high regard. His paper we have always held in high esteem. For all connected with that journal we wish to entertain none but fraternal feelings...'Let there be no strife between me and thee for we are brethren.³⁸

It was with such fraternal feelings that Sommer assayed to issue two new "periodicals" shortly after he came to the influential position of editor of the Review: The Helper and the Tract Quarterly. The Tract Quarterly consisted of

sixteen pages in magazine form with cover, and will contain the most revolutionary articles of the Review...The purpose of the "Tract Quarterly" will be to give in the most convenient form for distribution such articles as will be most beneficial . . . for distribution among our misguided brethren and all others who need to be instructed in the right way.³⁹

point of view, see his grandson-in-law's sympathetic biography: Lloyd Cline Sears, The Eyes of Jehovah: The Life and Faith of James Alexander Harding (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1970) pp. 35 ff. Harding and Sommer "hurled their criticisms back and forth for years" (West, II, 317). Before long, others on Advocate staff were drawn into the controversy. See "Miscellaneous," GA, XXIX:20 (May 18, 1887), p. 315.

³⁷W.H. Krutsinger, "Items From Indiana," GA, XXIX:20 (May 18, 1887), p. 311.

³⁸"Peculiarly Unfortunate" OR XXX:19 (May 26, 1887) n. 1

³⁹ "Prospectus of the Tract Quarterly," Tract Quarterly, I:1 (January 1889) n. 15

Sommer was especially interested in providing yet another medium to express his opposition to institutions of higher education which were supported by the church, and which Sommer felt were supplanting the church in its divine mission of educating preachers.⁴⁰

Sommer sought his own way of assisting those who aspired to preach or otherwise serve the church. With the first number of The Helper, explained his purpose:

The Helper . . . is altogether unpretentious and yet altogether significant. Through these columns I propose to HELP my fellow-servants in the Church of Christ, whether they be bishops, deacons, unofficial teachers or public proclaimers called preachers or evangelists.⁴¹

Both of the publications were shortlived. The Helper had a measure of "planned obsolescence" since it was designed to continue only two years from the beginning.⁴² The Tract Quarterly had lasted until the last quarter of 1893, for a total of five years, during which time its editor had printed and distributed "probably twenty thousand or more copies."⁴³

Sommer thus displayed quite early in his editorial career that his opinions on most matters were fixed and unlikely to be altered, as well as the fact that he was unafraid of following his predecessor's advice to "take hold of some formidable men and publications and handle them with a master hand,"⁴⁴ or, at least with a heavy hand. Sommer showed this

⁴⁰The roots and manifestations of Sommer's antipathy toward preachers educated in colleges operated by church members are intricate and will be discussed in a succeeding chapter.

⁴¹"Conclusion," The Helper, 11:6 (November, 1890), p. 15. The Helper, unlike the Tract Quarterly, was issued every other month, six times a year. The only complete sets of these publications known to the author are the bound volumes in the possession of the CTS library.

⁴²Ibid. ⁴³"Notes to Our Readers," IQ, V:4 (October, 1893), p. 12.

⁴⁴Franklin to Sommer, May 20, 1878, on file.

tendency not only as a fledgling editor, but in his personal preaching and his debating career, soon to commence. While he had purchased a sizable list of readers, the Review; was still somewhat insecure in the minds of many readers, as well as financially insecure. But Sommer soon was to call attention to himself as "a gospel man" maintaining "the most radical ground."

In the following chapter we will recount the beginnings of Sommer's career as a public controversialist.

^{4s}Ibid.

CHAPTER VII:

THE EMERGENCE OF A CONTROVERSIALIST

The year 1889 was a monumental one in Disciples history, for it was during this year that the first public, formal call for the dissolution of the tenuous ties of brotherhood association which had bound Campbell-Stone movement together for more than half a century was made.¹ The year was also a watershed in the life of Daniel Sommer, for it was he who made that call at a gathering of several thousand church members near Shelbyville, Illinois. The year thus symbolizes the beginning of Sommer's long career of public religious controversy. But Sand Creek was not the beginning.

Miller-Sommer Debate

Earlier in the year, Sommer had formally begun his career of religious warfare by engaging in public debate a champion of the German Baptist Brethren, Robert H. Miller.² With one exception,³ this was Sommer's first

¹Arthur Van Murrell, "The Effects of Exclusivism in the Separation of the Churches of Christ from the Christian Church," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1972), pp. 118-122; but cf. p. 222ff.; Louis Cochran and Bess White Cochran, Captives of the Word (Garden City, New York; Doubleday, 1969), pp. 205-206; and Leroy Garrett, "Is August 17, 1889 the Birthday of the Church of Christ?", Restoration Review, XVII:1 (January, 1975), pp. 6-9.

²The Miller and Sommer Debate, reported by James Abbott (Mount Morris, Illinois: The Brethren's Publishing Company, 1889). The debate took place at Rockingham, Ray County, Missouri, March 20-23, 1889.

³Sommer related an incident in which a debate which he began "some years ago" terminated after one night (Debate, p. 5).

activity in public religious discussion since his Bethany College days and his encounter with Champ Clark, later Speaker of the House of Representatives.⁴ Sommer did not carry much notice of the debate in his paper, and apparently had misgivings about the whole idea prior to the discussion. In one of the few short items concerning the debate which were carried in the Review, he said, "Debating will be a new experience for me and I have no idea that it will be enjoyable. I don't think that I will enjoy being confuted, nor enjoy confuting the other fellow, unless he be impudent."⁵ But he stood too much within the tradition of Alexander Campbell (who declared soon after his first debating experiences that "a week's debating is worth a year's preaching")⁶ to refuse any such opportunity. Certainly, it must not have proven too much of a burden for a man who was to characterize himself many years later as "a soldier by nature" who regarded "books on military exploits" as a "natural delight."⁷

In Miller, Sommer found a man of quite similar disposition; indeed, a man who, confiding to a colleague, admitted that he had not only a "combative nature," but a "retaliative spirit of which I have a little too much to keep always in subjection . . ."⁸ Unlike Sommer, however, Miller was

⁴See Chapter 4, at nn. 22-25.

⁵"Publisher's Paragrams," OR XXXII:13 (March 28, 1889), p. 1.

⁶Quoted in Earl West, Search for the Ancient Order: A History of The Restoration Movement, 1849-1906 (Vol. I, 1849-1865; Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), p. 66.

⁷Sommer, diary entry, January 29, 1935. The author is indebted to William E. Wallace for the generous loan of this diary, which has now been placed in the Disciples of Christ Society facilities in Nashville (xerox copy in author's possession). Paradoxically, Sommer was to write at about the same time, "I am not a natural debater, nor have I debated enough to learn much about that business." ("A Record of My Life—No. 26," ACR, LXXXV:23 (November 5, 1940), p. 9.

⁸Miller, letter to a Dr. Balsbaugh, quoted in Jay Johnson, "A

quite experienced in debating, having had as many as "two-score" ⁹ debates, including "no less than twelve formal discussions" ¹⁰ and "probably . . . many informal debates that have never been recorded." ¹¹ At least eight of his known public debates were with representatives of the Disciples movement, ¹² according to an historian of Miller's own group, who said that Miller's debate with Sommer was "his last and perhaps one of his strongest debates."¹³ Another Brethren historian has written that "the Brethren had the distinct impression that Miller had the best of the debate,"¹⁴ and perhaps the best known Brethren historian, Donald F. Durnbaugh, concurs in that judgement: "the Brethren seem to have felt that they won out in the exchange."¹⁵

Study of the Doctrinal Debates Carried on by Leaders of the Church of the Brethren and Leaders of Other Denominations between 1850 and 1900," (unpublished B.D. thesis, Bethany Biblical Seminary, 1943), p. 56.

⁹Debate, p. 5. Sommer commented: "_____this is my first discussion, and I have understood that the elderly gentleman, who represents the other side, has had quite a number. Somebody said two-score. I hardly credit "that; but be that as it may, he has had quite a number and has the advantage before the public as a disputant..."

¹⁰"Death of Eld. R.H. Miller," Gospel Messenger, XX:11 (March 15, 1892), p. 1. I am indebted to Matthew C. Morrison for allowing me to examine xerox copies of this and other issues of the Gospel Messenger which were provided for him by David B. Eller of Bethany Theological Seminary, Oak Brook, Illinois (letter from Eller to Morrison, June 14, 1971), pp. 1-2. (copies xeroxed by the author at Athens, Georgia, August 14, 1973).

¹¹Johnson, p. 58.

¹²Ibid., pp. 54-58.

¹³Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁴Eller, p. 1.

¹⁵Letter to Morrison, June 23, 1971, p. 1. Further inquiry by the author produced no additional information (letter to Durnbaugh, February 27, 1974; Durnbaugh, reply to author, March 19, 1974). For a general discussion of the history of the Church of the Brethren, see Durnbaugh's The Church of the Brethren Past and Present (Elgin, Illinois: Brethren Press, 1971).

This was certainly the opinion among Miller's contemporaries, including his biographer, who said that "within two years there were fifty accessions to the Church of the Brethren, while the church represented by; Daniel Sommer had barely held its own." ¹⁶ Indeed, "the church was . . . pleased by the outcome of the debate...[and] gained considerably in membership."¹⁷

It is certainly true that much more notice was given in the pages of the Gospel Messenger than in the Review, and that it was the Brethren who published the debate, and advertised it heavily in their paper.¹⁸ Of course, this was to be expected since they considered Miller to be "a very able man...who enjoyed debating very much and was quite capable...; who was "one of the most active and versatile of the Brethren of his day" whose "influence was strongly felt in the shaping of the general church policies," and who, above all, "loved debating, and who was, in fact, "the most active of all Dunkard debaters."¹⁹ A recent historian of the Brethren has concurred in the judgement that "he was probably the best debater the Brethren were able to field at this time."²⁰

¹⁶Otho Winger, The Life of Elder R.H. Miller (Elgin, Illinois: Brethren Publishing House, 1910), p. 38.

¹⁷Eller, p. 2.

¹⁸"The Miller and Sommer Debate," Gospel Messenger, XXVII:19 (May 7, 1889), p. 296; see also in the same periodical the issues from April 2, 1889 to April 30, 1889, pp. 216, 232-33, 248-49, 264-66, and 280-81. Sommer commented on the circumstances of publication in this manner: "But the German Baptists controlled the printing of it, and for some reason printed only a small edition. I agreed to take two hundred copies, and when they were sold I could not get any more. And I was informed that the German Baptist leaders were soon found gathering up copies they had sold and destroying them! I was not surprised at that report." ("A Record of My Life—No. 25," ACR, LXXXV:22 [October 22, 1940], p. 6) .

¹⁹Johnson pp. 48 51 54 58

²⁰Eller, p. 2.

The debate was well attended by various prominent German Baptists,²¹ but as with most religious discussions, who did in fact gain the "upper hand" is open to some dispute. The church of the Brethren in Rockingham had experienced good growth before the debate,²² and how much effect the debate had on either religious group in the county is impossible to ascertain. It is certain that Sommer would never acknowledge defeat, and said years later that even though he was not thoroughly versed in German Baptist doctrine, he "knew the Bible quite well" and "even then I knew it [Dunkard doctrine—SW] so well that I have not been called on for any other debate with any of that particular sect."²³ Sommer certainly had the advantage of youthful health, while "Miller's health was never too strong,"²⁴ and at age 63, Miller was still in the throes of an illness incurred the previous winter; he would live less than three years after the debate.²⁵

²¹Gospel Messenger, XXVII:14 (April 2, 1889), p. 216.

²²See S.B. Shirky, "Growth and Development of Northern Missouri District," Gospel Messenger, XLVII:45 (November 7, 1908), p. 708. The historian of that district has said that "This church had a rapid growth from the beginning, indeed so rapid that at one time it held the proud distinction of having the most rapid growth of any church of this denomination, west of the Mississippi River." (Ernest R. Vanderau, "A Historical Compilation of the District of Northern Missouri," [unpublished B.D. thesis, Bethany Biblical Seminary, 1945], p. 245).

²³"Concerning the Doctrine of So-Called 'Trine Immersion,'" AR, LX:47 (November 20, 1917), p. 1. See also A.M. Morris (a close associate of Sommer), "That Debate," OR, XXXII:16 (April 18, 1889), pp. 4-5.

²⁴Johnson, p. 53.

²⁵"Death of...Miller," p. 1. Miller was born June 7, 1825 and died March 8, 1892. For an account of his ill health immediately prior to the Sommer debate, see Report of the Proceedings of the Brethren's Annual Meeting, Harrisonburg, Virginia, June 11-15, 1889, pp. 127-128; and Debate, pp. 551-532.

The Sand Creek Address

The first formal, public call for the dissolution of the tenuous ties of brotherhood unity which had been maintained since the merger of the Stone-Campbell movement in 1832 was read by Daniel Sommer.²⁶ Although composed by P.P. Warren, and elder in the Sand Creek, Illinois, church, it was Sommer who suggested several changes in the manuscript and who read the "declaration" following and "address" on Sunday morning August 17, 1889.²⁷ The place was a shady church yard set amid the open and rolling corn and wheat fields of south-central Illinois, at a place called Sand Creek, ten miles from Shelbyville Illinois, near the small village of Windsor. The occasion was a traditional "homecoming" gathering which annually drew large crowds. Estimates of the crowd that day range from 5,000 to 6,000.²⁸ According to an informal account of the events surround-

²⁶For a perceptive discussion of the means by which a supposedly loose collection of independent congregations came to divide, see Harrell, Quest For a Christian America: A Social History of the Disciples of Christ (Volume I: Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866; Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), p. 9, n. 12; and The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ, 1865-1900 (A Social History of the Disciples of Christ, Volume II; Atlanta: Publishing Systems, Inc., 1973) pp. 6-7, 326.

²⁷Morrison is incorrect in asserting that "at the time of the address, Sommer was not certain who authored the declaration?" ("Daniel Sommer's Seventy Years of Preaching," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1972), p. 137, n. 3. In sworn testimony given during the trial over the Sand Creek property fifteen years later, Sommer made it clear that he not only knew beforehand who wrote the document, but suggested several minor alterations. (Transcript of "The case of Christian Church of Sand Creek v. J.K.P. Rose et. al." Case #4424, Illinois Supreme Court, February term, 1906, p. 716). This 1638-page transcript was microfilmed for the author by the Illinois State Supreme Court Archives.

²⁸The most colorful account of the gathering is found in W. Carl Ketcherside, "The Sand Creek Address," Mission Messenger, XXIV:2 (February, 1962), pp. 1-14; and "Brothers at Law," Mission Messenger, XXIV:3 (March, 1962), pp. 1-10. The only other detailed account of the gathering is in Morrison, who relies quite heavily upon Ketcherside's version. ("Daniel Sommer's Seventy Years of Religious Controversy," pp. 135-165). The

ing this momentous occasion,

Daniel Sommer faced the large audience. There were few of them he had not met. They had driven long distances to hear him in the past. He was the recognized defender of orthodoxy and his position was the more glamorous now that he was editor of the paper which Benjamin Franklin had started and which he employed with such vigor to battle every tendency at departure from the scriptural pattern. On this day Daniel Sommer was in his physical prime. He took great pride in stopping by the blacksmith shop and lifting with one hand a piece of iron which taxed most men to lift with both hands. His deep voice carried without break or quaver to the remote limits of the crowd. His subject was "Innovations in the Church" and he was thoroughly conversant with the material. He left no doubt in the minds of the hearers that 'there is no law human or divine which innovators hold themselves bound to respect in dealing with those who oppose their devices.' He knew of but one scriptural solution - - - formal division!²⁹

After the morning discourse was concluded, Elder Warren arose and made some brief comments, whereupon he read the "Address and Declaration: which had been discussed and signed the previous day by representatives of the surrounding churches."³⁰

biographer of one of Sommer's later associates, W.W. Otey, has expressed doubt at the figure reported for the attendance (Cecil Willis, "The Saga of Daniel Sommer (I)," TRUTH Magazine, XIV:45 [September 24, 1970], pp. 5-6). Willis' biography of Otey, originally a Butler University School of Religion thesis, is now published as W.W. Otey: Contender for the Faith (Akron, Ohio: by the author, 1964). Several visits to the sight of the Sand Creek meeting house (during July, August, and September, 1973) have made it apparent to the author that there would easily have been sufficient room for the number described, and their horses, mules, carriages, wagons, etc. The church yard, while not that large itself, was bounded on all sides by property owned by members of the congregation (see plat map of Windsor Township, in Atlas of Shelby Co. and the State of Illinois [Chicago, Warner and Beers, 1875], p. 57). For other brief accounts of the Sand Creek Declaration, see Louis Cochran and Bess White Cochran, Captives of the Word (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969), pp. 204-206; and Henry K. Shaw, Hoosier Disciples: A Comprehensive History of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana (St Louis: Bethany Press, 1966), pp. 272-274.

²⁹Ketcherside, "Brothers at Law," p. 2.

³⁰The "Address and Declaration" was first published, along with Sommer's remarks, in the Octographic Review, XXXII:36 (September 5, 1889), pp. 1- 8; and the Tract Quarterly, 1:4 (October, 1889), entire issue (pp. 1-16). The "Address and Declaration" by itself has been reproduced many places (and is included in this thesis as Appendix A). See, for instance,

The title of document was self-consciously designed by its authors to allude to one of the great "charter documents" of the movement, the "Declaration and Address," written by Thomas Campbell in 1809.³¹ This document has been called "one of the greatest documents which American Christianity has produced" by a pre-eminent American church historian.³² The content of the two documents were certainly not the same, however. While Campbell had written his document as an instrument to aid in the uniting of those in the various denominations, Sommer's address called for the separation of those who sought the apostolic order from those who promoted the "innovations" which in his mind were perverting the Church of Christ and the movement to restore the New Testament church. These innovations consisted largely of "church festivals, instrumental music,

P.P. Warren, "The Sand Creek. Address and Declaration," Christian Leader, 111:37 (September 10, 1889), p. 2; Alfred Ellmore, "Wheat and Chaff," Christian Leader, 111:51 (December 17, 1889), p. 4; Apostolic Review, LVIII:" 15-18 (April 13-May 4, 1915), pp. 1, 8, each issue; George D. Chafee et. al., eds., Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Shelby County, Volume II, (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company, 1910), pp. 745-746; N.S. Haynes, History of the Disciples of Christ in Illinois, 1819-1914 (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1915), pp. 651-655; Earl West, The Search For the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement, 1849-1906 (Volume II: 1866-1906; Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), pp. 450-432; William E. Wallace, Daniel Sommer, 1850-1940: A Biography (n.p., 1969), pp. 303-307; and Robert H. Brumback, A History of the Church Through the Ages (St. Louis: Mission Messenger, 1957), pp. 386-390 (p. 387 includes a good photograph of the Sand Creek building).

³¹For a copy of the "Declaration and Address," along with its companion document, "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery," with good commentary, see H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents (Volume I: 1607-1820; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), pp. 576-586; and the same documents, by title, with introduction by Frederick D. Kershner (St. Louis: the Bethany Press, 1960).

.....³²Sweet, "Campbell's Position in Church History," Christian-Evangelist LXXVI:56 (September 8, 1938), p. 060

choirs, societies, and the one-man pastorate." ³³ The document concluded with a plea and a warning:

It is, therefore, with the view, if possible, of counteracting the usages and practices that have crept into the churches, that this effort . . . is made, and, now, in closing up this address and declaration, we state that we are impelled from a sense of duty to state, that all such who are guilty of teaching, or allowing and practicing the many innovations and corruptions to which we have referred, that after being admonished and having had sufficient time that we can not and will not regard them as brethren.³⁴

"Actually," as is pointed out even by a Christian Church historian, "in the declaration, the editor of the Review was not requesting immediate disfellowship. He advocated warning the innovationists that if they did not mend their ways after 'sufficient time,' separation would result." ³⁵ Consequently, "the Christian-Evangelist and the Christian Standard gave it slight notice." ³⁶ After all, in a brotherhood of autonomous, independent congregations, what could any one man,

³³Shaw, p. 273.

³⁴Appendix A. It was from these brethren, assembled at Sand Creek, that Sommer obtained the balance of the \$12,000 owed to make the Review completely his own. See Allen Sommer, "Time Marches On," ACR, CX:1 (January-February-March, 1965), p. 16; West, II, 393-394; Ms. Gladys Ritchie, (retired Shelbyville, Illinois high school teacher now writing a history of Shelby County) oral interview with author, at Olney, Illinois, August 30, 1973; and Morrison, 159, who is probably correct in surmising that Sommer "probably made the appeal for money in the Sunday afternoon speech, since he is purposely vague about the content of that second speech, and it afforded an excellent opportunity to suggest a tangible response — something for the listeners to do after the morning's 'call to arms'"

³⁵Murrell, 121.

³⁶West, II, 433.

or even group of men, do in the absence of any central convention or headquarters? ³⁷ There was no unanimity of opinion about the proper course of action, even among those who agreed with the Review editor's opposition to the "innovations." Sommer's counterpart among the southern Churches of Christ, Gospel Advocate editor David Lipscomb, "objected to the delegate nature of the assembly at Sand Creek" ³⁸ (which Christian Church historians have been quick to point out was "not consistent with the position taken"), ³⁹ and so he too remained silent, even though he was much in sympathy with his Northern fellow-editor.⁴⁰ "As cries for disfellowship began to be heard, even from his own editorial staff, [Lipscomb's] reply was that he 'preferred to keep

³⁷See n. 26, and n. 8, Chapter II. Alfred Ellmore, former Review staffer who at the time was on Rowe's Christian Leader, listed four possible courses open to the conservatives: "1. Ask the 'progressive' men to return to our original plea in all things, viz., speak when the Bible speaks, and be silent when the Bible is silent. 2. The brethren who are yet loyal to this plea, leave it, and go with the party who declare us only a religious 'movement.' 3. Remain together as we are and go on in endless confusion and strife; or, 4. Separate and have peace. Now, let every thoughtful, loyal, praying man decide for himself, and so act. As to my own individual part, I have decided long ago, and intend to stand by my convictions and the word of God. ..." ("Wheat and Chaff," Christian Leader, 111:51 [December 17, 1889], p. 4). Ellmore was later dropped from the Leader after Rowe, about 1893, began to come more and more under the influence of the Christian-Evangelist, J. H. Garrison's pro-instrument paper, and adopted a "mediating" position on the instrument (see Chapter VI at nn. 15-16, 22-23, 28-31).

³⁸Murrell, 121.

³⁹Chaw 272

⁴⁰Murrell, 121.

the issues open ... [and he] urged patience because he believed more and more Disciples were 'seeing the evil of Society ways.'"⁴¹

By 1892, however, it became apparent to Sommer that those utilizing societies and instruments were not about to change, and as their course became clearer, it made his all the more obvious. He reprinted the Sand Creek Declaration, but this time suggested that those subscribing to its tenets go a step further, and insert a clause in the deed of any property they owned or purchased, restricting its usage exclusively to those opposing the innovations which were becoming increasingly widespread.⁴²

This time, the reaction from the opposition was immediate and unequivocal. Russell Errett, Christian Standard editor, compared Sommer's proposed course of action to the "Spanish Inquisition," and declared that "the churches should be put on their guard. They should know that Daniel Sommer has abandoned apostolic ground and is no more identified with the Disciples of Christ than Sidney Rigdon. He ought to go to his own place."⁴³ With the next issue, Errett formally called for a counter disfellowship procedure against Sommer by all

⁴¹Ibid., 121-122. Quotations are from Lipscomb, "He Wants To Divide," GA, XXXIII:4 (January 28, 1891), p. 49; and "Be Firm But Patient," GA, XXXIV:1 (January 7, 1892), p. 5.

⁴²OR, XXV:18 (May 3, 1892), p. 1.

⁴³"A Divisive Work," CS, XXVIII:25 (June 18, 1892), pp. 520-521. Rigdon was a follower of Alexander Campbell who later became involved with Joseph Smith and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons). See Joseph W. White, "The Influence of Sidney Rigdon Upon the Theology of Mormonism," (M.A. Thesis, University of Southern California, 1947).

churches agreeing with the Standard's position, endorsing an article which accused Sommer and those who agreed with him of "Playing cuckoo whenever they can, taking other:birds' nests and using them," and asking, "Do you advise that he not be allowed to use the churches for his tirades against the progressive Christianity we teach?"⁴⁴

•Errett replied tersely, "We do so advise, and without reservation."⁴⁵

Errett also demanded that Lipscomb and Rowe declare themselves on this question, stating that "The Christian Leader and Gospel Advocate owe it to the cause of Christ to let it be known that they have no sympathy whatever with Sommerism and Sand Creekism. At a time like this . . . silence is a shame. Nay, it is a crime."⁴⁶

Lipscomb, however, was not about to be pushed into lining up with anyone, least of all the Standard. He came to Sommer's defense, and came very near to endorsing the "creed in the deed" proposal, asking,

Where is the crime in that? It simply secures that property shall be used for the purposes for which it is given. . . .
How can an honest man object to this? To pervert property

⁴⁴A. B. Cunningham, "A Schismatic Work," CS, XXVIII:26 (June 25, 1892), p. 522 [sic - actually 542].

⁴⁵"Daniel Sommers [sic]," ibid., pp. 520-521 [sic - actually 540-541]. The Standard continued to carry articles condemning Sommer and those who stood with him. See "The Sand Creek Test of Fellowship," CS, XXVIII:30 (July 23, 1892), pp. 624-625; "To Whom It May Concern," CS, XXVIII:42 (October 15, 1892), p. 374; "Sectism and Anti-ism," CS, XXXII:32 (August 8, 1895 [sic - actually 1896]), p. 1029; "Supplementary," CS, XXXII:32 (August 8, 1896), p. 1019; "Joseph Franklin's Reply," CS, XXXII:40 (October 3, 1896), p. 1274; "To Joseph Franklin," CS, XXXII:40 (October 3, 1896), p. 1275; and "The Fruit of the Spirit of 'Anti-ism,'" CS, XXXIV:2 (January 8, 1896), p. 51.

⁴⁶Errett, "A Divisive Work," 521.

from the purpose for which it is given, is hardly honest. The frequency with which it is done makes it a prudent precaution to hinder it. The only hesitancy about recommending the course I have is, it looks like maintaining, if not propagating the faith by means of human laws; on this point my conscience is tender.⁴⁷

Lipscomb concluded:

Shame on the man that would . . . justify excluding a man from the fellowship of Christians, because he opposes bringing human opinions and inventions of man into the worship or service of God. . . . Judged by the authorities the Standard quotes, both human and divine, it is the guilty party.⁴⁸

Lipscomb felt that the Standard, not the Review, had made "a human creed, human opinions . . . a test of fellowship," and saw a supreme irony in the fact that the Standard advocated "all this ... in the name of Christian fidelity and unity in Christ."⁴⁹

Enigmatically, however, Lipscomb had allowed this seemingly diametrically opposed comment to be printed in his paper the week prior to his own editorial. Penned by columnist and part owner of the Advocate, J. C. McQuiddy, it was clear and unequivocal. Said McQuiddy:

As for our part, the Advocate needs no second call to express its sentiments on this momentous matter. The Sand Creek manifest folly, and the Advocate emphatically denies any sympathy with Sommerism — whatever that is — Sand Creekism, Sand Lotism, Sans-cullottism, Standardism or any other partism in religion.⁵⁰

There can hardly be any wonder as to why Sommer would thereafter feel harshly toward the Advocate, and why he would say, looking back on the affair more than two decades later, that

The Review stood alone of the papers of the brotherhood in the radical step of drawing the line on the innovating churches and preachers. The Gospel Advocate criticized

⁴⁷Lipscomb, "Our Response," GA, XXXIV:27 (July 7, 1892), p. 429.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰McQuiddy, "Miscellany," GA, XXXIV:26 (June 30, 1892), p. 408.

severely the Sand Creek Declaration and the position of the Review on the matter. But who of the preachers and writers of the Advocate do not now [about 1917] practically *stand* for the same thing . . . ? The Review was simply a couple of decades ahead of the Advocate in this matter of "marking them who are causing divisions and occasions of stumbling contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and avoiding them." The Review, being in the front rank of the battle against the "digressives," has borne the brunt of the attack." ⁵¹

This ambivalence on the part of the Advocate staff would have not only the effect of presenting a divided front among conservatives' opposition to the innovations, but would have even more serious effects on later relations within the Churches of Christ, even after they had completely severed themselves from the Christian Churches. That friction shall be the subject of a later chapter, as we now turn our attention to the finalization of the division between the Churches of Christ and the Christian Churches.

See also Fletcher Srygley, "From the Papers," GA, XXIV:32 (August 11, 1892), p. 497.

⁵¹A Defense: Papers or Principles — Which? ([Indianapolis]: n.d.), p. 9.

CHAPTER VIII

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A HOOSIER PREACHER

By the mid-1890's, Sommer had become embroiled in the controversy over innovations to the point that his name had become part of a pejorative description ("Sommerism") for the conservatives in the controversy. Matters had progressed (or digressed) to the point that both sides were now contemplating the extreme measures of disfellowship and court action over church property to enforce their separate and different decisions with regard to the worship.

Allusion has already been made to the fact that, although the church at Richwood, Ohio was using the instrument in its worship when Sommer arrived, it soon ceased to do so under the influence of Sommer's preaching.¹ However, as time passed, Sommer's name came to be identified as "an extremist position, . . . synonymous" with "the Sand Creek platform, . . . and the Octographic Review," which together meant "schism" to those who advocated the use of the instrument and the missionary society.² Some members of the congregation sought to

¹See Sommer, "Which is the More Excellent Way?" ACR, XXX:5 (February 3, 1887), p. 53.

²Henry K. Shaw, Hoosier Disciples: A Comprehensive History of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1966), p. 273.

withdraw fellowship from Sommer.³ Although Sommer, in a trial over church property in 1896, "admitted in . . . testimony before the court in Salem, Ind. that an attempt to exclude me was made by a few persons in Richwood because of my opposition to certain innovations ..." the main figure involved in the move to oust Sommer "had the established reputation of a double criminal, and the church which permitted such an attempt to be made on me without notice while I was over five hundred miles from home has never from that day had an hour of solid prosperity."⁴

Such action, however, rekindled in Sommer an idea which he had announced from the beginning of his editorial career, but which had lain dormant for several years.

³See "A Record of My Life -No. 24," ACR, LXXXV:21 (October 8, 1940), p. 9.

⁴Sommer to J. A. Lord, August 10, 1900, reprinted by Sommer in a tract entitled "Correspondence of Daniel Sommer with Nathan H. Shepherd, J. B. Briney, J. H. Garrison and J. A. Lord," pp. 22-23. Lord was editor of the Christian Standard. The trial in Salem was one of the first in which Sommer was to be involved. See Case #2416, Washington County Clerk's office, suit filed December 31, 1896, and decision handed down June 12, 1897 (Washington County Circuit Court Minute Book 5, 1895-1897, pp. 362, 417, 430, 433, 434, 438, 450, 452, 454, 459, 473, 484, 490, 507, 514-518, and 528). I am indebted to Ms. Jewell Sweeney of the Washington County Circuit Court Clerk's Office for allowing me to Xerox the records of the proceedings, and Ms. Lulie Davis, president of the Washington County Historical Society for assistance in researching the trial (popularly known as the "Mt. Tabor church case"). See also "The Church in Court," Salem Republican Leader, XVIII:51 (June 11, 1897), p. 5; and "Circuit Court," Salem Democrat, L:24 (June 11, 1897), Part 1, p. 3. The decision of the court, Hon. Samuel T. Voyles, presiding, was that each party should have exclusive use of the building for one-half of each month, a decision obviously unsatisfactory to either party.

In May of 1887, shortly after taking over the REVIEW, Sommer had written:

At this juncture we venture to say that Cincinnati is not the most central place. [The REVIEW had been published at Cincinnati under Alden's ownership.] For years we have thought of Indianapolis as the city above all others from which the publication that would work a revolution should be issued. On this subject we have not change (sic) our mind. Indiana was the home of the Review's founder, and doubtless is the state in which his influence was most largely felt. Indianapolis is the city in which about 15 lines of Rail Road concenter. Besides, it is perhaps more nearly than any other city in the center of our great brotherhood. In due time the Review expects to recover from her wounds and recuperate wasted forces and move westward.⁵

Several months later, after an extensive preaching tour of the state of Indiana, Sommer sent this item back to the Review office for publication:

Something over four weeks ago we left home for this state (Ind.), and we must confess that the more we see of it the better we like it. The utter absence of aristocracy is delightful to a plain man. People seem to estimate each other at the point of character and regardless of wealth or grammar. They do not affect to despise each other, but character seems to be the highest criterion. . . . Brethren of Indiana, we still think favorably of Indianapolis as the future home of the Review. It is a central place with excellent facilities. The Lord willing we shall get there, and hope all the people will say, "Amen."⁶

⁵"The Review's Retreat," OR, XXX:16 (May 5, 1887), p. 1.

⁶Editorial item, OR, XX:32 (August 25, 1887), p. 1. Recently, the study of "plain people," or "the common man" has become popular as the historian's "raised consciousness" has coincided with new sophisticated means (specifically, computers) of tabulating historical data (such as election returns and census data), which would have been too cumbersome and time-consuming. For a recent attempt to relate the attitudes and voting behavior of Hoosier farmers to their social status and religious and cultural preferences, see Melvyn Hammarberg, "Indiana Farmers and the Group Basis of the Late Nineteenth-Century Political Parties," Journal of American History, LXI:1 (June, 1974), based on his Ph.D. dissertation, done at the University of Pennsylvania in 1970. See also Richard Jensen, "The Religious and Occupational Roots of Party Identification: Illinois and Indiana in the 1870's," Civil War History, XVI:4 (December, 1970), pp. 325-343. These articles deal with questions in "political history"

Sommer's son, Allen, who later became one of the Review's office managers, recalled many years later that his father was looking for "a railroad town" accessible from all directions. He had investigated Indianapolis, a growing city of 125,000 with numerous R.R. connections. So the Sommers "hit the rails" for Indianapolis — some in a huge boxcar with household and Review necessities plus the family horse, — others

which are, at the very least, tangential to "religious" history. Beginning with the pioneering theoretical work of several historians and political scientists with established reputations, notably V. O. Key, Jr. I see "A Theory of Critical Elections," Journal of Politics, XVII: 1 [February, 1955], pp. 3-18), Samuel P. Hays (see, among many other articles, "History as Human Behavior," Iowa Journal of History, LVIII:3 [July, 1960], pp. 193-206, and "Social Analysis of Political History, 1880-1920," Political Science Quarterly, LXXX:3 [September, 1965], pp. 373-394], younger historians have begun to ask questions about the "grassroots support" of political leaders rather than relying solely on the recorded rhetoric and "official positions" of these leaders. In Hays' words, peoples' reactions to problems "are to be described and analyzed not in terms of the formal statements which institutions produce such as laws, constitutions, newspaper editorials, annual reports, speeches, or official press releases, but in terms of the types of human interrelationships which are inherent in those institutions" ("Social Analysis . . ." p. 374). For a similar expression of this idea as it relates to this paper, Chapter I at nn. 14-17. For bibliographical surveys of this type of "ethnocultural" history, in which religious persuasion plays a great role in determining "secular" actions such as political behavior, see Samuel T. McSeveney and Joel T. Silbey, Voters, Parties, and Elections (Waldham, Mass.: Xerox College Publishing, 1972), which contains a reprint of V. O. Key, Jr. and Frank Munger, "Social Determinism and Electoral Decision: the Case of Indiana"; McSeveney, "Ethnic Groups, Ethnic Conflicts, and Recent Quantitative Research in American Political History," International Migration Review, VII:1 (Spring, 1973), pp. 14-33; Richard McCormick, "Ethno-Cultural Interpretations of Nineteenth-Century American Voting Behavior," Political Science Quarterly, LXXX IX: 2 (June, 1974), pp. 351-377; and Robert P. Swierenga, "Ethnocultural Political Analysis: A New Approach to American Ethnic Studies," Journal of American Studies, V:1 (April, 1971), pp. 59-79.

While the "hard data" on those who provided "grassroots" support for various religious bodies is less and more difficult to come by (there are no "official election returns" and many of the religious censuses are notoriously inaccurate), and while the author does not view this "new historical" approach as the only way of solving historical problems (there being as yet no substitute for combing the journals, sermons, et cetera of the leaders, on the assumption that the bulk of those who subscribed to a religious journal did so because they basically agreed with the particular views associated with that journal), yet this kind of approach is a valuable tool with

in a passenger coach. On arrival we boarded a trolley car for Northwest Indianapolis, where a large house had already been selected for us.⁷

According to the state's "official" history of this period, Indianapolis was not quite so large, having only 105,436 residents.⁸ This historian says, however, that

The only city to reach 100,000 population in this period was Indianapolis, which passed that mark in 1890, slightly more than doubled in size during the next two decades, and approached a third of a million residents by 1920. The capital city's importance was enhanced by its central geographic location in the state and especially by its position at the intersection of a great network of steam railroads and, later, electric interurban lines. Yet, despite its rapid rate of growth in this period, Indianapolis did not become a great metropolis on the order of Chicago, Cleveland, or Detroit in neighboring states.⁹

which to view certain kinds of historical questions that are particularly germane to the study of American religion.

⁷Allen Sommer, "Time Marches On," ACR, CX:2 (April-May-June, 1965), p. 4. For a detailed analysis of the migration of population to and from Indiana during the period of Sommer's lifetime, see Robert LaFollette, "Interstate Migration and Indiana Culture," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI:3 (December, 1929), pp. 347-358. Clifton J. Phillips notes that "Much of the increase in urban population in these years was drawn from . . . a large scale migration from other states (which) helped to swell the number of residents in Indiana cities. By 1900 nearly five hundred thousand Hoosier residents had been born outside Indiana. . . . The neighboring states of Ohio and Kentucky led in furnishing settlers" Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth (The History of Indiana, Vol. IV; Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1968), p. 367. An historian writing shortly after the Sommers moved to Indianapolis described the railroad situation with these words: "From the latest estimates, 760 miles of railroad are now completed in the state — 979 miles more in course of construction." Nathaniel Bolton, "Early History of Indianapolis and Central Indiana," Indiana Historical Society Publications, 1:5 (1897), p. 186. See Phillips' detailed Chapter VI, "The Evolution of a Modern Transportation System," pp. 224-270.

⁸Phillips, p. 366.

⁹Ibid., p. 365. LaFollette points out that Indiana was in fact a "hinterland" for the metropolitan cities of neighboring states, demonstrating that, in addition to such obvious instances as Chicago,

In fact, Booth Tarkington, Indianapolis native who became a Pulitzer Prize winner for his novels The Magnificent Ambersons (1918) and Alice Adams (1921), wrote these and two others — The Turmoil (1915) and The Midlander (1924) — to portray "Indianapolis middle-class family life in the midst of a deteriorating social order caused by urbanization and industrialization." ¹⁰ Tarkington began his first of the four, The Turmoil, by describing bygone days in a fictionalized city based on his home town in these words:

Not quite so long ago as a generation, there was no panting giant here, no heaving, grimy city; there was but a pleasant big town or neighborly people who had understanding of one another. . . . It was a leisurely and kindly place — "home-like," it was called. . . . No one was very rich; few were very poor; the air was clean, and there was time to live. ¹¹

In a passage reminiscent of Sommer's own opinion of the Hoosier state, another prominent author, "the Hoosier Cavalier" Meredith Nicholson put these words in the mouth of one of his characters:

It's all pretty comfortable and cheerful and busy in Indiana, with lots of old-fashioned human kindness flowing around, and it's getting better all the time. And I guess it's always got to be that way, out here in God's country. ¹²

Cincinnati, and Louisville attracting large sections of the state into their respective "orbits," or spheres of influence, that even such seemingly distant cities as St. Louis, Cleveland, Toledo, and Detroit were actually closer to some sections of the state than was Indianapolis (pp. 353-554).

¹⁰Phillips, p. 523. For a superb detailed analysis of novelists and other writers during this period, see Arthur W. Shumaker, A History of Indiana Literature (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1962).

¹¹Quoted in Phillips, pp. 523-524.

¹²Nicholson, A Hoosier Chronicle (Boston, 1912), p. 606 (quoted in Phillips, p. 515). For a study of Nicholson, see Shumaker, 325-337 and throughout; and Jean Butler Sanders, "Meredith Nicholson: Hoosier Cavalier" unpublished M. A. thesis, DePauw University, 1952.

In a less fictional manner, Nicholson would describe the city to which the Sommer family moved as it changed during the decade following their arrival. He said:

Indianapolis was a town that became a city against its will. It liked its own way, and its way was slow; but when the calamity could no longer be averted, it had its trousers creased and its shoes polished, and accepted with good grace the fact that its population was approximately two hundred thousand, and that it had crept to a place comfortably near the top in the list of bank clearances. . . . If left to itself, the old Indianapolis would never have known a horse show or carnival — would never have strewn itself with confetti; but the invading time-spirit is fast destroying the walls of the city of tradition. Business men no longer go home to dinner at twelve o'clock and take a nap before returning to work; and the old amiable habit of visiting for an hour in an office where ten minutes of business was to be transacted has passed. A town is at last a city when sociability has been squeezed out of business and appointments are arranged a day in advance by telephone.¹³

Perhaps it is not such a great wonder that a "plain man" like Sommer, having decided that living in a city was a necessary evil, would choose just such a city.

Sommer the Hoosier Novelist

It was while living in Indianapolis that Sommer tried his hand, as did many other Hoosiers, at imitating the likes of Tarkington,

¹³Nicholson, "Indianapolis: A City of Homes," Atlantic Monthly, XVIII:560 (June, 1904), pp. 839-840. This essay was later reprinted as "A Provincial Capital," along with other essays on Hoosier literature, including one on Edward Eggleston, in Nicholson, The Provincial American and Other Papers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912), pp. 55-38. For an excellent scholarly study of the growth of the city of Indianapolis with reference to population expansion, migration, and mobility, economic development, ethnic relationships and immigration absorption, city and county government, family life, religion, recreation facilities, education, social class structure, municipal services (police, fire, and public health protection), and cultural, artistic and intellectual development, see Frederick D. Kershner, Jr., "From the Country Town to Industrial City: The Urban Pattern in Indianapolis," Indiana Magazine of History, XLV:4 (December, 1949), pp. 327-338. Kershner, whose father was the Dean of the Butler University School of Religion with whom Sommer

Nicholson, Eggleston, and Lew Wallace.¹⁴ Between the time Sommer moved to Indianapolis and the turn of the century, he had published half a dozen novelettes¹⁵ which one analyst correctly identified as "thinly disguised doctrinaire tracts . . . which have a common message: the

would form a warm friendship in the 1930's, based his article on his Ph.D. dissertation, "A Social and Cultural History of Indianapolis, 1860-1914," done under Merle Curti at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. It was originally read as a paper in a session on "The Urbanization of the Mississippi Valley" at annual meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Society at Madison in 1949 (Kershner, "Country Town . . .," p. 327; see also Ray Allen Billington, "The Forty-Second Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXVI:2 [September, 1949], pp. 288-289).

¹⁴Shumaker deals with the prevailing notion that Indiana has produced more than its share of writers, many without proper ability, but a disproportionate share with enough ability to attract national attention. By tabulating the state origins of authors whose books were listed as the most popular during the period 1861-1951 in Richard B. Morris' Encyclopedia of American History, Shumaker discovered that 15%, a noticeably disproportionate share, were Hoosiers. He also reports the results of a more detailed study by Purdue University librarian John H. Moriarty. Utilizing data in Alice Payne Hackett's Fifty Years of best sellers, Moriarty "took the period from the turn of the century to the beginning of World War II, and assigned a score of ten for each top best seller during those years. The second novel on the list was scored as nine, the third as eight, and so on. The birthplace of each author was then ascertained. The various stages were then credited with the total score of the authors born in them...Indiana, during the forty years checked, was second state in the Union ..." New York was first with a score of 218; Indiana a close second with 213, and Pennsylvania a distant third with 125 (Shumaker, pp. 6-7).

¹⁵Hydrophobia and Its Cures, by One Who Was a Victim (1894); Hector Among the Doctors: or, A Search for the True Church: A Volume of Thought for Thinkers (1896); Rachel Reasoner (1900); and Jehenne LeFevre or A Miner's Daughter (n.d.): all published by the author at Indianapolis. Hydrophobia . . . and Hector . . . have been previously discussed (at n. 34 and 55, Chapter V, and nn. 18-20, Chapter III, respectively). According to Sommer's son, Allen, Rachel Reasoner was "prompted by the Quaker girl he married" ("Time Marches On," ACR, CX:2 (April-May-June, 1965), p. 5.

superiority of the Church of Christ as the only religious body that Christ died to establish."¹⁶ In the words that Sommer put in the mouth of one of his heroines, Jehenne LeFevre, all other churches "are mere side shows, that haven't the right even to pitch a tent on God's footstool."¹⁷

Matthew Morrison presents the following concise survey of the main features of Sommer's fiction:

. . . the fictional pieces have the same format: an innocent and ingenuous hero, equipped with the distinctive tenets of the Restoration plea, confounds and refutes such learned clerics as a Jesuit priest, a Methodist presiding elder, an Episcopal bishop, a Spiritualist, and a Presbyterian doctor of divinity. Using the Socratic method of teaching by dialogue, Sommer invariably led the movement of reasoning along familiar lines to a predictable conclusion. Always the teacher is a Socrates in argumentative adroitness, and his pupil a Phaedrus in malleability.¹⁸

In addition, while living in Indianapolis, Sommer was "evidently influenced by Kin Hubbard's Abe Martin, regularly featured in the Indianapolis News. . . ." ¹⁹ Morrison, himself with an editorial cartoon background, ²⁰ found that "Sommer's cracker-barrel sagacity did not approach the charm of the Brown County wit. Some of the home-spun epigrams of Sommer are instances of drollery that are striking because of their unrivaled banality. . . ." ²¹ Nor were

¹⁶Matthew C. Morrison, "Daniel Sommer's Seventy Years of Religious Controversy," (Ph.D. dissertation in Speech, Indiana University, 1972), pp. 247-248.

¹⁷Jehenne LeFevre, p. 78.

¹⁸Morrison, 248.

¹⁹Ibid., 244. For a perceptive discussion of Hubbard, see Shumaker, 475-485.

²⁰Ibid., "Vita" (284).

²¹Ibid., p. 244.

Sommer's novels any more attractive to this professional speech analyst, who affirms that Sommer's "prose stretched to tedious repetition and wordiness. . . . His style suffered from stale repetition and banality. . . . While clear and grammatically correct, his writing style vacillated between the ineffective extremes of mildness and severity." ²²

Sommer as Legal Disputant

Sommer was not simply sitting in Indianapolis with nothing more to do than write an occasional novel and read the Indianapolis News with a view to mimicking Kin Hubbard, however. If Sommer had moved to Indianapolis to avoid trouble (and there is no reason to suspect that he did), he soon found that it not only followed him, but was waiting there for him. He had been there barely a year when a suit was brought against him by members of the church who were apparently in sympathy with those promoting the "innovations" which Sommer was opposed to.²³ The suit was decided in favor of the defendants (i.e., Sommer and his party), but this was only the beginning of trouble in the legal arena. Within a year Sommer was called to testify in a similar trial in Salem, Indiana.²⁴ In these two trials Sommer had found

²²Ibid., pp. 250, 252-3.

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Record Book of North Indianapolis Church of Christ, now in possession of the author (hereafter referred to as simply "Record Book"). See copy of Marion County, Indiana, Superior Court Summons #51323, p. 45 of Record Book, and Record Book entries at pp. 42-45, 46, and 49-51; and entries for Case #51323, Judge Bartholomew, presiding, in Marion County Superior Court Entry Docket Book #65, City-County Building, Indianapolis.

²⁴References to this case are contained in n. 4, above.

a compatriot in the person of L. J. Coppage of Crawfordsville, Indiana, an attorney who was also a Christian.²⁵ Coppage assisted Sommer in a suit brought to oust the "progressives" from the property at Winchester, Indiana in a two-year case which was decided in March, 1901.²⁶

This was the only case in which Sommer participated which was lost by those opposing the "innovations"; not surprisingly it is the only one (with exception of the Sand Creek trial) that received notice in the Christian Standard.²⁷ Several months later, the church at North Indianapolis was sued again by the same party, with the same outcome as five years before.²⁸

On December 18, 1901, just prior to the decision of the second Indianapolis case (January 6, 1902), the Illinois Supreme Court reversed the decision of the Piatt County (Illinois) Circuit Court which had awarded the Hammond, Illinois church property to the Christian Church.²⁹ There were many ambiguities which this trial did not attempt to resolve; but the Illinois Supreme Court Justices would not have to wait long before receiving another chance to resolve the prickly legal difficulties involved in such a religious dispute. A case tried in

²⁵ Record Book, p. 50; Washington County, Indiana Circuit Court Minute Book 5, p. 514.

²⁶James Vernon, "A Daniel Comes to Judgement," Christian Standard, XXXVIII:13 (March 28, 1901), p. 416.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Record Book, 84-86; entries for Case #62225, Judge Vinson Carter, presiding, in Marion County Superior Court Entry Docket Book #78, City-County Building, Indianapolis.

²⁹Church of Christ v. Christian Church of Hammond, 193 Ill. 144 (1901). (Transcript #1975, Illinois State Supreme Court Archives; Judge William G. Cochran, presiding, Piatt Circuit Court, February 18, 1901)

the November, 1904 term of the Shelby County, Illinois Circuit Court had been decided in favor of the Church of Christ.³⁰ The case was appealed to and heard by the Illinois Supreme Court, which upheld the lower court's decision.³¹ By the time the Court rendered its decision on February 21, 1906, statistics were being gathered by the federal government which would once and for all declare the separation of what had once been a united body.³² There was very little, if any, further legal agitation after 1906.

As a kind of "seal" to the division, a debate was conducted in Louisville, Kentucky in 1908, between J. B. Briney and W. W. Otey.³³ As far as the Christian Church was concerned, the debate was anti-climatic.³⁴ To Sommer, however, it was an important event, as he was

³⁰Shelby County Circuit Court, November term, 1904, Case #294978. A portion of Judge Samuel L. Dwight's decision is included as Appendix B. A microfilm copy of the transcript of this trial is in the possession of the author. For popular accounts of the trial, see "Circuit Court," Shelbyville Democrat, XXXI:23 (December 15, 1904), p. 1; "Shelby County Courts," ibid., XXXI:24 (December 22, 1904), p. 1; and "Sand Creek Church Case," ibid., XXXI:27 (January 12, 1905), p. 1, and W. Carl Ketcherside, "The Sand Creek Address," Mission Messenger, XXIV:2 (February, 1962), pp. 1-14; and "Brothers At Law," MM, XXIV:3 (March, 1962), 1-10.

³¹Christian Church of Sand Creek et al. v. Church of Christ of Sand Creek et al., 219 Ill. 503 (1906).

³²See Chapter II for a discussion and interpretation of the statistics gathered by the government.

³³W. W. Otey and J. B. Briney, Otey-Briney Debate (Cincinnati: F. L. Rowe, 1908).

³⁴When the "progressive" religious journal, the Christian-Evangelist, under the editorship of J. H. Garrison, reviewed the printed copy of the debate, an unidentified staff writer commented sarcastically, "No, there is not a mistake in the date of this book. It is 1908, not 1809. There are a few brethren still stumbling over an organ and over a missionary society . . ." ("Literature of Today," Christian-Evangelist, XLV:9 [March 4, 1909], p. 272). See also Winfred Ernest Garrison, Religion Follows the Frontier (New York: Harner and Brother 1931)

asked to moderate for Otey, and did so.³⁵ By the time the debate was concluded, the breach of fellowship was wide and deep, open for all to see, and, for all practical purposes, irreversible, as Sommer would discover in later years.

Sommer's controversial years were not finished, however. Among his own brethren in the Churches of Christ there had arisen an institution which to Sommer was as abominable as the instrument or the missionary society — the Bible School. Although, at 58, Sommer had seen more controversy than many see in shorter life-spans, he would see even more. The controversy over Bible schools, and Sommer's role in that controversy, will be the subject of our next chapter.

p. 263; and Garrison and Alfred Thomas DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ: A History (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1948), p. 406, for comments pertaining to the consideration of these affairs as "dead issues" by many on at least one side of the widening chasm of division.

³⁵Otey-Briney Debate, p. 9. See also Cecil Willis, W. W. Otey: Defender of the Faith (Akron, Ohio: By the author), pp. 194-212, for an extensive discussion of the events surrounding the debate and its publication. It is significant that the debate came about as a result of Otey's preaching two meetings at the Sand Creek church in 1906 and 1907. One of the elders of the Sand Creek Church, J. K. P. Rose (who had been one of the signers of the Sand Creek Declaration), had arranged the auditorium on the Chatauqua fairgrounds at Shelbyville. This debate did not materialize, however, as Briney insisted on having the debate in Louisville, where he had lived for a number of years.

CHAPTER IX

SOMMERISM: THE BIBLE COLLEGE CONTROVERSY

The seeds of discord which were to blossom into fullblown antipathy toward many Disciples of Christ were first planted in Sommer's mind at Bethany College.¹ Throughout the succeeding years, the college as an institution without proper authority, usurping the function of God's church, and promoting digression away from the simple Christianity of the "plain man" into the "progressive Christianity" fostered by the spirit of the age, was to become a recurrent theme in Sommer's preaching and writing. In many ways (as intellectual historians have demonstrated was also true for the concept of biological evolution several years later), it "came to epitomize the totality of error"; it was the representative of the assault on all "established" ideas and institutions.² Sommer would thus argue repetitively that institutions such as his alma mater had

¹See Chapter IV at nn. 31-33.

²The phrase is from William Jennings Bryan's biographer, Lawrence W. Levine, in his review of Willard B. Gatewood, Preachers, Pedagogues, and Politicians: The Evolution Controversy in North Carolina, 1920-1927 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966); see also pp. 27, 230 of Gatewood; Ferenc M. Szasz, "The Scopes Trial in Perspective," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XXX:3 (Fall, 1971), p. 288; Donald F. Brod, "The Scopes Trial: A Look at the Press Coverage after Forty Years," Journalism Quarterly, XLII:2 (Spring, 1965), p. 219; and Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), pp. 125-125.

"resulted in cursing the brotherhood with a swarm of innovating preachers" whose efforts had resulted in "the conduct of the card-playing, theater-going, pleasure-loving, higher-criticism, church-federation, power-centralizing Christian church." ³ In Sommer's mind, these sprang from one source — the human institution of theological education.

Of course, while a young man at Bethany, where "Alexander Campbell's memory hovered spirit-like," ⁴ Sommer may have caught a glimpse of the mind of the young Campbell, who, in the iconoclastic years before the founding of Bethany College in 1840, had been "sorry to observe a hankering after titles by some . . ." and commended the example of a prominent frontier evangelist who, upon being offered a collegiate degree, "like a Christian, declined it." ⁵

Sommer's growing anxiety about the future course of the colleges among Disciples was only intensified by his association with the conservative Benjamin Franklin. ⁶ In seizing upon Franklin's suggestion

³Sommer, "In Regard to Earthly Riches Among Disciples of Christ," *OR*, XLVIII:34 (August 22, 1905), pp. 1, 8.

⁴Earl Irvin West, The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement, 1849-1906 (Vol. 2, 1866-1906; Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), p. 296.

⁵Quoted in Walter B. Posey, "Ecclesiastical Hankerings," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XXIII:2 (June, 1964), p. 139. In the words of one American church historian, "Campbell did more than any other single person to generate opposition to . . . a theologically educated ministry" (Winthrop S. Hudson, American Protestantism [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961], p. 94.).

⁶See unsigned editorial item, "Educating Preachers," ACR, XXI:44 (October 28, 1878), p. 348; Sommer, "In Regard to Earthly Riches," p. 8.

that Sommer inscripturate himself into the confidence of the brotherhood,⁷ Sommer submitted as his first serious attempt at writing⁸ a series of articles on "Educating Preachers,"⁹ which concluded with this remark:

From Satan's first contact with our race, till now, the one, great, fundamental offense of religious man has been his unsatisfied feeling with the God-given in religion. Of this feeling, colleges for ministerial education are an outgrowth. By whomsoever founded or defended they are a human device — a pride-fostering and church-impooverishing device.¹⁰

"During the next ten years, the records reveal only an occasional critical remark against the colleges by Sommer, but, in the 1890's his opposition to the Christian colleges increased."¹¹ According to Sommer's youngest son, Allen, the reason for this escalation of antipathy in the 1890's is likely an altercation at Milligan College, in Tennessee, in which Sommer's oldest sons, Fred and Frank, were involved: a controversy over one of the local "belles" which ended with Frank receiving "a couple of revolver slugs" in his legs.¹²

⁷See Chapter VI, n. 7.

⁸Sommer had previously published several short articles, cited in Chapter V at nn. 30 and 32.

⁹See ACR, XXI:44 (October 29, 1878), p. 349; ACR, XXI:49 (December 3, 1878), p. 385; and ACR, XXII:2 (January 14, 1879), p. 15.

¹⁰ACR, XXII:2 (January 14, 1879), p. 15.

¹¹Weldon Bailey Bennett, "The Concept of Ministry in the Thought of Representative Men of the Disciples of Christ" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1971), p. 416. See Sommer, "Colleges Again," OR, XXXI:47 (November 22, 1888), p. 1; and these articles in the Octographic Review on the 1890's: XXXVII:18 (May 1, 1894), p. 1; XL:45 (November 2, 1897), p. 1; and XLII:50 (December 12, 1899), p. 1.

¹²Allen Sommer, interviews with author, June 14, 1972; July 13, 1973; and December 28, 1973; see Allen Sommer, "Time Marches On," ACR, CX:2 (March-April-May, 1965), p. 3.

When, therefore, David Lipscomb, James A. Harding, and others founded the Nashville Bible School (later David Lipscomb College), Sommer viewed it with great distaste. Sommer was not a man to change his position because of who was engaging in a practice he believed to be wrong; and certainly his feeling toward Lipscomb and other Advocate staffers (Harding in particular) was none too high.

The strained relationship between the editors of the two journals has already been described.¹³ In 1894, shortly after McQuiddy's first use of the term "Sommerism" with reference to the Sand Creek Declaration, Sommer reviewed Lipscomb's position on civil government, as set forth in his book by that title.¹⁴ When Sommer announced that the discussion was over and refused to print a reply by Lipscomb, the Nashville editor adopted a stance of frigid aloofness toward his Indianapolis counterpart; this was only intensified by an exchange between Sommer and another Advocate staff correspondent, E. A. Elam, in 1901.¹⁵ Lipscomb reiterated his position of clinical coolness, saying of Sommer

He seems to be at war with every one. I have no disposition to hinder Brother Sommer in doing all the good he can. But I am sure we cannot work together, with his present style; so in the future, as in the past, I shall let him do all the good he can, and I will go the way that seems best to me ... I do not expect to notice this again.¹⁶

¹³See Chapter VI at nn. 33-38, and Chapter VII at nn. 50-51.

¹⁴For a concise discussion of Lipscomb's position as set forth in his book, see David Edwin Harrell, Jr., "Disciples of Christ Pacifism in Nineteenth Century Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XXI:3 (September, 1962), pp. 269-270.

¹⁵The series of events is summarized in Lipscomb, "Our Reason For Our Course," GA, XLIII:20 (May 16, 1901), p. 312.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

Matters progressed from bad to worse, as far as brotherly relations between Sommer and his Southern brethren were concerned. In 1901, feeling that there was no "opportunity for the school in Nashville to expand its accommodations," James A. Harding left Nashville Bible School, in company with his son-in-law, J. N. Armstrong and other members of the faculty of Lipscomb's school and began Potter Bible College in Bowling Green, Kentucky.¹⁷ Sommer responded by re-running some articles, critical of schools, which his former editorial companion on the Octograph from 1883-1886, L. F. Bittle, had published in the Review during 1873.¹⁸ Beginning in 1902, under the continuous heading of "Signs of the Times," Sommer began a full-scale offensive against the colleges.

Sommer insisted that his objections to the schools could be classified under two headings: "Using the Lord's money to establish religio-secular schools and giving them a sacred name as though they were divine institutions." He insisted that "all that I have written on the subject has been under two headings, namely, the mistake of thus using the Lord's money, and the mistake of thus naming such institutions."¹⁹ It is true, however, that Sommer was fond of lacing

¹⁷M. Norvel Young, A History of Colleges Established and Controlled by Members of the Churches of Christ (Kansas City: Old Paths. Book Club, 1949), pp. 110-111. Harding proved to be incorrect in his judgment that the Nashville Bible School would not expand, for on March 18, 1903, David Lipscomb donated 55 acres to the school for expansion purposes. David Lipscomb College, as the Bible school was renamed after his death, now stands on that site (William Waller, ed., Nashville: 1900 to 1910 [Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1972], p. 288.

¹⁸West, II, 392.

¹⁹"A Plain Statement and Challenge," OR, XCVI:31 (August 4, 1903), p. 1. Sommer, it will be remembered, had changed the name of even Franklin's periodical so as to not refer to it by what he considered to be a "divine name" ("Christian"). See Chapter VI, n. 25.

what appeared to him to be major arguments against the schools with certain points of criticism to which such institutions were made vulnerable by the abuses arising from their existence. He was fond of pointing to the fact that such institutions fostered pride, developed a special sense of the "clergy" among college-educated "preachers, had developed in some brethren's minds the idea that a man could not preach without a college education, and had been the main breeding ground for digression in years past.²⁰

With respect to his insistence that the college was using "the Lord's money," Sommer was put in a compromised position. When he defined "the Lord's money" as anything not necessary to provide necessities of food, clothing, shelter and taxes, saying the remainder belonged to God and should be placed in the treasury of His church,²¹ he had, in effect condemned himself for spending thousands of dollars of "the Lord's money" to purchase his paper, the Review. According to his own reasoning, it should have been given to the church instead of being used to establish a rival human "device" or "institution," a religious journal, to propagate the gospel.²²

²⁰See Bennett, p. 417. Earl West, though insisting that papers not schools, had been the main source of digression and division in the Restoration movement, conceded that "It cannot be denied, in all fairness to Sommer and to the facts involved, that on many points he was right — more correct than his enemies ever gave him credit for being" (II, pp. 461-462; 393).

²¹Sommer was later pushed in a debate into taking this position.

²²W.W. Otey, one of Sommer's editorial assistants during this period, attempted to answer this argument in a long article, "The Difference Between Soliciting for the Review and Bible Colleges," OR, LII:2 (January 11, 1910), pp. 3, 6.

However, as with many extreme positions, this one was begotten of another extreme. Because of his inconsistency, mentioned above, Sommer could not really insist that such institutions had no right to exist. And, at least early in the controversy with Harding, he did not take that position. Said Sommer:

I have been charged with teaching that it is 'wrong' to teach the Bible in connection with secular things, and that it is even 'wicked' to do so. The last charge I have seen on the subject is in these words: 'There are preachers and religious editors who fight Potter Bible College and the Nashville Bible School because they teach the Bible to their students.'

In regard to the charge just quoted I state that it is utterly destitute of truth, at least so far as the REVIEW is concerned. No one in connection with this paper has published in its columns concerning the mentioned "College" and "School," that it is wrong for their instructors to teach the Bible to their pupils. On the contrary, as far as the publisher and former office-editor have expressed themselves on that side of the subject, we have taught that it is always right to teach the Bible aright, when no Bible teaching is violated in so doing. Then the senior editor of the Review has taught that if we must have institutions called "Bible Schools" the entire time of the instructors in such institutions should be devoted to teaching the Bible.²³

The opposite extreme which had triggered Sommer's extreme reaction, and pushed him even beyond the above statement, was a statement from Harding's son-in-law, J. N. Armstrong. While attempting to

²³ Daniel Sommer, "A Plain Statement and Challenge," OR, XLVI:31 (August 4, 1903), p. 1; reprinted in OR, XLVIII:34 (August 22, 1905), p. 8, in response to Harding's article, "Another Effort to Secure a Discussion of the Bible School Question," ibid. Although Sommer had visited Harding during the summer of 1905 (Sommer, "My Southern Tour," OR, XLVI:28 [July 14, 1903], p. 8), the two men were not able to resolve their differences and the controversy continued, with each one claiming they had not understood what the other was saying, and claiming misrepresentation on the part of the other (see the first two articles cited in this footnote, and editorial item, OR, XLVI:29 [July 21, 1903], p. 1). Sommer reproduced a lengthy series of articles which ran throughout the fall of 1903 under the heading, "Concerning the Unscripturalness of Establishing Religio-Secular Schools With the Lord's Money," and distributed them in tract form under the title Colleges as Church Institutions.

raise funds for the predecessor of the school which now bears his father-in-law's name (Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas supported by Churches of Christ), Armstrong had said:

The starting of this work does not depend on your gift, for God's hand is not shortened. Your salvation may depend on it, but the school does not. If you have means in your hand and are a servant of God, it is God's means; and to be a faithful servant, you must use his means in the place where you believe it will do the most toward building the kingdom of God.²⁴

Thus, even one of Sommer's most vocal opponents had come perilously close to the same position with regard to what was "the Lord's money." Apparently Armstrong felt that all of a Christian's money was the Lord's, and that the college he was promoting was so essential to building the kingdom of God that those who refused to support it did so at the risk of eternal condemnation. Sommer, not one to be threatened with eternal punishment, least of all for refusal to support a human enterprise, argued that if such money was indeed the Lord's, why not return it to Him through the church? One must certainly agree with West that "it is hard to escape the conclusion" that the disputants in this controversy "were not closer together in their thinking than they admitted."²⁵ But having taken these positions publicly, they apparently felt obliged to maintain them through the years.²⁶

²⁴Quoted in Lloyd Cline Sears, For Freedom: The Biography of John Nelson Armstrong (Austin, Texas: Sweet Publishing Company, 1969), p. 74. Sears, the son-in-law of J. N. Armstrong (who was himself the son-in-law of J. A. Harding), was for many years professor of English in the college which bears Harding's name at Searcy, Arkansas. Sears' son is now professor of Biology at Harding.

²⁵West, II, 394.

²⁶Sommer, of course, continued to involve himself with the college issue well into the 1930's. Sears, in the biography of his father-in-law, states that "Armstrong's statement [quoted in n. 24] was interpreted by Sommer and his friends as a threat that anyone who would not contribute to the college would be damned. Twenty years later a

The controversy continued to rage, and occupied Sommer's attention to the point that his name became associated with a position often referred to as "anti-college," although as we have seen, that was not Sommer's position, at least in the beginning. But he continued to deal with the subject to the extent that he would later look back and estimate that "the controversy required of me five to ten years' writing and preaching to save the churches of Christ north of the Ohio River from being deceived by the "college craze," which was common in the Southland."²⁷

woman wrote Armstrong to ask if this was what he meant. He replied that . . . after twenty years, "I like it pretty well yet" (p. 74). A dozen years later (in 1938, at a meeting in Detroit), the two men met, and parted with Armstrong thinking that "he [Sommer] has modified" his position (Sears, p. 86). Yet when Armstrong himself died in 1944, one of Sommer's old writers, W. W. Otey, reproduced a letter from Armstrong in which the former college president had said: "I feel distressed sometimes over the condition of the church everywhere — For instance I think that our schools are all in line to build up the clergy and that the church in general is trending toward denominationalism. I do not know what can be done, maybe nothing, but I do think there is a need for us to put on the brakes and warn the brotherhood about the definite trends of these times. . . . I think . . . that all our schools are set for the training of professional preachers. I tell them at Harding College that we are also being influenced by these trends . . ." (quoted in IV. W. Otey, Bible Colleges [Belle Plain, Kansas: by the author, 1945] p. 15). Otey, who, in the words of Armstrong's son-in-law, "had become a firm friend . . . in these last years," sent the letter to G. H. P. Showalter, Firm Foundation editor who published the material. He included this notation: "I have read and verified the quotation. I will add that last June when I was at Harding College . . ., Brother -Armstrong in a conversation with me stated substantially the same thing. In addition he stated to me that, as is well known, he had his debates with Daniel Sommer on the college question years ago, but that, as the schools are now going, Sommer was, after all, largely correct in his criticisms" (ibid., p. 16).

²⁷"A Record of My Life -No. 44," ACR, LXXXVI.-14 (July 15, 1941), p. 9.

In February, 1907, Sommer returned to the state of Missouri, less than forty miles from where he had begun his debating career nearly twenty years before, to debate the "Bible college question" with the best representative Armstrong's school at Odessa could furnish:

B. F. Rhodes, an excellent collegiate debater and one who "had a brilliant mind, a flashing, often ironic wit, was widely read, and had a memory stored with knowledge of nearly every conceivable subject."²⁸

This debate was published by Sommer, as "A Report of Skirmishes Introductory to Another Skirmish between Daniel Sommer and J. N. Armstrong," a written debate which took place during 1908.²⁹ During all this time Sommer kept up a relentless attack through the pages of the Review, to the extent that he alienated himself from many of the members of the church, especially in the South.

During this time Sommer found a kindred spirit in the person of the crusty Texas frontier evangelist, Jefferson Davis Tant.³⁰ Tant was carrying on a battle, similar to that of Sommer's in the Midwest, against the abuses (but not of the principle of the college's right to operate) of some of the schools in Texas. In 1937, shortly

²⁸Sears, 72.

²⁹A Report of Skirmishes Between a Religious Journal and a Religio-Secular College ([Indianapolis]: n.p., [1907]); Daniel Sommer and J. N. Armstrong, A Written Discussion on the Bible School ([Indianapolis] : n.p., 1908).

³⁰Tant's son, later to become a prominent preacher, editor, and debater as the postWorld War II Churches of Christ went through the same sort of sociological evolution described by Sommer and the statistics in Chapter II, has published a biography of Tant. See Fanning Yater Tant, J. D. Tant: Texas Preacher (Lufkin, Texas: The Gospel Guardian Company, 1958), pp. 222, 321ff., and 421ff for a discussion of Tant's stance toward Bible Colleges. See also J. D. Tant, "Where Are We Drifting?" Firm Foundation, XXVI:5 (January 18, 1910), p. 5; O. A. Carr, "Our Colleges," FF, XXVI:5 (February 1, 1910); Tant, "To Brother O. A. Carr," FF, XXVI:9 (March 10, 1910), p. 4; J. N. Armstrong, "Our Schools," FF, XXVI:14 (April 5, 1910), p. 1; L. S. White, "Schools, Churches, Orphan Homes," FF, XXVI:15 (April 12, 1910), p. 3; R. L. Whiteside, "Abilene Notes," ...

before his death (and Sommer's as well),³¹ he wrote the Indianapolis editor a letter in which he made predictions which are interesting in view of developments among Churches of Christ since the death of these two. He said, in part:

I shall always rejoice I met you at the Lectureship at Abilene (Tex.) some years ago. I realized then that we were both out of our place. The brethren had no use for me because I did not have a college education. They had no use for you because you did not recognize the College as a divine institution and that the Church should be subject to it. . . . But the time is about here that if a man knows the New Testament by memory and speaks Greek and Hebrew fluently, he is not wanted in many churches in Texas if he has no degree from Abilene or David Lipscomb College.

It was thought that you were "extreme" on the college work, but of late years I have said the time will come that we will go so far from Bible Christianity that we can well say, "We had a prophet among us but did not know it."

It is not necessary for me to repeat: "Bible colleges" have led from God in all ages of the past.

Bethany and Lexington are living examples; and it won't be long till Nashville and Abilene will follow.

I will always rejoice I met you, and hope I may meet you again before crossing "the great divide." Fraternaly, J. D. Tant³²

FE, XXVI:16 (April 19, 1910), p. 3; John T. Poe, "Strength in Union," FE, XXVI: 17 (April 26, 1910), p. 1; N. L. C. [lark], "Gunter Bible College," FE, XXVI:22 (May 31, 1910), p. 2; Tant, "The Information Given," FE, XXVI:20 (May 17, 1910), p. 2; and G. H. P. S. [howalter], "Remarks," FE, XXVI:20 (May 17, 1910), p. 2.

³¹Sommer died February 19, 1940, at the age of ninety; Tant passed on June 1, 1941, four weeks shy of eighty years of age.

³²Apostolic Review, LXXXI.-49-50 (December 7, 1937), p. 5. The idea of the repetition of digression due to the same cause (colleges), was a popular one often expressed by Sommer, Tant, and others who opposed the schools. Sommer said, in a typical comment, "'A great deal has been said about the patience of Job,' said a modern witticist, 'but a man who will let a hornet sting him twice in the place has more patience than he has common sense.' I say the same about the hornet of collegeism in the disciple brotherhood. If we allow it to sting us twice in the same place, or in the same generation, we certainly lack common sense" (Sommer "In Regard to Earthly Riches" p. 8)

It was intimated by Harding ³³ during this discussion that Sommer was actually only venting his spleen after having been rejected for the presidency of Potter Bible College, losing out to Harding for the post. This Sommer denied.³⁴ But it was repeated through the years, with embellishment each time, until it was rumored after Sommer's death that he aspired to the presidency of Bethany College!³⁵ The fact that the source of the rumor was likely Harding himself, the third-hand nature of the evidence that those who have passed on the rumor have used to support it, and Sommer's extensive "track record" over a period of years preceding the establishment of such colleges among Churches of Christ, makes such an idea highly unlikely. In the words of one

³³Sommer's reference to "a certain college president who has been charging what I have written on the subject to envy and jealousy," is obviously about Harding; the charge is repeated by Harding's grandson-in-law (Sears, The Eyes of Jehovah: The Life and Faith of James Alexander Harding [Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1970], p. 192). and by A. T. DeGroot, The Grounds of Division Among the Disciples of Christ (Chicago: n.p., 1940), pp. 162-163. Each relies on flimsy "hearsay" evidence. While it is true that Sommer did know the Potters prior to this time (see Sommer, "My Southern Tour," p. 8), it would not have been difficult in that time for a man like Sommer to start a college of his own, had that been his desire. He had successfully raised \$15,000 to take over the Review, and even one of his critics admits that "In those years, before the accreditation of colleges became a requirement, . . . any group of competent teachers willing to make the necessary sacrifices could establish a new institution" (Sears, For Freedom, p. 71).

³⁴"Educating Preachers," OR, XLVI:31 (August 4, 1903), p. 1.

³⁵Cecil N. Wright, "The Cooperation Controversy," GA, XCIII:25 (June 21, 1951), p. 390; idem., "Correction," GA, XCIII:28 (July 12, 1951), p. 439; [B. C. Goodpasture], "Editor's Note," ibid., "And Just What Do You Think of This?" ACR, XCVI:7 (July, 1951), pp. 14-15; and Bessie Sommer to W. W. Otey, July 9, 1951 (now at Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville; Xerox copy in author's possession).

well-recognized scholar who has repeated the charge in print, it "would be correct to say that we have only oral history here, with all of its possibilities for error,"³⁶ and that "the . . . opinion . . . that I cited runs contrary to all other and better documented opinions and facts . . . I agree that what we have before us is, indeed, just about offhand opinion. No evidence was presented to me; it was a remark in conversation. . . ." ³⁷

These kinds of charges merely made Sommer more determined in his opposition to "save the churches from the college craze," and drove him further away from brethren already alienated. As Sommer passed his sixtieth year, he repetitiously was involved in a perpetually running controversy (or "skirmish," as he phrased it) with his brethren.³⁸

In our concluding chapter, we shall recount Sommer's eclipse into relative obscurity among the brethren who supported colleges (probably a majority of the Churches of Christ), and the incidents of the meteoric rise as an elder statesman among the Disciples as an octogenarian.

³⁶DeGroot to author, March 11, 1974.

³⁷DeGroot to author, March 27, 1974.

³⁸See, for instance, Sommer's exchanges with E. A. Elam during April and May of 1913, and his "skirmish" with F. B. Srygley more than a decade later, in August of 1923.

CHAPTER X

FROM SEPARATION TO UNIFICATION

Sommer's involvement with the "Bible School" controversy had persisted to such a degree that by the end of World War I, the polemic term "Sommerism" had undergone a subtle shift in meaning. First coined by J. C. McQuiddy in the Gospel Advocate, it had been intimately connected with the Sand Creek Declaration, and stood as a symbol of the separation of the Christian Churches from the Churches of Christ.¹ Over the next quarter-century, however, Sommer had separated himself (if not by formal declaration of disfellowship, at least in practical terms of dissociation, public criticism, debate and censure) from his noninstrumental brethren in the South as well.² "Sommerism" had come to mean (and still does) opposition to "Bible schools."

Sommer had developed a feeling of antagonism toward those in the South, which antipathy he frequently mentioned. Although he spoke favorably of many people in the South, he viewed a preaching trip there almost a journey to a foreign country.³ He confided to Frederick D.

¹See Chapter VII, n. 50, and Chapter VIII, n. 2.

²Although Sommer was cut off from the main body of the Churches of Christ, which in 1926 comprised nearly half a million people (see Chapter II at n. 31), Sommer's paper was taken by subscription by nearly 10,000 people in 1924 (tabulation of subscription lists obtained for the author from Bessie Sommer, Review office manager and Sommer's daughter, by L- A. Stauffer of Indianapolis. ;

³See Sommer, "My Southern Tour," OR, XLVI:28 (July 14, 1903), p. 8.

Kershner, Dean of Butler University's College of Religion, that he would "find our Southern Disciples offish. They have a 'Dixie' feeling," said Sommer.⁴ Several years later, in a letter to F. B. Srygley of the Gospel Advocate staff, Sommer tried to explain "what we have suffered in the Northland by Southern preachers," J. A. Harding in particular.⁵

Thus when J. N. Cowan, a Texas preacher, "came up from the Southland to disturb as many disciples as possible about the 'one-class' question, 'the war question,' 'the rebaptism question,' and . . . 'the woman silence question,'" Sommer agreed to meet him in debate, even though the aged warrior was nearly 77 years old at that time.⁶

⁴Sommer to Kershner, January 29, 1931, in Kershner Papers, Series IX, Folder 139, Box 27, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis.

⁵Sommer to F. B. Srygley, May 13, 1933, in material now at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville.

⁶Sommer, "Addenda," in William E. Wallace, Daniel Sommer, 1850-1940: A Biography (n. p., 1969), p. 282. Sommer's terminology perhaps needs further identification. The topics for the discussion were concerned with whether or not the church could organize or subdivide into classes smaller than the entire worship assembly for the purpose of Bible study; whether a person baptized in another religious group should be required to repeat the rite to be accepted as a member of the Churches of Christ; whether a Christian could participate in, or even support the efforts of the government in the conduct of a war; and whether or not women were allowed to teach a Bible class or even speak in the assembly of the church. There had been discussions for years among churches of Christ on these and other questions, and quite often a group would isolate themselves around one or more of these particular points and refuse fellowship or recognition to anyone, even other members of the Churches of Christ who did not espouse an identical position. J. D. Tant, the crusty Texas preacher, recalled a few years after Sommer's debate with Cowan, "Forty and eight years I have been a debater in the church of Christ. Have debated with thirteen denominations, involving three hundred or more debates; and have met . . . J. N. Cowan, leading advocate with the anti-class faction, representing one of the fourteen factions into which they have split since pulling off from the church of Christ" (quoted in Fanning Yater Tant, J. D. Tant: Texas Preacher [Lufkin, Texas: Gospel Guardian Company, 1958], p. 445). According to one source, "Cowan had gained a fairly wide reputation among Churches of Christ as a debater in the Midwest and

In the aftermath of World War I, many members of the Churches of Christ joined with their fellow Americans in a consideration of "the peace question."⁷ A pacifistic position which denied the right of a Christian to participate in warfare came to be quite popular between the two World Wars, although it had been an established position among many Southern members of the church at least since the Civil War, having its most influential spokesman in the person of David Lipscomb.⁸ While the immediate cause for the debate was the agitation in Sullivan, Indiana (where the debate occurred), which resulted in the division of the church there over the issue of Bible classes,⁹ there were powerful sectional motivations which were underlying factors. When the Texan Cowan alleged that soldiers were murderers and that military service was a sin which would need to be repented of as certainly as adultery, fornication, or drunkenness, one observer asked:

How many old soldiers who endured such unspeakable privations to put down the rebellion and to wash from the face of our fair land the curse of human slavery are ready to receive this

South, having engaged in one hundred oral religious debates, eighteen of these on the war issue" (Matthew C. Morrison, "Daniel Sommer's Seventy Years of Religious Controversy," [Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1972], p. 194). This information will provide some background information in the divided nature of the Churches of Christ during this period.

⁷For a general survey of the pacifist movement in the United States by a recognized social historian, see Merle Curti, Peace or War: The American Struggle, 1656-1936 (Boston, 1959).

^aSee David Edwin Harrell, Jr., "Disciples of Christ Pacifism in Nineteenth-Century Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XXXI:3 (September, 1962), pp. 263-274.

⁹An observer of the debate provided some background information for the readers of the Review by saying that "those who were inclined to agitate" had wrought a "division of the church in Sullivan" in 1924 and that "this debate is the direct result of that division" (Horace Hinds, "That Sommer-Cowan Debate," AR, LXXIX:50 [December 14, 1926], p. 11). The debate took place November 9 to 14, 1926.

doctrine, acknowledge their 'sin,' stop their pensions and return to the government the money they received for their service of crime . . . ?¹⁰

The debate, which Sommer printed and distributed,¹¹ attracted the attention of the churches in the surrounding area¹² and of the people in Sullivan itself.¹³

With the conclusion of this debate, however, an era of Sommer's life came to an end.¹⁴ Having already lived longer than many men

¹⁰Ibid., p. 12.

¹¹Debate Between J. N. Cowan . . . and Daniel Sommer. . . . (n. p., [1927]).

¹²The report of the debate in the Review stated that "few wanted the debate; most of the brethren were sore that it was brought here" (Hinds, p. 12), but a preacher who attended the debate, and who has lived in Sullivan since 1927, stated that the debate was well attended by members of the church in surrounding counties and across the state line in nearby Illinois (J. C. Roady, interview with author, July 10, 1973).

¹³Morrison is incorrect in his assertion that the "local papers carried no notice or report of the debate," which misinformation he speculates "confirms . . . the members were embarrassed by this public display of their differences" (pp. 195-196). Under the title, "Bible Debate at Church of Christ," the Sullivan Daily Times carried the following item: "A great Bible debate, with vital issues to be discussed that are of national interest, will be held at the Church of Christ in Sullivan, November 9, at 7:30 P.M. The disputants are J. N. Cowan of Robstown, Texas, and Daniel Sommer, of Indianapolis. These men are recognized as leaders of their respective positions on the questions at issue. Those who hear them will be well compensated and those who fail to hear them will have missed a great opportunity. Both men have had years of experience as public debaters and are well qualified to present their positions with (sic) great force and clearness" (Sullivan Daily Times, XXIII:219 [Saturday, November 6, 1926], p. 3. In the next week's edition of the paper, the church at 118 N. State Street advertised preaching by A. E. Harper, one of the moderators (ibid., XXIII:224 [Saturday, November 15, 1926], p. 5).

¹⁴Sommer had published a tract on the subject of "rebaptism," entitled, A Discussion of the Question about Valid Immersion Offered to Reasonable Readers, sometime prior to 1917. This had been replied to by H. C. Harper, a Floridian who published The 'Review' and Baptism, or Daniel Sommer Answered on Sect Baptism (Union City, Georgia: The Apostolic Way [1917?]). Sommer also carried on a critique of the writings of R. H. Boll on premillennial doctrine and the second coming of Christ during 1926 just before Boll would engage in a definitive "

(77 years), Sommer lived more than another decade, and would become prominently involved in efforts to restore unit among the fragmented "Restoration Movement" —unity which had been lost during Sommer's young manhood, and to which loss he was a visible contributor. He would not succeed, but the efforts of his last years are intriguing as well as significant.

Why men often significantly alter their opinions, religious, political, or otherwise, as old age approaches, is a question which has intrigued historians for many years.¹⁵ This question — more philosophical than strictly historical — is beyond the scope of this work, but we do wish to attempt to answer the question which has been raised with regard to Sommer: Did he change his position, and if so, why did he do so? Before we can answer this question correctly, some of the events of Sommer's last decade must be recounted, and we must learn something about the man who was to have more influence on Sommer than any other person during this decade.

Frederick D. Kershner

In the summer of 1930, Sommer received the following invitation by mail:

written debate with H. Leo Boles, Gospel Advocate mainstay. (See Leo Lipscomb Boles and J. E. Choate, I'll Stand on the Rock: A Biography of H. Leo Boles [Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1965], p. 179). For Sommer's articles on Boll, see "Concerning R. H. Boll," AR, LXIX:35 (August 31, 1926), pp. 4-6, AR, LXIX:36 (September 7, 1926), 4-6 and "More About R. H. Boll," AR, LXIX:42 (October 19, 1926), pp. 9-11.

¹⁵For a discussion of the recurrence of this problem with reference to two major figures in recent Southern history, see C. Vann Woodward, "A Southern Brief for Racial Equality," in American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1972), pp. 209-211.

June 5, 1930

Dear Brother Sommer,

I have greatly appreciated your articles in the Apostolic Review, even when they were somewhat critical of my own position. I think that your strictures on the higher education of the ministry deserve thoughtful consideration. I am therefore writing to invite you to discuss this subject at our summer school institute early in July. There will probably be someone who will be asked to state the case for higher education, and I would like for you to give the other side. Dr. A. T. Robertson of Louisville will give six lectures for the institute . . . His general theme is "Paul and the Intellectuals". I trust you will find it possible to discuss the subject assigned you.

Very sincerely yours,
(signed) Frederick D. Kershner¹⁶

The Review articles Kershner referred to were precipitated by one of his own, "Bible College Deception," carried in his regular weekly column in the Christian-Evangelist.¹⁷ In that article Kershner took the position that an educated ministry was to be desired, but praised the Review as "the patriarch among our religious newspapers," adding that "it is a real religious newspaper in that it advertises nothing except books, . . . and all the reading material is of the devotional and spiritual type." Pointing out that the Review's readers "represent the real Simon-pure orthodox right . . . wing of our movement," he suggested that even though he held a differing position, "there is a certain degree, of wisdom in the opposition to higher education on the part of the conservatives," and concluded that "the temper of the Review is good, whether we agree with all of its conclusions or not."¹⁸

¹⁶Kershner to Sommer, June 5, 1930, Kershner Papers, Series IX, Folder 139, Box 27.

¹⁷Kershner, "As I Think On These Things," CE, LXVI:31 (August i, 1929), p. 1001.

¹⁸Ibid.

This came as a refreshing change to Sommer, and he reprinted the article in the Review. Although commenting that it had appeared in "'the Christian-Evangelist' — a very presumptuous, sacrilegious name for a human enterprise, specially one considerably devoted to offering worldly commodities to its readers," he wrote that the article was a "gratification to me, for it indicates that its author (Frederick Kershner) is capable of writing kindly and fairly concerning the Review."¹⁹ He continued:

This is not usual among those who are by the Review reproved . . . because of their departures 'from the simplicity in Christ'. . . . As a rule, those who have been thus represented in this paper are as hateful toward it . . . as rebellious Jews were toward the prophet Jeremiah. . . . But Kershner has done better than that, on this and several other occasions. ²⁰

This overture on Kershner's part precipitated a friendly exchange between the two men through their respective columns.²¹ The fraternal sparring was to grow and develop into a genuinely warm, personal friendship — and, because of the positions of influence these two religious leaders occupied in their respective fellowships, was to have major repercussions in the groups they represented.

Because of the salient effect Kershner's continuing relationship with Sommer was to have on the aged patriarch, a brief examination of some aspects of Kershner's life and work is in order.

¹⁹Sommer, "Items of Interest," AR, LXXXIII:21 (May 27, 1930), pp. 11-12.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Kershner had referred to a February 4, 1930 Review article in his column, entitling it "Slipping" and saying, "The ancient and venerable Apostolic Review is evidently slipping," for the Review staff had printed a column of humor, advertised sectarian books, and even offered an Edgar A. Guest poem in one issue. To this tongue-in-cheek criticism Sommer replied: "That's right, Frederick, 'hit 'im again,' if you have anything more on that order! I have been telling my young

Kershner's Life

Shortly after Daniel Sommer had left the state of Maryland to begin preaching in Kelton, Pennsylvania a child was born into a farming family near Clear Spring, Maryland — about ten miles west of Hagerstown and just across the state line from Pennsylvania.²² The date was August 25, 1875; the child was named Frederick Doyle Kershner.

His parents, Andrew Jacob and Hannah Leshner Kershner, were descended from those who "came of the heterogeneous hodgepodge of heretics and insurgents who were transported by William Penn from the Old World to the New."²³ After his family moved to Hagerstown, Kershner developed into an able student. Whereas Sommer was forced to discontinue his education at the age of nine, a quarter-century earlier, Kershner was enrolled in high school at that age, and later studied under a private tutor.

Kershner attended Kentucky University, a disciple-related institution, where he studied under J. W. McGarvey. That institution granted him the bachelor's degree in 1899, and Kershner straightway went to Princeton University, where he studied under Woodrow Wilson,

folks in the Review office that "little stuff is not apostolic ..." The "young folks" back in the office (actually, Sommer's children, to whom he referred, were in their mid-fifties) replied with mock horror, "And just think — we were almost in the notion of advertising one of Kershner's books!" (See "Items of Interest," "Let the Truth 3e Known!" "What Will We Do About It?" and "Pick-Ups," in AR, LXXIII:19 (May 13, 1930), pp. 2, 3, 13).

²²Unless otherwise indicated, all biographical information concerning Kershner has been taken from his biographical sketch in the Christian-Evangelist LXXVI:42 (October 20, 1938), p. 1149; and David C. Rogers, "Frederick D. Kershner: Educator, Editor, and Ecumenist" (B.D. thesis, Butler University School of Religion, 1952), pp. 1-13.

²³Kershner, Christian-Evangelist, LXXXVIII:4 (January 25, 1950)

Henry Van Dyke, and others; he received his M.A. in 1900. According to one who interviewed Kershner shortly before his death, "He desired greatly to continue his education at Harvard . . . [and was] highly recommended ... to the Harvard faculty for a fellowship, but for some unknown reason he failed to receive it."²⁴ Instead, Kershner accepted an offer to return to Hagerstown as a professor at KeeMar College. His arrangement with the college allowed him to teach English as well as the Ancient languages — Greek and Latin — in which he had become proficient. He was also allowed to take a year's leave in 1903, which he spent studying the works of Shakespeare and Browning in the British Museum in London, and visiting the museums and art galleries in Florence, Naples, and Milan, Italy. This trip, as well as later travels (to New York and Philadelphia, among other places) to lecture about his European Studies, were made possible by the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching. He returned to KeeMar, where he remained until 1905, when he left to take charge of a small, struggling Christian Church at Martinsburg, West Virginia.²⁵ The years 1906 and 1908 found him at the American University at Harriman, Tennessee, from which place he was called, at age 33, to the presidency of Milligan College.²⁶

It was while at Milligan that Kershner began to write frequently for Disciples papers, usually with regard to some aspect of the growth

²⁴Rogers, p. 7.

²⁵Rogers says that Kershner "had remarkable success" in building the church from about 75 members to over 250 members in a year (p. 9).

²⁶See Kershner, "Milligan College: A Prospect and Retrospect," Christian Standard, XLIV:12 (March 21, 1908?), p. 506; and F. H. Knight, "Milligan College." CE. XLVI:27 (July 2, 1908). p. 851.

of Milligan.²⁷ While at Milligan, he was married to the former Pearl Archer, on August 25, 1909. The following year he was permitted once again to study in Europe: his journey this time took him to England, Belgium, Switzerland, France, and Germany. Upon his return he resumed administrative duties at Milligan until he accepted a position as president of Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.²⁸

While at TCU, Kershner made significant contributions to the improvement of that institution.²⁹ Tragedy struck him only a year after moving to Fort Worth: his young wife died suddenly on September 13, 1912. Before leaving Fort Worth, however, Kershner remarried, this time to Elsie Martin. The marriage took place on June 15, 1915; three children (Frederick Doyle, Jr., Mary Eleanor, and Beatrice Pearl) completed the family.

By 1915, at the age of 40, Kershner was of significant enough stature to be named editor of the prestigious Christian-Evangelist; he moved his family to St. Louis for that purpose. While editor, Kershner "brought the paper's subscription quota to a new high,"³⁰ and

²⁷See "Milligan College," CS, XLIV:29 (July 18, 1908), p. 1231, and "As Seen from the Dome," CE, XLVI:7 (February 18, 1909), p. 207. Kershner was also requested by the Christian Standard to compose a eulogy for J. W. McGarvey from a student's viewpoint, after McGarvey's death in 1911. Also interesting for catching a glimpse of the mind of the young Kershner is "What Shall It Profit a College' If It Gain the Whole World and Lose Its Own Soul?" CX, XLV:35 (August 28, 1909), p. 1502.

²⁸Kershner, "An Open Letter to the Brotherhood in Texas," CS, XLVII:47 (November 25, 1911), p. 1950.

²⁹For Kershner's activities while president of TCU, see numerous references in Colby D. Hall, History of Texas Christian University: A College of the Cattle Frontier (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1947).

³⁰Rogers, p. 10.

made an historically significant suggestion which wrought a change in the structure of the Disciples of Christ sufficiently significant to be labelled by the historians of the Disciples, "an end to this era of indecision and the beginning of" a new type of convention system. This change, "brought about by the suggestion from Frederick D. Kershner, then editor of the Christian-Evangelist," is described by those historians:

In a very brief but historically significant editorial of November 2, 1916, Dr. Kershner proposed twin conventions, frankly combining the delegate feature in one house and the mass meeting in another.³¹

However, Kershner's stay on the staff of that paper would be short-lived. Two months after his editorial suggestion, Kershner announced his resignation, and several months later accepted a position as Book Editor of a rival journal, the Christian Standard (lively in an attempt to quell the rivalry between the two).³² He continued through the years to fill the columns of both papers, and others as well, with his regular writings. A number of columns ("Department of Religious Problems," "As I Think On These Things," "Stars," and "Comets and Constellations") were only a part of the amazing amount of writing which Kershner did, in addition to his teaching and administrative responsibilities.

Beginning in 1919 and continuing until 1924, he was professor of Christian Doctrine at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. A final

³¹Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred Thomas DeGroot, The Disciples of Christ: A History (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1948), p. 526.

³²See Kershner "An Announcement" CE. July 19 1917. Rogers n 10

relocation to Indianapolis was made when he accepted the Deanship of Butler University's College of Religion in 1924.³³

Kershner was also a prolific author,³⁴ and although "a series of operations in 1937 and 1938 left him almost completely blind,"³⁵ he served as President of the International Convention of Disciples of Christ, meeting in Denver.³⁶

Described by a student of his as "an immense scholar with nothing less than a massive memory" and "a steel-trap mind,"³⁷ Kershner was perhaps best described recently by one who was a colleague of his on the College of Religion faculty, late in Kershner's career in the 1950's:

³³For the predecessors and the revival of a School of Religion at Butler University, see Henry K. Shaw, Hoosier Disciples: A Comprehensive History of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1966), pp. 353ff; and Kershner, "A University for the Disciples," CE, LXIV:3 (January 20, 1927), 96-97.

³⁴Kershner's published works, in addition to various syllabi on art, drama, and literature, included The Religion of Christ (Revell, 1908; Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1917); Christian Baptism (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1913; and Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1917); How to Promote Christian Union (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1914); Restoration Handbook (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1919); Sermons for Special Days (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922); Christian Union Overture (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1925); Horizons of Immortality (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1926); The Spiritual Message of Great Art (Indianapolis: Meigs Publishing Company, 1927); and The Pioneers of Christian Thought (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1950). These works indicate interests ranging from early church history to textual criticism, Restoration thought, philosophy, art, and extra-sensory perception and psychic phenomena.

³⁵Rogers, p. 11.

³⁶See Kershner's Presidential Address, "One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church," delivered on October 16, 1938, and printed in the Christian Standard for October 22, 1958, pp. 1029ff.

³⁷DeGroot to author, March 11, 1974, and March 27, 1974.

Dean Kershner was an intriguing personality, who blended popular pragmatism with humanistic culture, apologetic for the "Restoration Plea" with theological sophistication, and journalistic wit with scholarly erudition. A graduate of Kentucky University with a Princeton M.A., he had lived for some months in Florence, reading Dante and Browning and studying the art of the Renaissance. He had served successively as editor of the Christian-Evangelist and the Christian Standard, rival journals, as President of Texas Christian University, and as professor of Christian Doctrine at Drake University. Conservative in theology, he was liberal in spirit; as a churchman he undertook the role of conciliator. Throughout his ministry, Dr. Kershner suffered from poor eyesight and in his later years from total blindness. In 1944 he retired from the deanship, though he continued as professor of ethics and Christian Doctrine.³⁸

Kershner was honored with doctorates from Bethany College in 1913 and Transylvania University in 1916.

The Butler University Midsummer. Institutes

One of the significant developments which occurred under Kershner's Deanship at Butler was the creation of the Midsummer Institute, in which invited speakers addressed students, faculty, and ministers and church workers from around the state and elsewhere. Begun in 1929 with A. T. Robertson as invited speaker,³⁹ the first Institute was judged successful enough to become an annual affair. Robertson was invited to return, and Sommer, who was in the midst of a friendly yet serious exchange of ideas with Kershner, was also invited to speak at a morning session.⁴⁰ Sommer accepted, with these comments:

³⁸Ronald E. Osborn, in "Education for the Ministry," CTS Bulletin: President's Report for the Work of the Ministry (Indianapolis, 1973], nn 4-5

³⁹Kershner, "A. T. Robertson," CE, LXVII:30 (July 24, 1930), p. 969.

⁴⁰See above, at n. 16,

. . . the invitation you extend to me is especially appreciated because it is offered through the one to whom I have several times referred in the Review, and not always in a complimentary manner and though compliance with your invitation will require of me a return to Indianapolis that I did not intent to make so soon, yet I shall, the Lord willing . . .⁴¹

Kershner responded immediately:

I want to assure you that we shall give you the most cordial reception and that your argument will be heard with the most careful attention. After all, what we want is the truth and no one ever finds it who is unwilling to keep his mind open for it. May I say again that I am a constant reader of the Apostolic Review, and that I greatly appreciate the work you are doing on the paper. It will be a pleasure to meet you and to welcome you to the free and open discussion which the Institute is intended to promote.⁴²

Apparently Kershner's irenic ecumenicity had kindled in Sommer the desire to seek reapprochment with those from whom he had been separated, for he wrote Kershner after the conclusion of the 1930 Institute: "I am in correspondence with the Standard's editor concerning the oneness of the disciple brotherhood."⁴³ Sommer also made plans to visit with Peter Ainslie, ultraliberal Disciple editor in Baltimore, which Kershner approvingly acknowledged in inviting Sommer to return for the 1931 Institute.⁴⁴ In accepting the invitation to speak on "the causes and the cures of the dissensions among the disciples," Sommer informed his correspondent that "Dr. Ainslie has invited me to

⁴¹Sommer to Kershner, June 11, 1930, Kershner Papers, Series IX, Folder 139, Box 27, Christian Theological Seminary. Unless otherwise specified, all Kershner correspondence is in this location.

⁴²Kershner to Sommer, June 13, 1930.

⁴³Sommer to Kershner, November 11, 1930.

his home, and proposes to lodge and feed me while we discuss our differences. The Lord willing I shall accept the invitation."⁴⁵

For the 1931 Institute, Sommer and Kershner proposed to invite a number of representatives from a wide variety of positions within the broad spectrum of the "Restoration Movement." However, apparently due to political infighting among each of their own respective groups, those invited were unwilling to appear.⁴⁶ Sommer,

⁴⁵Ibid.; see also Sommer to Kershner, December 13, 1930. Ainslie had said to Sommer: "I should like to see a group of Disciples, including those who you are identified with and those the Standard and Evangelist are identified with and those that I am identified with sit down and spend the day together in conference . . ." (Ainslie to Sommer, November 20, 1930, now at DCHS). See also Ainslie to Sommer, December 6, 1930 and December 12, 1931, ibid. Sommer also inquired about C. C. Morrison's attitude and stance toward such an effort (Ainslie to Sommer, December 6, 1930).

⁴⁶At the time there was a controversy among the Christian Church people so that the Christian Standard Editor refused to appear on the program with Ainslie; Kershner could not get Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Gospel Advocate editor, or G. H. P. Showalter, editor of the Firm Foundation among Churches of Christ to reply to his letters (Kershner to Sommer, January 26, 1931; and January 31, 1931; Sommer to Kershner, February 14, 1931; Kershner to Sommer, March 11, 1931 and March 23, 1931). In the place of other representative men, Sommer suggested that M. C. Kurfees of Louisville be invited to present the viewpoint representative of many members of Churches of Christ. In Sommer's estimation, "Kurfees is the most careful, modest, and scholarly man I know of in the Southland" (Sommer to Kershner, February 5, 1931). However, Sommer continued that "He may plead ill health as a reason for not coming to Indianapolis ..." and before two more weeks had passed, Kurfees was dead (Sommer to Kershner, ibid.; Gospel Advocate, LXXIII:10 [March 5, 1931] pp. 260-263. Upon learning of his death, Sommer said, "I regretted to learn of his departure, for I knew him favorably. And I fear we may not find any other man in the Southland who will be as much disposed as I think he would have been toward our proposed unity meeting" (Sommer to Kershner, March 9, 1931). Kurfees had written a hymn pleading for unity among brethren which Sommer had suggested be sung at the Institute. Sommer also suggested that any singing be done without the instrument "as a gesture in harmony with the occasion," to which suggestion Kershner readily agreed, stating, "As I have said so many times, it is perfectly satisfactory to me to worship without instrumental music, and I am always willing to do so, although I frankly confess that the instrument does not disturb my worship if one is used in the service" (Sommer to Kershner, February 5, 1931); Kershner to Sommer, March 11, 1931; Sommer to Kershner, June 2, 1931; Kershner to Sommer, June 5, 1931.

however, still maintained the attitude of willingness to go anywhere as long as he was allowed to preach his convictions.⁴⁷ He commented to Kershner; "With my Bible in hand I would be willing to hear 'His Satanic Majesty,' for I wish to know the worst as well as the best of those who oppose truth."⁴⁸

In the spring of 1931, Sommer made good his plan to visit with Ainslie,⁴⁹ although the trip was delayed for three weeks on account of the death of his second wife.⁵⁰ He returned to Indianapolis to engage in the program he had helped Kershner to plan, and left with a euphoric feeling which is expressed in a letter shortly after the program:

⁴⁷See Chapter VI, n. 34.

⁴⁸Sommer to Kershner, January 29, 1931.

⁴⁹Upon first meeting Ainslie, Sommer described him in this fashion: "He is a genial gentleman and says he 'likes the Review' — says he had 'previously misjudged the paper' . . . I find him perfectly candid." Ainslie invited Sommer to preach at the congregation where he worshipped, and Sommer reported, "He says the church 'will sing without the instrument on my account.' I told him I could endure his music as well as he could endure my preaching. He laughed, and thus we have begun." Several days later Sommer wrote to Kershner that "He is as candid as I am and on that account I like him. His wife is also candid. . . . I regret to say that they both underestimate the importance of the ordinances. . . . They come very near seeming willing to substitute a pious life for baptism. . . ." Confiding that "as a result, Peter Ainslie's wife has not yet been immersed," Sommer cautioned "But keep this to yourself, for his critics should not know this." Sommer concluded by saying that "You and I know better than to suppose that either baptism without the pious life, or the pious life without baptism, should be regarded as acceptable to God." (Sommer to Kershner, April 24, 1931).

⁵⁰Sommer's first wife of half a century died in 1924, and Sommer was remarried to Esther Letitia White of Ontario, Canada in 1927.

... I am wondering if (as the word "Jerusalem" means "foundation of peace") . . . Indianapolis may not be made, or regarded, as a sort of Jerusalem for the brotherhood of disciples. It is nearer the center of the population than any other city of importance. Yes, and I am wondering if Butler University may not become the place where the missionaries may learn the languages they will need. ⁵¹

Sommer also published in booklet form An Appeal for Unity, which was described by Kershner as "something forthright and direct in the style as well as the substance of the volume. . . ." ⁵²

However, Sommer's euphoria was short-lived, as it became apparent that while there were those who were willing to talk in a brotherly manner, there was no man, or group of men, who would, or could, remove the things which had divided the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ a half-century or more before. And Sommer was not about to cease his opposition, although the tenor of his objections may have been less frenzied. Convictions had not changed among Sommer and those he represented. He continued to correspond with Kershner, and to appear on his program,⁵³ but he came to feel that those in the Christian Churches had progressed too far for them to ever be unified with the Churches of Christ.

⁵¹Sommer to Kershner, July 31, 1931.

⁵² Kershner, "Brother Sommer's Appeal," CE, LXVIII:35 (August 27, 1931), p. 1137.

⁵³Sommer appeared in a debate on the war question with James A. Crain in 1932; there being no Institute in 1933 due to Depression era funding cuts at Butler, he did not speak again until 1934, and was invited to return again in 1935 to speak about Benjamin Franklin (Butler University Midsummer Institutes, Programs, Kershner Papers, Series XVII, Box 54, Folder 8). Sommer expressed to Kershner the fear that "in trying to be good-natured we . . . became 'good for nothing.'" (Sommer to Kershner, July 31, 1931).

Sommer did, however, turn his sights upon the unification of the splintered groups among those who did not use the instrument in worship. In the June 21, 1932 issue of the Review, there appeared an article by the Review staff which Sommer later endorsed. It set forth several suggestions by which those who agreed on the nature of the worship of God could present a united front in other things.⁵⁴ Ironically, while the response was generally good, a number of prominent evangelists who had stood with Sommer up to this time bolted and started a rival publication, The Macedonian Call, edited by Sommer's son, D. Austen Sommer.⁵⁵

In 1933, Sommer made a tour of the Churches of Christ, speaking at David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Abilene Christian College in Texas, and several other such institutions operated by Churches of Christ.⁵⁶ Although it left those in the Southern churches somewhat

⁵⁴See Appendix D; for Sommer's endorsement see AR, LXXVII:17-18, (April 25, 1933), p. 10. As Sommer expressed it to Kershner: "We worship with the college folks of the South, regardless of their colleges, because they have kept the worship pure, and we can do the same with other disciples on the same condition." (Sommer to Kershner, February 4, 1936).

⁵⁵See The "Rough Draft": Its Sponsors —Also Its Outworkings — Why We Are Against It, (pamphlet), Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

⁵⁶See Sommer, "A Record of My Life - No 46." ACR, LXXXVI:16 (August 12, 1941), p. 6; "A Record of My Life --No. 47," ACR, LXXXVI:18 (August 26, 1941), p. 5; "A Record of My Life -No. 48," ACR, LXXXVI:18 (September 9, 1941), p. 5; and "A Record of My Life -No. 49," ACR, LXXXVI:19 (September 23, 1941), pp. 9-10; "Report of Progress," AR, LXXVII:11-12 (March 14, 1933), pp. 10-12; F. B. Srygley, "Brother Sommer's Visit to Nashville," GA, LXXV:15 (April 13, 1933), p. 348, and Sommer's six-part series, "The Supreme Enterprise," Firm Foundation, L:7-13 (February 14-March 28, 1933).

more at ease about Sommer's position ⁵⁷ it did not noticeably alter the structure of those institutions which still, even today, have the same features which Sommer objected to at the turn of the century."

The Termination: Be Thou Faithful Until Death

To the very end of his life, Sommer remained active as a traveling evangelist. In the summer of 1939 he spoke on the last of

⁵⁷James A. Allen, former editor of the Gospel Advocate, commented, after a visit with Sommer, "Many brethren and churches in the South know of Daniel Sommer principally through the Bible College controversy. I venture their knowledge of him, even in this respect, is very partial and incomplete. Brother Sommer is not illiterate and unlearned, but is a highly educated man, a graduate . . . of Bethany College. . . . He believes in schools and colleges. But here is the point: He contends that running a college is a private enterprise just like running a printing office or a religious paper and that we have just as much Bible authority to ask the churches to finance a printing office as we have to ask them to finance a college.... It must be admitted that some of the absurd and extreme things some of our school brethren have written look like the very salvation of mankind depends upon rushing a donation to that school. . . ." (James A. Allen, "Daniel Sommer," Apostolic Times, 11:3 (February, 1933), p. 31.

In response to the question of whether Sommer had altered his position on the college question, Sommer said: ". . . a change has been made in minds of many of those in the Southland who previously contended for those colleges of which I have written. When they now come Northward they seem glad to preach the gospel to the best of their ability without contending for those colleges either publicly or privately. As a result the Review's managers do not denounce them as it did when they were contending for the colleges. Besides this I should mention that several of the journals published in the Southland have opened their columns to the discussion of the college question. As a result changes have been made in the college sentiment in the Southland, and their colleges are no longer regarded as church institutions. But they are referred to as individual and family enterprises to educate young people separate from the evils of state institutions.

. . . the Review has suffered in regard to the college question. It was for many years the only paper of the disciple brotherhood that offered even one word against the "church college," or the religio-secular college' which the church was begged to support. And it was the only paper which opposed and exposed the preachers who tried to secure control of all the churches in behalf of such colleges. As a result so much was offered, and needed to be offered against such colleges that a certain class of its readers learned too well that the church college was dangerous. And those who were of that order could not or would not consider that the Review should relax in its contentions on that subject when the church colleges had quit begging the churches as such for support.

Kershner's Midsummer Institutes,⁵⁸ and that same month appeared on a "Unity Program" at the Englewood Christian Church in Indianapolis, at which H. Leo Boles of David Lipscomb College and the Gospel Advocate addressed an audience of Christian Church preachers.⁵⁹ After leaving the assembly and boarding a train which was to have carried him to evangelistic work in West Virginia, Sommer suffered a stroke which left him blind and partially paralyzed.⁶⁰ The railroad crews, whose acquaintance he had formed over many long years of riding the rails,

Nor could they understand that the Review's managers could afford to relax in their contentions on that subject when several Southern journals had opened their columns to a full and free discussion of the college question. This sentiment in the Review office was adopted: We can afford to relax our contentions against church colleges; for Southern people will more readily accept arguments from their own people than they will from us." (Quoted in Wallace, pp. 280-281).

⁵⁸Butler University Midsummer Institute, 1939 Program. (Kershner Papers, Series XVII, Box 54, Folder 8).

⁵⁹Indianapolis Star, XXXVI:332 (Wednesday, May 3, 1939), p. 15; "Unity Urged For Church Branches," Indianapolis News, May 3, 1939; "Disciples Discuss Unity with Churches of Christ Leaders," CE, LXXVII:19 (May 11, 1939), pp. 499-500. For an account of Boles' speech, see J. E. Choate, The Anchor That Holds: A Biography of Benton Cordell Goodpasture (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1971), pp. 147-152. The Christian Standard printed three articles in response to Boles' speech, which was reprinted serially in the Advocate. See "But It Has Not Worked So," CS, LXXIV:22 (June 3, 1939), p. 3; "Speaking Where the Bible Speaks," CS, LXXIV:23 (June 10, 1939), p. 3; and "We Are Not Under Law, But Under Grace," CS, LXXIV:24 (June 17, 1939), p. 3. The year before, Sommer had visited Freed Hardeman College and discussed the college issue with N. B. Hardeman, possibly the most widely known preacher in the Churches of Christ at that time. See L. L. Briggance, "Special Courses Come to an End," GA, LXXXI:5 (February 2, 1939), p. 113.

⁶⁰Allen Sommer, "The Final Days," in Wallace, pp. 269ff.

saw that he made the proper connections to return home: but it was only a matter of time until his "good fight" was completed.

Sommer passed from this life on February 19, 1940 in the house in Indianapolis which had been his home for nearly half a century.⁶¹ His long life had spanned many significant events — both religious and secular — in American history. He was not only an observer of events, but was one who was responsible for causing some of them. Whether all of the things Sommer engaged in are judged as acceptable by twentieth century religious standards, they occurred nonetheless. Whether one approves or disapproves, a glimpse of Sommer's life and thought can enrich our understanding of the mind of a conservative religious spokesman — and of the people for whom he spoke. If we can come to grips with Sommer's life, we can begin to understand the historical development of the Churches of Christ — and perhaps understand the thought of literally millions of other similar religious conservatives of assorted varieties.

⁶¹For obituary comments, see Indianapolis News, February 19, 1940; "Until We Meet Again," ACR, LXXXV:5 (February 27, 1940), p. 7; Daniel Sommer Robinson (President of Butler University), in ACR, LXXXV:12 (June 4, 1940), p. 13 (from Shane Quarterly); H. Leo Boles, "Daniel Sommer Passes," GA, LXXXII:10 (March 7, 1940), p. 221; G. H. P. Showalter, "The Passing of a Good Man: Daniel Sommer," FE, LXII:13 (March 26, 1940), p. 4; "Daniel Sommer Passes," CS, LXXXV:9 (March 2, 1940), p. 196; and Frederick D. Kershner, "Daniel Sommer," CE, LXXVIII:11 (March 14, 1940), p. 290. Kershner's obituary, which Sommer had requested he write, is reproduced as Appendix E.

EPILOGUE

Daniel Sommer was truly a product of his time. Like many other Americans, he was born of immigrant parents and raised in a predominantly rural society, and he prided himself on his genealogical and geographical background. Even though, again like many of his fellow Americans, he became an urban resident in his adult years, he never completely shed the results of his formative circumstances. He continued to associate with a largely rural religious constituency throughout his long life, retaining such contacts well into the twentieth century. Outspoken and caustic, he was blunt, even earthy, to the point of crudity. He liked to consider himself a plain and plain-spoken individual.

What makes Daniel Sommer worthy of historical study? The author had studiously attempted to avoid personal evaluation of Sommer's life and work throughout this thesis — perhaps even to the point of neglecting the legitimate historical function of analysis and reasonable interpretation. This epilogue will serve as a vehicle to discuss a number of reasons which, in the author's opinion, provide sufficient warrant for a study of Sommer's life. His very longevity, stretching from the days of the Campbells to the middle of this century; his long association with the Midwest generally, and Indianapolis and the North Indianapolis Church of Christ (the author's home town and church, respectively) in particular, as well as the author's life-long acquaintance with descendants of the Sommer family, in addition to the

relative wealth of available material pertaining to Sommer's life; have made a study of Daniel Sommer a personally interesting undertaking for the author. While this does not establish the usefulness, validity, or importance of such a study for anyone else, it has provided the author both access to some types of materials as well as the endurance and fortitude to examine hard-to-obtain and often seemingly meaningless or useless bits of data which others without such interest might not have been able to do.

Beyond these largely personal considerations, however, there is a deeper and wider significance to Daniel Sommer's life. In the first place, many of the issues he addressed are still discussed among Churches of Christ today. Since Sommer's death, a large portion of the Churches of Christ have divided over issues pertaining to church support and control of educational institutions — an issue which even yet is associated with Sommer's name. Many of the arguments and even the vocabulary of parties to the controversy date from Sommer's lifetime. Not only that, but the nature of the division has striking sociological and economic roots which are remarkably similar to the nature of the division in which Sommer participated — which nature Sommer was one of the few to perceive. As a portion of the membership of the Churches of Christ have achieved a degree of educational sophistication and material prosperity since World War II, they have followed the path of their nineteenth century counterparts in the Christian Churches. Anyone who would understand the nature of the origins of either group will do well to attempt an understanding of Daniel Sommer.

This leads to a second significant reason for a study of Sommer's life. How could a major American religious body — the largest one

indigenous to American soil — founded on the basis of Christian unity, splinter and divide as it has done? Sommer *not only* participated in the division, but he was a perceptive observer of its causes. He was not by any means solely responsible for, nor the only one involved in, the division (as some have intimated), but one who can understand him has taken a major step toward an understanding of *the* nature of the conservative religious psychology generally and of the Churches of Christ in particular. Those who cannot or, because of various prejudices, will not understand this type of mind have shut themselves off from a significant minority, if not majority, of American Protestantism.¹

It is here, perhaps, that the author's dilemma in attempting to write a biography *of* Sommer for a degree from an institution which is, to say the least, unsympathetic with a conservative religious philosophy — with its often-attendant exclusivism, literalism, and even divisive nature — is clearest. While the author does not always agree with Sommer on every detail of his religious beliefs, he holds many of them, both by virtue of childhood training and the conviction of young adulthood. The author has attempted to write a reasonably objective consideration of one whose life continued to have validity and relevance for his own religious communion. Even were this, being a part of the author's education, not of itself a sufficient justification for a thesis topic, the very attempt to examine, within the guidelines of generally accepted canons of historical objectivity rather than for the purposes of lionization or religious propaganda, one whose life is in

¹See "U.S. Evangelicals: Moving Again," Time Magazine, XCV (September 19, 1969), p. 60; Henry P. VanDusen, "Third Force in Christendom," Life Magazine, XLIV (June 9, 1958), pp. 115-118; and David Edwin Harrell, Jr., White Sects and Black Men in the Recent South (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), pp. 5-4.

so many respects closely connected with the author's own, should provide an exercise in historical writing which would be of value to the author.

The author recognizes that Sommer's religious philosophy (and his own as well) is anything but popular in the religious world at large today. In an ecumenically-obsessed religious society, such exclusivism is anathema; certainly most people will find such a religious stance unattractive if not repulsive. And of course, any ecumenical position is unthinkable for those of Sommer's persuasion. But, with Sommer, the author is hopeful that he can become increasingly aware of, and perhaps even understand, a liberal, ecumenical mind which is characteristic of most prominent religious bodies in our time. He further hopes that this thesis can contribute not only to his own knowledge of his theological roots, but to the awareness of others about the nature of his, and Sommer's religious convictions. If reconciliation is impossible, at least an understanding of, and a certain degree of tolerance which that understanding can breed, is an important secondary desideratum.² Perhaps this is the major implicit point as well as the most significant contribution of a thesis such as this.

²For elaboration of this viewpoint, see Harrell, "Peculiar People: A Rationale for Modern Conservative Disciples," in Harrell, Robert O. Fife, and Ronald E. Osborn, Disciples and the Church Universal (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1967), pp. 34-44; and Harrell, "Disciples and the Church Universal —A Postscript," Discipliana, XXVII:4 (January, 1968), p. 75.

APPENDIX A

ADDRESS AND DECLARATION

BY THE CONGREGATIONS REPRESENTED BY
THEIR RESPECTIVE CHURCH OFFICERS
IN A MASS MEETING ASSEMBLED AT
SAND CREEK, SHELBY CO. , ILL., AUG.
17th, A.D. 1889.

To all those whom it may concern —

greeting:

Brethren: —You doubtless know that we as disciples of Christ (with scarcely an exception) many long years ago took the position that in matters of doctrine and practice, religiously, that "where the Bible speaks we speak, and where the Bible is silent we are silent;" and further, we held that nothing should be taught, received or practiced, religiously, for which we could not produce a "thus saith the Lord." And doubtless many of you also know that as long as the above principles were constantly and faithfully observed, that we were a happy and prosperous people. Then we were of one heart and of one soul; we lived in peace and prospered in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then what was written as doctrine and for practice was taught and observed by the disciples. And, it may not be amiss in this connection to say, that many, yes, very many in the sectarian churches saw the beauty, consistency and wonderful strength and harmony in the plea, as *set* forth by the disciples, for the restoration of primitive or apostolic Christianity in spirit and in

to the great grief and mortification of some of the members of said congregations.

And, now, brethren, you that teach such things, and such like things, and those who practice the same, must certainly know that they are not only not in harmony with the gospel, but are in opposition thereto. You surely will admit that it is safe, and only safe to teach and practice what the divine record enjoins upon the disciples. To this none can reasonably object, and this is exactly what we want and for which we contend. And, now, we say that we beg of you to turn away speedily and at once from such things, and remember that though we are the Lord's freemen yet we are bound by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know that it is by keeping His commandments and not the commandments of men that we have the assurance of his approval. Therefore, brethren, without addressing you further by using other arguments, and without going further in detailing these unpleasant, and, as we see them, vicious things, you must allow us in kindness, and in christian courtesy, and at the same time with firmness, to declare that we cannot tolerate the things of which we complain; for if we do, then we are (in a measure at least) blameable ourselves. And, let it be distinctly understood, that this "Address and Declaration" is not made in any spirit of envy or hate, or malice or any such thing. But we are only actuated from a sense of duty to ourselves and to all concerned; for we feel that the time has fully come when something of a more definite character ought to be known and recognized between the church and the world. Especially is this apparent when we consider the scriptural teachings on the matters to which we have herein referred — such for instance as the following: "Be not conformed to

this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

It is, therefore, with the view, if possible, of counteracting the usages and practices that have crept into the churches, that this effort on the part of the congregations hereafter named is made.

And, now, in closing up this address and declaration, we state that we are impelled from a sense of duty to say, that all such as are guilty of teaching, or allowing and practicing the many innovations and corruptions to which we have referred, that after being admonished and having had sufficient time for reflection, if they do not turn away from such abominations, that we can not and will not regard them as brethren. (Signed)

P. P. WARREN, A. J. NANCE, DANIEL BAKER, PETER ROBINSON,
J. K. P. ROSE, JAMES WARREN - Sand Creek Church.

RANDOLPH MILLER, CHARLES ERWIN, W. K. BAKER, WM. COZIER -
Liberty Church.

WM.. STORM - Ash Grove Church.

J. H. HAGEN - Union Church.

ISAAC WALTERS - Mode Church.

The brethren whose names stand alone in signing this document represented the churches from which they came. Besides these Elder Colson of Gays, and Elder Hoke of Stricklyn congregations signed, but as individuals only, because the congregations whence they came had not been called together so as to send them formally. Green Creek congregation by a letter from Bro. Jesse Baker endorsed this movement.

* * * *

REMARKS BY THE PUBLISHER.

Concerning the foregoing document we wish to make a few statements :

1. It originated with the churches and is sent forth as the conviction of those churches that are represented by the brethren whose names are subscribed thereunto.

2. In and of itself this document is only intended to serve as the expression of the churches by which it has been adopted. Besides its declarations affect the life of the Christian rather than the question of doctrine. While maintaining doctrinal correctness the purpose is to cut off all practical crookedness and worldliness, and thus it will meet the approbation of all soberminded people, both religious and irreligious, wherever found.

3. There are churches and individual brethren all over the brotherhood that have for years, no doubt,, entertained the same conviction which in this document is expressed. In the mass meeting last fall in Moberly, Mo., and in the meeting at Richmond, Mo., the year before, this question of drawing a line of demarcation between the Church of Christ and our innovating brethren was discussed.

4. Ten years ago the subject was agitated in the columns of the REVIEW by a brother not now connected with the paper. But it was then thought by the brethren generally that some other solution than a formal division could be reached.

5. But as innovators have made their devices tests of fellowship, having in many instances explicitly or by implication declared non-fellowship with those who oppose their devices with persistence — as they have done this it has become evident that they have abandoned

our original position and have gone out from us because they were not of us.

6. In view of such conduct on the part of innovating disciples called "Modern Schoolmen," it is evident that they are the dividers of the brotherhood, and the sooner this is generally acknowledged by adoption of the sentiments of the brethren who assembled at Sand Creek in Shelby Co., Ills, on the afternoon of Aug. 17th 1889, *the* safer and better it *will* be for *all* concerned,

7. Let it be distinctly understood that we have from the first agitation of this subject been numbered with those who earnestly endeavored to find some other solution of the problem than a formal separation. But having learned from personal experience that there is no law human or divine which innovators hold themselves bound to respect in dealing with those who oppose their devices — having learned this we declare sadly and reluctantly, but FIRMLY that we endorse the foregoing documents as adopted and signed at the Sand Creek meeting. The spirit of that document we regard as the best that could be expressed, and we specially remind all those who may be disposed to differ from the decision of the last statement it contains, that it does not propose to disfellowship any till they have been admonished and refuse to turn from their waywardness. If innovations be sinful certainly those who persist in advocating them are persistent sinners. "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." — 1 Pet. 4: 17. If this sentence of an inspired apostle be adopted throughout the brotherhood then the time will come that our Modern School brethren will have fixed upon them odium of having by division disgraced the best cause on earth and having thereby

became a party among parties, a sect among sects, a denomination among denominations. In the meantime the loyal disciples will become more firmly than ever established on their original principles in contending for the faith once delivered to the saints and endeavoring to establish everywhere the kingdom of Christ as it was in the beginning. AMEN.

From: Tract Quarterly, I:4
(October, 1889), pp. 14-16.

APPENDIX B

DECISION OF THE CIRCUIT COURT, SHELBY COUNTY, ILLINOIS

HONORABLE SAMUEL L. DWIGHT, PRESIDING

This case, although not involving a large amount in dollars and cents, is, in some respects, one of importance and one in which a large number of persons seem to be deeply interested.

The able manner in which the case has been conducted, and the evidence presented to the court, both on the part of counsel for complainants and for the defendants, indicate the great learning and research of able counsel in behalf of their clients.

Although the interests involved ordinarily would engender some feeling, there appears to have been no manifestation of ill will between the parties during the progress of the trial.

It is worthy of note that the character of citizenship of all the parties, as well as their adherents, commends them to our favor.

Every one who has watched the progress of this case could not fail to have noticed the religious fervor that seemed to animate all the parties, as they urged their respective claims or sat by and carefully noted the progress of the case in which they seemed to be so deeply interested.

The taking of the evidence, consuming, as it did, nearly two weeks, unfolded the history of the Christian church — a splendid organization — coming into existence perhaps a century ago, avoiding

tiresome creeds and looking alone to the Bible as a guide in faith and practice.

That church has grown and spread throughout the Union and its faith and teachings find a response in the hearts of people everywhere.

This church was the only religious body, I believe, to have a headquarters upon the grounds of the World's Fair at St. Louis.

In its early organization, its mode of worship was much as it was in the church of Apostolic times. It is represented as a monarchy. I do not like the term — To me Christ was the King, but His was a scriptural kingdom — His church upon earth has only the form of a monarchy.

Christ, while upon earth, went among the people without any effort at organization. He was not a product of the schools. As he walked beneath the Palms of Palestine or along the shores of the Sea of Galilee he taught the people. His teachings were drawn from nature. Everything was an object lesson.

So this church, founded a hundred years ago, was modeled apparently as was the church at Corinth and other places in the days of the Apostles.

As time progressed, many of the churches of the faith gradually changed their mode of worship and the means employed; in other words keeping abreast with all the changes that crowded into the religious world as well as every other sphere of life.

The Sand Creek church withstood all the 'innovations.'

For seventy' years that church has had an existence and during all of that long lapse of time has continued its mode of worship in the same simple way as did the fathers when it was first established.

It, as all other congregations of the brotherhood, is an independent body. It is responsible to no other ecclesiastical body; without dictation whatever from any source, that congregation may regulate its own affairs.

A decided majority of that congregation have abided in the faith of their fathers in the simple mode of worship first adopted.

However much as we may prefer the modern methods adopted in forms of worship, one cannot but admire this people.

A splendid community in this grand county of Shelby, who are able to turn aside from all 'innovations' and continue to worship their 'Lord and Master' as did the Apostles in the early days of the church.

The complainants, a part of this congregation, in their desire for progress, seem to have grown dissatisfied with existing things. As a result this suit was begun.

Of other congregations of this faith and brotherhood we have nothing to do, and the real question in this case is:

Have the defendants departed from the faith?

Taking all things into consideration and with no sort of any personal feeling, and from all the evidence submitted and the able arguments of counsel, and with a keen desire to do right in this matter, and to follow the law, I must come to the conclusion that they have not.

The finding of the court will be for the defendants. The bill will be dismissed for want of equity.

(January 12, 1905)

From: George D. Chafee et al., Eds., Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Shelby County, Vol. II (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company, 1910), pp. 747-748.

APPENDIX C

CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAND CREEK ET AL.

v.

CHURCH OF CHRIST OF SAND CREEK ET AL.

219 ILL. 503 (1906)

The several church organizations formed by the followers of Alexander Campbell, — and they are numerous, — at the time of their organization were, and now are, purely congregational in their government; that is, there is no general conference, synod, presbytery or other similar body which exercises supervision over said church congregations, but each organization, in matters of practice, in church government and otherwise, is sovereign, and *the* congregations so organized have no creed except the Bible, the view of the followers of said Alexander Campbell being, that where the Bible speaks the congregation and its several members are authorized to speak, but where it is silent the congregation and the members thereof should also remain silent. In 1849 there sprang up among the members of said religious sect different views upon subjects of practice to be adopted by the congregations with reference to matters upon which the Bible is silent, one view being, that in the matters upon which the Bible is silent such silence should be construed as a positive prohibition; the other view being, that if the Bible is silent upon a given subject pertaining to church government then the congregation may formulate

a rule in that particular for the government of the congregation. The division along the lines above suggested seems to have grown as the church membership increased, and in 1889 there was a wide difference of view between the several congregations, and between the members of the same congregation, relative to many practices in the church, such as to the propriety of having instrumental music in the church during church services; the employment by the congregation of ministers of the gospel for a fixed time and for a fixed salary; the organization of missionary societies and Sunday schools as separate organizations outside the regular church congregations; the raising of funds for the support of the gospel by holding church fairs and festivals, and perhaps in other matters of a similar character; and in that year, at the annual August meeting held at the Sand Creek church, and where there was present a large concourse of people drawn together from different congregations, Rev. Daniel Sommers, a follower of Alexander Campbell, preached a sermon upon what was characterized as innovations upon the practices of the church, and afterwards a declaration, known as the "Sand Creek Declaration," was presented to the brethren present for their endorsement. That declaration condemned many, if not all, of the practices above referred to. It was signed by a few, only, of those who were present, and it was not considered binding upon any member of the church or upon any congregation unless signed by the member or adopted by the church congregation, but was considered merely advisory to the members of the church. The division heretofore referred to, from that time forward seems to have spread, and at the time this suit was commenced the evidence shows the followers of Alexander Campbell had divided upon those lines to such an extent that one faction in the church was

characterized as progressives and the other conservatives, the members favoring the more liberal view being called "Progressives," while those entertaining the more conservative view were called "Antis." The persons entertaining the progressive view appear latterly to have usually favored and taken in their church organizations the name "Christian Church," while those favoring the conservative view have taken the name "Church of Christ" as the name of their church organizations. . . . the sole question here to be decided is, does the brick church erected by the Sand Creek congregation in 1874, and the land upon which it stands and which is appurtenant thereto, belong to the plaintiff in error the "Christian Church of Sand Creek" or to the defendant in error the "Church of Christ of Sand Creek?"

The courts of this State are powerless to pass upon the questions of difference between the contending factions of the Sand Creek congregation except in so far as property rights are involved, (*Ferraria v. Vasconcelles*, 23 111. 403; *Ferraria v. Vasconcelles*, 31 id. 25; *Kuns v. Robertson*, 154 id. 394,) as it will readily be conceded by all that every person in this country has the full and free right to entertain any religious belief, to practice any religious principle and to teach any religious doctrine which he may desire, so long as it does not violate the laws of morality and property and does not infringe upon personal rights. (*Watson v. Jones*, 13 Wall. 679.) It is not, therefore, within the province of this court to pronounce judgment upon the doctrines taught by Alexander Campbell and believed and practiced by his followers, or to determine which faction of the Sand Creek congregation, in their practices in their church congregation, from an ecclesiastical

standpoint, is correct, as the courts have no concern with the questions whether a religious congregation is progressive or conservative; whether a musical instrument shall be present or absent during church services; whether the preacher shall be selected from the congregation or shall be a person employed by the congregation for a stated time at a stated salary; whether missionary societies and Sunday schools shall have separate organizations from the church congregations or not, or whether the funds necessary for the support of the church shall be contributed wholly by its members or raised in part by fairs and festivals. All those questions, and kindred questions, must be left to the determination of the church congregation. . . . It is, however, urged that the great majority of the church congregations which are professed followers of Alexander Campbell have adopted, in practice, the innovations from the practice of which defendants in error hold aloof, and that the plaintiffs in error are in accord with the spirit of a more enlightened age than the defendants in error, and that their practices are in harmony with the later teachings of Alexander Campbell himself upon the subjects upon which they differ in their practices and belief from the defendants in error. It appears from the undisputed testimony that the churches organized in accordance with the teachings of Alexander Campbell were all congregational, and that these congregations, including the Sand Creek congregation, were and always have been, sovereign in all matters pertaining to church government, —that is, each congregation has the right to determine for itself what its practices in the manner of conducting the worship of God in the congregation and its church business shall be, so long as such practices are not in conflict with the positive commands of the

Bible. Such being the fact, although it might appear that every congregation bearing the name "Christian Church" or "Church of Christ" organized throughout the land, "other than the Sand Creek congregation, had adopted the practices heretofore referred to, the action of those congregations would not be binding upon the Sand Creek congregation unless that congregation had endorsed and adopted them for the government of the Sand Creek congregation. In July, 1904, after the plaintiffs in error had broken away from the Sand Creek congregation, the members of the Sand Creek congregation who had not seceded met and pursuant to the statute incorporated as the "Church of Christ of Sand Creek." By that act of incorporation all the property of the Sand Creek congregation became immediately vested in that corporation (Dubs v. Egli, 167 111. 514), and its title thereto was not divested by the act of the plaintiffs in error in subsequently incorporating as the "Christian Church of Sand Creek." Happy v. Morton, 33 111. 398.

In the determination of the question here involved it must be borne in mind that this is a contest between two incorporated church organizations, and that the only question that this court can deal with is, in which corporation is the title to the church property which formerly belonged to the Sand Creek congregation now vested? From a careful examination of the record in this case, which contains over sixteen hundred pages, we have reached the conclusion that the learned chancellor who heard the case below rightfully reached the conclusion that the title to that property, at the time of the commencement of this suit, was in the defendant in error the "Church

of Christ of Sand Creek," and not in the plaintiff in error the
"Christian Church of Sand Creek," and rightfully so decreed.

The decree of the circuit court will therefore be affirmed.

Decree affirmed.

APPENDIX D

CANT WE AGREE ON SOMETHING?

(A Rough Draft for Christian Unity)

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one: as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." (John 17:20,21)

To those of the Churches of Christ who desire a Plan for Unity, we submit the following for your consideration. We cry "Unity," and say that Unity can be obtained only on a New Testament basis; and yet the New Testament is the Book we disagree on. If we can search out the things we can agree on, and unite on them, and work together, we'll have Unity!

So we submit the following items of the worship which are necessary to a New Testament Church.

COMMUNION. —The Lord's Supper must be kept each Lord's day.

PREACHING and MUTUAL EDIFICATION should be decided by each congregation for itself. It knows its own needs.

"PASTOR SYSTEM." — There are no New Testament pastors save Elders.

OFFICERS. — Only officers recognized for religious work by the New Testament are Elders and Deacons.

SINGING. — No instrumental music, but honest endeavor to make the song-service as edifying as possible.

CONTRIBUTION. — This is for support of spreading the Gospel and taking care of the poor.

DISCIPLINE. — The course that is fair is the Scriptural plan, every time. Conduct that brings reproach on the Church, and heresies, are matters of discipline if persisted in after due warning.

WORKERS.— Safety of the New Testament plan of worship demands all such should be under supervision of Elders and mature members of the Church. All Bible classes must be under supervision of the Church — not a separate organization.

PREACHERS.— Must be men of good character. If they favor "Bible colleges" or not, let it be an individual matter. Their business is, preaching the Gospel and building up churches, not other religious organizations.

BIBLE CLASSES.— As they are not part of the worship, those not believing in them may stay away without censure.

LESSON-LEAVES.— If a Bible-class uses lesson-leaves, those not agreeing may use their Bibles without censure on the part of those using lesson-leaves. (Most of us use commentaries of some sort, the place where we use them being the main point of difference. Some use New Testaments with extensive notes at bottom of each page, without criticism, even in worship.) Bible-classes are not part of the worship.

"BIBLE COLLEGES" and ORPHANS' HOMES.- Supporting them is an individual matter — the Church Contribution is not for that purpose. We're saved as individuals, anyhow; not as churches. If anyone must take the risk, let that one do it as an individual. It's a matter of believing in the efficacy of the Church. If a preacher or a brother talks to us privately about "Bible colleges," just inform him kindly,

yet firmly, that you do not support them, and tell him why. We can't force them not to believe in them, but maybe we can reason with them.

FOREIGN MISSIONS.- Individual work. There's plenty of work at hand to satisfy those who want work.

SOCIETIES.— These are all foreign to the Scriptural plan, and are full of possibilities for departures. The Church is the only avenue through which to do religious work.

BROTHERLY LOVE.— This is as much a command as "repent and be baptized," and, if exercised would be the solution of many problems. "Come, let us reason together," means "reason," not quarrel. Ephesians 4:16 speaks of "love" as a means of the Church edifying itself. All can take part in this, and make it really "mutual"

Brethren, if the Church IS as supreme with us as we would have people think, WHY NOT DO ALL OUR RELIGIOUS WORK THROUGH THE CHURCH, so the glory for such work will go where the Book commands? If YOU wish to support a Missionary or Education society to do Church work, go ahead — that's between you and the Head of the Church. But, keep your hands off the Church treasury! Don't touch a penny of that and send it to another organization to do Church work! Maintain purity of the worship! Couldn't we worship with the Christian church if they'd cut out the mechanical music and not touch the Church funds in the interest of human societies to do Church work? And raise money for that work by giving as the Lord has prospered? We can worship together with our College brethren if they'll keep their hands off the Church funds and don't try to divert them for the aid of (a) College to teach the Scriptures. For, THAT'S THE CHURCH'S WORK! Bro. Srygley, of the "Gospel Advocate," says no organization other than the Church's Elders

and Deacons is scriptural for religious work. Bro. H. L. Boles, late President of David Lipscomb College, says this President, Secretary and Treasurer stuff in Church work is wrong! So this brings us right back to the One Institution through which the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known: THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. We must jealously guard Her worship. Brethren, let's be just as jealous of HER WORK! If YOU wish to support the Y.M.C.A., or a Missionary or an Education society for preaching or teaching the Scripture,— go ahead: that's between you and the Founder of the one organization with Heaven's approval for making known the Gospel. YOU must settle with HIM! But DON'T TOUCH THE CHURCH FUNDS IN THE INTEREST OF ANY HUMAN RELIGIOUS SOCIETY!

If the preacher we employ wants to give part of what we give him to aid a human religious society, that's HIS PERSONAL AFFAIR, and — RISK! The Head of the Church will settle with him in the Last Day, for helping A RIVAL INSTITUTION. But, retain the Church funds strictly for Church work, and we'll have A GLORIOUS RE-UNION! And our Preachers, Elders, and the whole Rank and File can show the world what can be done by a people who put first things first - THE CHURCH BEFORE ANY OTHER SOCIETY FOR MAKING KNOWN "THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD." Then we ALL can joyfully and truthfully sing:

"For Her my tears shall fall,
 For Her my prayers ascend;
 To her my cares and toils be given
 Till toils and cares shall end."

Brethren, are you with us FOR THE CHURCH SUPREME? Let's hear from Editors, Preachers, Elders and Rank and File.

This is a rough draft, but is written in behalf of the thousands who desire to reach that Better Land, and who never will know, and never

can understand, "the fine points" in our arguments for and against some things that have disrupted us. We desire very much to afford a place for such a worship AFTER THE NEW TESTAMENT PLAN. We solicit suggestions and close analysis of these items.— Review Publishers.

From: Apostolic Review, LXXXVI:25-26
(June 21, 1932), p. 1.

APPENDIX E

DANIEL SOMMER

(AN OBITUARY BY FREDERICK D. KERSHNER)

Daniel Sommer was the last of the great pioneers of the Restoration Movement. Born in 1850, only twenty years after the dissolution of the Mahoning Association, his life stretched back to the days of the Campbells and spanned almost the entire circle of the growth and development of the movement. As the successor of Benjamin Franklin in the editorship of The American Christian Review, he became a dominant protagonist of the right wing among the Disciples and was usually regarded as the very tip of the wing. Sommer was opposed to all "humanisms," as he styled them, and believed that the only way to preserve the purity of the church was by forbidding even the slightest compromise with erroneous tendencies. Hence (sic) he opposed missionary societies, Sunday schools, Christian Endeavor societies and above all, instrumental music in the worship. He was roundly denounced by various groups of conservatives who permitted the camel to put his nose under the tent, in one respect or another, but he always held his ground. He was opposed to Bible colleges or special training schools for the ministry because he believed that they undermined the faith of their students and taught them everything except the Bible. In one way or another, he isolated himself from the overwhelming majority of the brotherhood, a fact which caused him much sorrow, but which never shook his own convictions as to the Tightness of his course.

Notwithstanding his rather extreme theological views, Daniel Sommer was one of the most tolerant and fair-minded men we have ever known. He had the Christian attitude toward the search for truth and the Christian spirit in his method of dealing with people with whom he disagreed. He had no trace of that ecclesiastical bigotry which refuses to sit on the same platform or speak at the same meeting with another individual suspected of heretical views. Instead of this widely prevalent Pharisaism, the editor of The Apostolic Review would go anywhere he was invited to speak, no matter how much he disagreed with the people who were managing the program or the general point of view prevalent at the meeting. He rightly reasoned that unfavorable circumstances of this kind made it all the more incumbent upon him to deliver his message whenever he had a chance to do it.

Hence he preached the gospel everywhere, to all sorts of people and under the most bizarre and unusual circumstances. Money was no consideration whatever with him and he never received more than a bare living for his untiring labors in behalf of the church. He delighted in real missionary work and only a few days before his death he insisted upon going forth again to take up the task of evangelism. He had a tonic influence upon all who came in contact with him and his obvious sincerity and disinterestedness gave weight to his words far beyond the tricks of the professional orator or elocutionist.

Even in his advanced age, Daniel Sommer was a forceful speaker and his thinking was logical and clear. He was one of the great preachers of the Restoration and his memory will be affectionately cherished by multitudes who possessed only slight personal acquaintance with him. Old as he was when he left this world, his more intimate

friends will be conscious of a keen sense of loss in his departure, a feeling which will only partially disappear with the passing of time. He was a great soul, perhaps one should say more correctly, he is a great soul, and many of us feel that we shall not look upon his like again. — Frederick D. Kershner

From: Christian-Evangelist, LXXVIII:11
(March 14, 1940), p. 290.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>ACR</u>	<u>American Christian Review</u>
<u>AR</u>	<u>Apostolic Review</u>
<u>C-E</u>	<u>Christian-Evangelist</u>
<u>CS</u>	<u>Christian Standard</u>
<u>FF</u>	<u>Firm Foundation</u>
<u>GA</u>	<u>Gospel Advocate</u>
<u>GG</u>	<u>Gospel Guardian</u>
<u>MM</u>	<u>Mission Messenger</u>
<u>OR</u>	<u>Octographic Review</u>
<u>RR</u>	<u>Restoration Review</u>
<u>TQ</u>	<u>Tract Quarterly</u>