The term "revival of religion" denotes a revitalization of Christian piety where it has declined. Theoretically, a revival could occur within the confines of any religion; practically, however, the term has a specific Protestant connotation. It is a type of evangelism, an enthusiastic desire of those who consider themselves saved, or converted, to achieve the salvation and conversion of the unsaved, or the unconverted. Revivalists, in their desire to convert others, have not been bound by tradition, but have been pragmatic in their methods, believing that the end, which is conversion to Christ, justifies the means.

Revivalism thus defined has long played a prominent role in American church history. This was especially true in the first half of the nineteenth century when it affected all major Protestant denominations. In time, despite their traditional conservatism, even

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1 Horace Bushnell, *Views of Christian Nurture* (Hartford, Conn., 1847), 123.
the German churches of Pennsylvania, the Lutheran and Reformed, were influenced.\(^3\)

Although many have studied the broad aspects of revivalism and the well-known revivalists, few have attempted to describe and explain the work of those ministers who used revivalistic techniques on the local level but who were not full-time itinerating evangelists. The Reverend John C. Guldin is an ideal subject for such a case study.

A German Reformed clergyman, Guldin served a number of congregations in Montgomery and Chester counties in Pennsylvania from 1820 to 1841. He was born in Exeter Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, and received an English education in the rural schools of that district. At about sixteen years of age, he began to study with the Reverend Frederick Lebrecht Herman, minister of the Falkner Swamp German Reformed Church and the leading, if not the only professor in what was known as the Swamp College in northern Montgomery County where several outstanding German Reformed clergymen had received their theological training.\(^4\) It was in keeping with family tradition that Guldin should prepare himself for the ministry in the German Reformed Church, for he was the great-grandson of the Reverend Samuel Guldin, the Swiss pietist who had emigrated to Pennsylvania early in the eighteenth century after having made himself \textit{persona non grata} to the authorities of the Reformed Church in Switzerland through his pietistic activities there.\(^5\)

Studying with an experienced minister was the normal training for the ministry in the German Reformed Church at that time, and Guldin pursued his studies with Herman for five years. On September 28, 1820, he was licensed and ordained by the Synod of the German Reformed Church, convened in Hagerstown, Maryland.\(^6\) Shortly

\(^3\) A contemporary scholar stated that one could write a book on the revivalism of the German churches, so deeply were they agitated. Philip Schaff, \textit{America: A Sketch of the Political, Social and Religious Character of the United States of North America} (New York, 1855), 193.

\(^4\) For a brief account of Guldin's early life, see Henry Harbaugh, \textit{The Fathers of the German Reformed Church in Europe and America}, ed. by D. Y. Heisler (Lancaster, 1872), IV, 158–159.


\(^6\) Minutes of Synod, 1820, 12, 24–25. In 1819 and 1820, the minutes of the Synod of the German Reformed Church were printed in Hagerstown, Md.; after 1840, in Chambersburg, Pa. Between 1821 and 1840 the place of publication varies widely. For purposes of this paper, the minutes are cited without place of publication.
thereafter, he began to serve three eastern Pennsylvania congregations: Trappe in Montgomery County, and Brownback's and East Vincent in Chester County. Here Guldin was to labor for the next twenty-one years.

The German Reformed Church was in poor spiritual health when Guldin began his ministry. It was in a state of transition, a European church in the process of becoming an American church. During the colonial and early national periods, the Church had remained bound to its Old World heritage: its clergymen had been sent from Europe; much of its financial support came from the European Church; its ecclesiastical procedures derived from abroad; and, of course, the language of the Church was German.

The American environment, however, modified the cultural patterns which the colonists had brought with them. Heavy pressure was placed on non-English settlers to conform to the habits of their more numerous English and Scotch-Irish neighbors, and change was inevitable. The German Reformed Church in America completed what had been initiated during the pietist movement of the seventeenth century and abandoned its liturgical heritage. The Palatinate Liturgy\(^7\) fell into disuse, and the Reformed congregations adopted the less formal type of worship service which they found in the English churches. Moreover, as had the Dutch before them, some of the German people abandoned the language of their forefathers for the English tongue.\(^8\) As a result, younger members of the congregations often could not understand the language in which the services were conducted, although in some cases, ministers were so scarce that services were held only irregularly in any language at all. In such an environment, the spirituality of the Church declined. The editor of a prominent denominational periodical charged that the German church people thought they were good Christians as long as they had been confirmed and received the sacrament of the Lord's

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\(^7\) The Palatinate Liturgy was published in 1563 and was henceforth used with varying degrees of regularity by the Reformed churches in the Palatinate region of southwestern Germany and in America. For an English translation of this German Reformed liturgy, see *The Mercersburg Review*, II (1850), 81–96, 265–286.

\(^8\) The language problem in the German Lutheran Church in America has been discussed by Armin C. Weng, "The Language Problem in the Lutheran Church in America," *Church History*, V (1936), 359–375. There is no corresponding study of the language problem in the German Reformed Church, but the situation was approximately the same in both denominations.
Supper occasionally, provided, of course, that they maintained a "mere outward decency of moral life." 9

What has been stated concerning the German churches in general applies also to the congregations whose call Guldin accepted in 1820. Especially serious among them was the language problem. The English-speaking members of the congregations were simply out of it, for Guldin’s predecessor, the Reverend Frederick Lebrecht Herman, could not preach in English, and only rarely was his son, Frederick L. Herman, Jr., able to come from New Holland, in Lancaster County, to minister to them in a language they could understand. Then, too, even the German-speaking members of the congregations were inadequately served, not through any lack of zeal on Herman’s part, but rather because of the sheer impossibility of serving ten congregations scattered over parts of three counties. 10

Certainly, a revival of religion was in order, but what kind of revival?

Since the Germans were adapting themselves in so many other ways to English cultural patterns, they naturally adopted the methods of evangelism then in vogue in the English churches. In particular, the system of the Reverend Charles G. Finney, just rising to national fame in western New York state, began to influence some of the German churches.

Finney refuted the earlier view that revivals are miracles over which man has no control, asserting instead that ministers could promote revivals simply by using the right means, that is, a calculated appeal to man’s emotions. He believed men to be such sluggish creatures that God had found it necessary to produce “powerful excitements” among them in order to lead them to obey. 11

The method of promoting revivals that Finney made popular became known as the system of “new measures,” and included such techniques as animated and “heart-searching” sermons, protracted meetings, anxious meetings (sometimes known as inquiry meetings),


10 Minutes of Synod, 1819, 24.

and the use of the anxious bench (also known as the mourner's bench). Some of these practices had been used by other revivalists before Finney, but he combined them into a system that brought him fame. It was to this system of evangelism that Guldin turned in his effort to revive his languishing congregations.

In keeping with the Finney revivalists, Guldin prepared heart-searching sermons. He so frequently mixed his entreaties with plentiful tears that he eventually became known as "the weeping prophet." Guldin himself has described his style of homiletics as "rather Methodistical." Those who heard him remembered him as a "clear and forceful" preacher who knew how to get his message across. Invariably, his subject matter involved the sinfulness of man, and his interpretation of this theme allowed him many variations. He presented the subject boldly. He castigated his congregations for violations of God's law and mercilessly condemned the guilty, especially the officials of his churches. Of course, Guldin continued, sinful man had a way out, through the blood of the Lamb. Christ died on the Cross for the sins of mankind. In order to be saved, Guldin preached, man had to be born again; man had to be converted.

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13 For example, John Winebrenner, who served the German Reformed congregations in Harrisburg and vicinity, was employing many of the techniques which were to bring fame to Finney before Finney began his large-scale evangelistic efforts. See John Winebrenner, The Truth Made Known: Or a Fair and Correct Account of the Facts, Which Have Transpired in the German Reformed Congregation of Harrisburg Since the Fall of 1822 (Harrisburg, 1824), 8, Archives of the Church of God, Harrisburg.


16 See Michael R. Schmidt, "Historical Notes on St. Vincent Evangelical and Reformed Church" (typescript compiled for the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the congregation's first building, 1952), St. Vincent Reformed Church, Route 23, Chester County.

17 This was one of Guldin's favorite themes and was included in some of his published sermons, such as "Der Baum des Lebens—die Herrlichkeit der Kirche," "Die Unzerstörbarkeit der Kirche," "Die gänzliche Verdorbenheit des Menschen," and "Die Versiegelung." See John C. Guldin, Altes und Neues aus dem Schatz des göttlichen Wortes in einer Sammlung von Predigten und Predigentwürfen (New York, 1853).
As Guldin pursued this theme, his congregations often became concerned. When he observed that "deep and solemn impressions" had resulted from a particular service, he would protract it by scheduling additional services during that week, or over a period of several weeks. These "protracted meetings," as they were called, were sometimes held three times a day, morning, afternoon, and night. On at least one occasion, Guldin held practically continuous services from 9:30 in the morning until 9 o'clock at night, and he would have continued on but for the fact that he disapproved of late meetings in the country because of the great distance between the church and the homes of his parishioners. At times, he tried to conduct services in several of his churches simultaneously, which necessitated extensive and rapid traveling along the Ridge Road and its tributaries as he went from congregation to congregation in northwestern Chester County.

At such times, Guldin called in other clergymen to assist him. Included among them were some of the most prominent ministers in the Church. There was Henry Bibighaus, whose congregation in Philadelphia was to become the largest in the denomination during his tenure there. John Cares, who had led revivals in his congregation at York, labored with Guldin, as did Jacob G. Shade, one of Guldin's converts who subsequently entered the ministry. Jacob Helffenstein, long a leader of revivals in the Presbyterian and Reformed churches, also assisted in the work. Not all of the assisting ministers were of the German Reformed Church, for, like other revivalists, Guldin placed little emphasis on denominational labels and was quite willing to promote ecumenicity. Occasionally, he invited New School Presbyterian clergymen, such as James Patterson from Philadelphia, to participate. From time to time, Guldin would reciprocate the visits

18 The descriptive phrase "deep and solemn impressions" was frequently used by the revivalists to depict emotional feelings aroused during the course of the revival. Not only has the phrase been used to describe the solemnity of a service of worship, but it has also been used in reference to services where outward manifestations of emotional feeling were revealed by numerous worshippers.

19 *The Messenger*, Feb. 1, 1835; *The Weekly Messenger*, Jan. 27 and Feb. 17, 1836. There is no evidence that Guldin led a revival movement in his Trappe congregation in Montgomery County.

20 Names of assisting clergymen are mentioned in a letter from the Guldin faction to its opponents in the East Vincent congregation, Jan. 19, 1837, Chester County Historical Society (CCHS).

of these ministers, and would assist them in conducting revival services for their own congregations.22

As he worked toward a revival of religion in the mid-1830’s, Guldin called into play that mainstay of the revivalists, the “anxious bench.” When, during the course of a service, he observed that certain worshippers had developed an awareness of their need for salvation, he would call on them to come forward and sit in the front pews where they could be made the object of special prayers of the congregation until they “got through,” that is to say, until they passed through a conversion experience. At one particular service in Brownback’s Church in northern Chester County, eighty people at one time answered the call to come to the anxious bench, a crowd which threatened to overflow the available space. To Guldin, it seemed literally a “day of Pentecost,” as though “dry bones” were “moving to and fro.”23

Those who were distressed but who did not feel as though they had experienced conversion were asked to remain after the service for what was called the “anxious meeting.” Here the pressure brought to bear by the officiating clergymen was increased as they continued in greater intensity their “preaching, and exhorting, and singing, and conversing with sinners in relation to the salvation of their souls.”24 Especially at the anxious meetings did Guldin preach the necessity of immediate submission to God.25

The emotional appeal of the revivalists often produced physical reactions. During his services, Guldin had heard worshippers beat out the tune of a hymn by stamping their feet on the floor. He had heard several of them simultaneously praying aloud, interspersing their prayers with the continual “Amen” or “Lord grant it.” He knew of screaming worshippers who pounded their fists on the seats and who threw their bodies about “as if they thought they could by physical power force the Almighty to grant their requests.”

In contrast to the itinerating revivalists who frequently gloried in such activities and credited them to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, local ministers usually opposed the extremes of emotionalism. In his article on the promotion of revivals, Guldin assigned an

22 Ibid., Feb. 9, 1837, and Mar. 23, 1842.
23 Ibid., Jan. 27, 1836.
important role to the emotions in the practice of true religion. He allowed emotional reactions, such as the “sometimes unavoidable groan of the deeply agonized soul.” However, he condemned the extremes of emotionalism as “truly disgusting.” He warned that excessive emphasis on emotionalism prompted worshippers to attempt to work themselves into a high state of excitement, to aim at mere ecstasy of feeling rather than at a faithful discharge of Christian duty. All that such people seemed to live for, he stated, was their own enjoyment, and any service which did not “bring them into a pleasant glow of feeling” was, in their opinion, not worth the time it took to hold it. In other words, overemphasis on the role of the emotions could lead the worshipper to miss the point of the service and to overlook the true obligations of the professing Christian.26

Typical of the revivalists, Guldin had rather definite ideas concerning these obligations, ideas which he did not hesitate to make known to his parishioners. He encouraged regular attendance not only at the normal services of worship, but also at the prayer meetings which were held at regular intervals, and at the Sunday schools which he organized in his congregations. He also vigorously advocated the support, through financial contributions and special prayer meetings, of foreign missions.27 In this age of humanitarian causes, Guldin translated his crusading zeal into specific projects. For example, he organized his parishioners into tract societies which assisted in the distribution of religious literature.28 He was especially interested in the short-lived periodical, the Evangelische Zeitschrift, which he edited, and in The Weekly Messenger, the official publication of the German Reformed Church.

Of all Guldin’s efforts, those in behalf of the temperance cause most clearly illustrate his emphasis on organization, so characteristic

26 John C. Guldin, Directions and Advice in Reference to Revivals of Religion (Chambersburg, 1841), and The Weekly Messenger, Oct. 7, 1840.
28 John C. Guldin, “Report on the State of Religion in the Vincent Charge of the German Reformed Church, 1840,” Archives of the Philadelphia Classis, HSRC.
of the revivalism of this era. Temperance during these years meant total abstinence. The problem seemed particularly serious to Guldin because the inhabitants of his region believed that “Schnapps ist eine Gabe Gottes, darum sollte es mit Danksagung empfangen sein,” which is to say, whiskey is the gift of God and therefore should be received with thanksgiving—and receive it with thanksgiving they did. In a day when banknotes were not always reliable and when bullion was scarce, farmers often paid their hired hands in whiskey, and farmers who refused to pay in whiskey sometimes went without help in the harvest season.

As might be expected, Guldin expressed his opposition to the use of alcoholic beverages vigorously. By 1835, his efforts had resulted in the founding of a group known as the Ridge Temperance Society, the charter of which condemned “the use of ardent spirits as an evil extensively ruinous to the human race, destroying the peace and happiness of many families, spreading misery and desolation throughout the land, costing a vast amount of money, increasing the public expense, as well as providing a great deal of poverty.” At the organization meeting conducted in Brownback’s Reformed Church on Saturday evening, February 28, 1835, approximately two hundred people pledged themselves to abstain from the use of intoxicating beverages, “except in cases where it may be found really necessary,” a modification which was not further defined. Not only did these signers agree to abstain from imbibing alcoholic beverages, they also asserted that they would “in all suitable ways discourage the use of it in the community.”

Since the Ridge Temperance Society continued to flourish as long as Guldin remained in the community, the local distillers and innkeepers felt no kindness toward him. Some of the members of the East Vincent German Reformed Church were involved in these

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29 This expression has been handed down from generation to generation in that region and is included in Alma Young Stauffer, History of Brownback’s Reformed Church (published by the church for the 215th anniversary of the founding of the congregation, 1958).
30 Frederick Sheeder, “East Vincent Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania” (1846), 34, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).
31 Charter of the Ridge Temperance Society. Original charter with signatures is in the possession of the East Vincent Reformed Church, Route 23, Chester County.
32 Records indicate that Guldin was its president until he left the region in 1841. After Feb. 26, 1844, no further entries appear in the record book.
economic enterprises. They considered it bad enough that Guldin was undercutting their business by associating the drinking of intoxicating beverages with sin, but worse that he condemned them personally in public.\(^{33}\)

One of the characteristics of revivalism is its divisive aftereffects, and in time a split developed in the East Vincent congregation. The division was caused, in part, by Guldin's application of the system of new measures, which involved not only a different type of evangelism, but also a somewhat different system of theology, expressing itself in different concepts of the Church, its rites and sacraments, and its corporate worship. Some of Guldin's members resented these departures from the traditions of the Church, and when such factors were added to the uneasiness of those who, Guldin predicted, would stand condemned on the Day of Judgment for distilling and selling intoxicating liquor, and to the petty family jealousies which exist in any small community, the congregation faced trouble.

There is evidence to indicate that a split in the East Vincent congregation had occurred as early as 1828 over some phases of church discipline. In any case, by 1837, the breach had widened to the point where Guldin's opponents had hired a neighboring minister and were meeting separately in the East Vincent Church. Eventually, the anti-Guldin faction officially organized itself as an independent congregation, and received a charter of incorporation which, among other items, asserted that no clergyman should be elected minister of that congregation who "has or will deviate from the long established forms and usages of the German Reformed Church."\(^{34}\)

Throughout the controversy, the Guldin faction at East Vincent insisted that Guldin had not violated the forms of the German Reformed Church and offered to bring in any of the ministers who had assisted him in his protracted meetings to testify to his orthodoxy.\(^{35}\) But the dissidents would have none of it. They issued an ultimatum to Guldin, stating that there were to be no more night

\(^{33}\) Excerpts from Isaac W. Guldin, "History and Genealogy of the Guldin Family" (typescript, 1903), CCHS.

\(^{34}\) Resolution of the Corporation of St. Vincent German Reformed Church, approved by the congregation, Nov. 29, 1837, in St. Vincent Reformed Church. See also Schmidt; Sheeder, 17, 22; and J. Smith Futhey and Gilbert Cope, History of Chester County, Pennsylvania, with Genealogical and Biographical Sketches (Philadelphia, 1881), 297.

\(^{35}\) Letter from the Guldin faction to its opponents in the East Vincent congregation, Jan. 19, 1837, CCHS.
meetings and no more protracted meetings. To give force to their assertion, they locked Guldin and his party out of the building and prepared for battle. Guldin’s adherents charged that twenty of their opponents carried rails and clubs into the church and remained inside for an indefinite length of time in an attempt to prevent Guldin from holding services there.

Guldin requested that the classis, the local administrative unit of the German Reformed Church, settle the issue. The revivalistic Philadelphia Classis supported Guldin, but the traditionalist East Pennsylvania Classis, comprised of congregations in the predominantly German region between Easton, Allentown, Bethlehem, and Pottstown, refused to restrain the Reverend Andrew Hoffman, minister of the Falkner Swamp German Reformed Church, who had been retained by Guldin’s opponents, from conducting services within the bounds of Guldin’s parish. The East Pennsylvania Classis refused to do so not out of any contempt for ecclesiastical order, but primarily because it opposed the new measures which Guldin was practicing in his parish.

While the case dragged on in the ecclesiastical courts, the anti-Guldin party consolidated the organization of its congregation, sold its interest in the East Vincent Church building, and erected a new church not more than two hundred yards north along the Ridge Road. Although the congregation adopted the name St. Vincent

36 Ultimatum dated Jan. 17, 1837, Minutes of the Philadelphia Classis (1837), Doc. 4, HSRC.
37 Letter from the Guldin faction to the Philadelphia Classis, ibid., Doc. 8, HSRC.
38 Ibid. See also Minutes of Synod, 1841, 18.
39 Minutes of Philadelphia Classis (1837), HSRC. According to local tradition, the Reverend Mr. Hoffman regularly prepared himself to conduct services in the Falkner Swamp Church by drinking whiskey with his parishioners at a nearby tavern, after which all would proceed to the church. See George W. Roth, History of the Falkner Swamp Reformed Church (New Hanover, 1904).
40 Comparatively few revivals were reported by the ministers of the East Pennsylvania Classis between 1830 and 1850. Furthermore, in this region opposition to the system of new measures was expressed consistently, and it was the ministers of the East Pennsylvania Classis who immediately rallied to the support of John W. Nevin when he launched his attack on the excesses of revivalism in 1843. See the Minutes of East Pennsylvania Classis (1830-1850), HSRC.
41 West Chester, Pa., newspapers contained announcements of the laying of the cornerstone and of the dedication of the new building. See The American Republican, July 30, 1850, and Aug. 24, 1852. See also An Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of the German Reformed Congregation of East Vincent Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1852, in East Vincent Reformed Church.
German Reformed Church, it was known locally as “Yeager’s Church” because of the numerical and financial prominence of the Yeager family.\textsuperscript{42} Throughout this period, the Yeager name appears on petitions supporting the licensing of numerous inns and taverns at which alcoholic beverages were to be sold.\textsuperscript{43} In 1867, if not before, one of the most prominent taverns in the region, the Seven Stars Hotel, came into the possession of the Yeager family.\textsuperscript{44} Remembering the firm opposition of the Reverend John C. Guldin to the use of intoxicating beverages and the interest of the Yeager family in such beverages, St. Vincent German Reformed Church for many years thereafter was referred to not only as “Yeager’s Church,” but also as the “Whiskey Church.”\textsuperscript{45}

Although the divisive results of Guldin’s use of new measures and their ramifications can be observed most clearly in the East Vincent congregation, dissension was not confined to that congregation. There was opposition to Guldin in Brownback’s Church, which involved his vigorous preaching on the temperance question. The situation there was made more ticklish by the fact that a member of one of the leading families in the congregation, the Brownback family for whom the church had been named, earned his livelihood from the liquor trade.\textsuperscript{46} This congregation did not split, but some members of Brownback’s Church left to join the St. Vincent congregation.

Dissension also entered the ranks of another congregation which Guldin had gathered in 1838 in an area located near the Schuylkill

\textsuperscript{42} The names of various members of the Yeager family appear frequently in the membership rolls, financial records, and consistory minutes of St. Vincent Church throughout the nineteenth century. Although “Yeager’s Church” is no longer widely used, present members of the congregation can remember the time when it was. These documents are in the possession of St. Vincent Reformed Church.

\textsuperscript{43} See petitions to the president and associate judges of the Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace for the County of Chester, 1831-1841, initiated by those desiring to sell alcoholic beverages, CCHS.

\textsuperscript{44} Petition of John Yeager, Jr., to operate the Seven Stars Hotel, 1867, CCHS.

\textsuperscript{45} Like the name “Yeager’s Church,” this popular epithet has declined in usage, but is still remembered. It is interesting to note that only a few of the hundreds who signed the abstinence pledge of the Ridge Temperance Society joined the newly organized St. Vincent Church, while many of the same names appear on the rolls of this society and on the rolls of the East Vincent Church served by Guldin.

\textsuperscript{46} List of tavernkeepers of East Vincent Township, 1820-1830, CCHS; Sheeder, 17, 22.
River and known, because of the unorthodox views of a group of its inhabitants, as "Free Love Valley." While Guldin served among them, there was no vocal opposition to his methods, but after he had left the region it seemed natural to some to look to the Methodist Church for leadership in the Guldin tradition. Others, however, felt that to adhere so openly to the Methodist Church was heretical. In the ensuing struggle for power, the two factions raced to the courthouse in West Chester, approximately twenty miles away, each hoping to secure a charter for the congregation before the opposing faction arrived. The Reformed group reached the courthouse first, and incorporated the congregation as the Second German Reformed Church of Coventry Township, later called Shenkle's Church. The pro-Methodist faction then withdrew and organized itself as a Methodist congregation, now known as the Temple Methodist Church.

Despite the fact that the spirituality of his parishioners may have been revived, the opposition to Guldin's methods which had developed by the late 1830's had split one congregation, raised dissension in others, and reduced the financial receipts of all. Guldin's vigor in the cause of temperance had alienated some potentially large contributors. By 1837, "on account of its impoverished financial concerns," the East Vincent congregation, for example, could not even afford to pay the expenses of its delegates to the annual meeting of the Philadelphia Classis.

Whether for this reason, or others, the Reverend Mr. Guldin left his eastern Pennsylvania charge in 1841 and entered a new field of service in central Pennsylvania. He served the Grindstone Hill charge, near Chambersburg, for about one year, and then went to New York City, where he entered the Dutch Reformed Church and

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47 For a description of the various activities which led to the application of this descriptive title to the region, see Charles Coleman Sellers, Theophilus the Battle Axe (Philadelphia, 1930). See also the records of the trials of members of the society known as the Battle Axes, Chester County Court Records, February Term, 1843, Prothonotary's Office, West Chester.

48 Record of Incorporation of the Second German Reformed Church of Coventry, Chester County Court Records, August Term, 1843, Prothonotary's Office, West Chester. See also J. Lewis Fluck, A History of the Reformed Churches of Chester County (Norristown, 1892), 98-100.

49 Original Minutes of the Second Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Classis, 1837, HSRC.

50 The Weekly Messenger, Mar. 24, 1841.
served until his death in 1862 as a Protestant missionary to the German immigrants who entered the United States through the port of New York. It would be safe to say, therefore, that Guldin's career as a Pennsylvania-German revivalist ended with his departure from Chester County.

However, even if Guldin had continued to serve his Chester County charge, several factors would have militated against continued revivalism. One was the reaction of a portion of his charge against his new measures and moral crusades, a pattern which can be observed in other areas served by new measures men. Another factor was the return of the denomination to its traditions and the subsequent deepening of its theological basis, a development which can also be observed in other denominations profoundly affected by nineteenth-century revivalism.

The Reformed Church people of the German-speaking regions of eastern Pennsylvania had consistently charged that the system of new measures was incompatible with the traditions of their Church, which had long been characterized by its devotion to the Heidelberg Catechism. This doctrinal standard, they asserted, taught an objective approach to religion which assigned some degree of importance to the Church and its sacraments and rites. To the opponents of new measures, it seemed as though its ministers were undermining the spirit of catechism with their emphasis on the subjective experience of new birth, or conversion. To some extent this was true of Guldin's congregations, for the records indicate that while the sacra-

51 Harbaugh, IV, 161. See also Abraham Messler to John C. Guldin, Nov. 11, 1851, and John C. Guldin to Nicolas Murray, Sept. 29, 1852, HSP.

52 See the plea for the retention of the old forms and usages of the German Reformed Church by the Reverend Thomas Pomp, minister of the Easton congregation and one of the leading spokesmen of the conservative German Reformed of eastern Pennsylvania. The Weekly Messenger, Jan. 6, 1841.

53 The Heidelberg Catechism was published in 1563 and reflects the irenic spirit of Philip Melancthon who, in his later years, mediated between the extremes of Lutheranism and Calvinism. It has been described as combining Calvinistic zeal with Lutheran piety. Max Goebel, Geschichte des christlichen Lebens in der rheinisch-westphälischen evangelischen Kirche (Coblenz, 1842), I, 392. "The Heidelberg Catechism teaches an educational religion and is irreconcilable with the magical process of conversion." Report on the State of Religion in the Lebanon Classis, Minutes of the Lebanon Classis, 1853, HSRC.

54 Typical of this school of thought were the sentiments expressed by the Reverend Bernard C. Wolff in his "Synodical Sermon" to the Synod of 1841. Recorded in The Weekly Messenger, Dec. 15, 1841.
ments and rites were administered regularly by Guldin, the number of those received into full membership of the Church through the sacrament of baptism and the rite of confirmation did not equal the number of those who Guldin claimed were converted on the anxious bench. As the opponents of new measures observed the increasing popularity of the anxious bench as a means of receiving new members into the Church, they concluded that the spirit of the Heidelberg Catechism was dead. The German Reformed Church, they asserted, was becoming more and more Methodistic and was in danger of losing its distinguishing characteristics.

These objections to the system of new measures were reinforced by the young professor of theology of the German Reformed Seminary at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, John Williamson Nevin. In 1843, Nevin published his views in a book entitled *The Anxious Bench: A Tract for the Times*. The next year, 1844, a young German theologian, Philip Schaff, joined the faculty of the Mercersburg Seminary and delivered his inaugural address on the “Principle of Protestantism,” which was later translated into English and published by Nevin.

Inspired basically by contemporary German theology, Nevin and Schaff developed their thoughts into what became known as the “Mercersburg Theology.” They treated the question which was basic to the anxious bench controversy, the nature of the Church,

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55 See the reports on revivals in Guldin’s charge in *The Weekly Messenger*, 1836-1841, the statistical reports of the High German Reformed Synod of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States, 1822-1836, and the statistical reports of the Synod of the German Reformed Church in the United States, 1837-1841.


57 Originally, Nevin was a Presbyterian, educated at Union College and Princeton Theological Seminary. He taught briefly at Princeton, experienced a longer tour of duty at the Presbyterian Western Theological Seminary near Pittsburgh, and in 1840 was called to become professor of theology in the German Reformed Seminary.

58 *John W. Nevin, The Anxious Bench: A Tract for the Times* (Chambersburg, 1843). While a student at Union College, Nevin claimed to have been converted by the revivalist Asahel Nettleton. However, disillusionment with this experience, and his observations of the system of new measures in operation in the Presbyterian Church, were causing him to re-evaluate his attitude toward revivalism.

59 *Philip Schaff, Principle of Protestantism* (Chambersburg, 1845).

and placed an ever-increasing emphasis on the role of the Church as the Body of Christ, the divinely appointed mediator of God's salvation. This view contrasted sharply with the more narrow view of the revivalists. This was not the only significant point of difference. The Mercersburg theologians came to emphasize the doctrine of the Incarnation, that God became man in Christ, subordinating the doctrine of the Atonement, that Christ died for mankind. They stressed the life that was lived by Christ rather than His death on the Cross and the blood which was shed, long a favorite theme of the revivalists. As the Mercersburg Theology began to occupy the mind of the Church, it diverted attention from revivalism to the more inclusive question of the nature of the Church. New measures became lost in a vast ocean of theological subtleties which stemmed from this fundamental question.

The Church had been aroused from its slumbers. The revivalist had played his part, but his role was declining in importance. In a way, he was caught in a web of his own making, in the reaction against his methods. More significantly, however, he was undermined by the increasing complexity of the culture which had produced him. A more sophisticated cultural atmosphere demanded a more sophisticated approach to religion than the revivalists were able to offer. Their emotional appeal for immediate conversion was no longer sufficient.