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Frederick Henry Quitman and the Catechesis of the American Lutheran Enlightenment

Benjamin A. Kolodziej

Frederick Henry Quitman (1760-1832) stands among the most prominent of early American Lutheran theologians largely to be overlooked in the twentieth century. His theology and practices departed from what was considered normative in the Lutheran Church, although he could never escape his thoroughly Pietist Hallensian training. Ordained in 1781, he was sent to Curacao in the West Indies, and from there to New York, where a short visit resulted in his eventually serving four congregations near Rhinebeck. This culminated in his election as president of the New York ministerium following the death of John Christopher Kunze in 1807. As president of the ministerium for twenty-one years, he managed to preach his brand of Christian rationalism as expounded by his teacher Johann Salomo Semler. This version of Christianity attempted to explain away many of the Scriptures' miracles as culturally-conditioned superstitions in which uneducated and illiberal peasants described the most natural of phenomena in terms of signs and wonders. This religion depended upon human potential in overcoming a sin that did not really cripple. Synergism and Socinianism were likewise natural manifestations of a religion that did not understand the gospel because it did not understand the law.

Quitman published his *Treatise on Magic* in 1810 as a means to explain some supposedly supernatural manifestations in Rhinebeck.¹ This was followed by *A Collection of Hymns and a Liturgy* in 1814, co-edited by Augustus Wackerhagen,² as well as a new *Evangelical Catechism* that same year, of which Quitman was the sole author.³ He would go on to preach

¹ Frederick H. Quitman, *A Treatise on Magic, or, on the Intercourse between Spirits and Men: with Annotations* (Albany, NY: Balance Press, 1810).

² August Wackerhagen and Frederick H. Quitman, eds., *A Collection of Hymns and a Liturgy, for the Use of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches* (Philadelphia: G. & D. Billmeyer, 1814).

³ Frederick H. Quitman, *Evangelical Catechism: or a Short Exposition of the Principle Doctrines and Precepts of the Christian Religion* (Hudson, NY: William E. Norman, 1814).

three sermons on the anniversary of the Reformation.⁴ Quitman's hymnal and catechism are the primary sources for this study. Although Wackerhagen is listed as co-editor of the hymnal, scholars generally call it "Quitman's Hymnal." Its preface bears all the grammatical and stylistic hallmarks of Quitman himself. The methodology of analyzing this hymnal is predicated on the assumption that, even if a hymn is not written by an editor, it is selected for inclusion by the editor due to its merits and overall congruence with the remainder of the hymnal. Therefore, although none of the hymns have authors ascribed (although some are recognizable from other English sources), it is presumed that none of the hymns will contain significant content contrary to what the editor is trying to convey. A reading of the catechism is fortunately straightforward and can be used to interpret Quitman's intentions in editing and compiling the hymnal.

Also important to note is Quitman's use of English. He was probably at least facilitous in Low German, High German, and Dutch, to which he added English later. One can see in his writing style (particularly in the use of commas to delineate clauses) his debt to German. Quitman himself warns his readers not to critique his writing, "As I have not written this essay, as a specimen of my proficiency in the English language, I am indifferent about alphabet critics."⁵ Self-deprecation aside, Quitman can be adroit in his use of theologically precise language when he cares to be. Through this language, Quitman reveals his curious world of trying to live both as an enlightened rationalist as well as an ordained steward of the mysteries of God.

I. Reason, Revelation, and Natural Law

The formulation of a coherent systematic theology from Frederick Quitman's writings must involve a thorough understanding of his view of reason and faith, natural law, and epistemology. While studying in the great Pietist center of Halle, Quitman came under the influence of the rationalist biblical critic Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791). This "Father of German Rationalism" had advocated an essentially historical-critical hermeneutic and labored to promote a religion with less of theology and

⁴ Frederick H. Quitman, *Three Sermons: the first preached before the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, convened in Christ's Church, in the town of Claverack, on Sunday the seventh of September, 1817, and the second and third on the Reformation by Doctor Martin Luther commenced October thirty-first, A.D., 1517*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: William Fry, 1818).

⁵ Quitman, *Treatise on Magic*, vi.

more of good works—in the spirit and model of Christ and his apostles so he claimed. Although there is evidence that Semler retreated from some of his rationalist tendencies toward the end of his life, his influence upon Quitman occurred at the height of Semler's intellectual prowess. For the German rationalists, orthodoxy, with its abstruse doctrinal rules and accounts of a vengeful and capricious Hebrew deity, held little relevance to the enlightened thinker. Semler had advocated an accomodationalist view of the Scriptures whereby miracles could be explained away and the supernatural excised because Christ had merely accomodated himself to the barbaric and unenlightened peculiarities of the ancient world. In order for these teachings to be useful 1700 years hence, thought Semler, they must be reconciled to the current time.⁶ Quitman echoes this sentiment in one of his sermons:

“The Bible,” says a late divine of our Church, “is a book designed for men, and it ought to be read in the spirit of man.” The same method therefore, which we observe in the investigation of the proper intention of any uninspired writer, ought to be pursued in the examination of the true sense of the holy scriptures.⁷

This “spirit of man,” is simply pure reason. Reason is able to uncover this “true sense” of scripture. This is a rather curious use of the term, as though somehow God has deigned to mystify humanity by hiding his thoughts somewhere within this conglomerated mass of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. The gulf between faith and reason here becomes clear: in order to discover God's true revelation and the true sense of the Scriptures, one must apply reason, through which only a faithful application would be rewarded by eventual individual revelation. Quitman, therefore, continues by noting that, “the Gospel of Christ does not shrink from the tribunal of reason, but even invites to a close and impartial examination of its origin and contents.”⁸ This idea holds little novelty to modern liberal Protestants, but this rationalism applied to the Lutheran faith (if not to Christian orthodoxy in general) negates a long scriptural tradition of faith

⁶ John Fletcher Hurst, *History of Rationalism* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1865), 130.

⁷ Quitman, *Three Sermons*, 8. The “late divine” mentioned here is probably Semler.

⁸ Quitman, *Three Sermons*, 14.

superceding reason, of which Luther spoke: "That which is to lead us to heaven must be something above our reason and wisdom."⁹

Quitman's epistemology is evident in his *Treatise on Magic* (1810), in which he addresses two supernatural events in the Scriptures: the account of the Egyptian magicians and the witch of Endor. Rather than reading the Scriptures literally, Quitman explains through complicated *non sequiturs* what this account of the Exodus means:

Our attention is directed to the magicians of Egypt, who opposed Moses, the divine legislator of the Jews. These sorcerers are said, in the second book of Moses . . . to have changed their rods into serpents, the water of the Nile into blood, and to have produced abundance of frogs. But who sees not the mark of the IMPOSTOR branded on the forehead of these magicians? . . . For such men it was no difficult task to make all others believe what they pleased. . . . Thus circumstanced, they found no difficulty to make it appear by sleight of hand, as if their rods were changed into serpents, to give to the muddy water of the Nile a reddish color, and sliily to introduce some hidden frogs, into the royal apartment. But when they were bidden to act on a broader scale, and to enter, after the example of Moses, the open tracts of nature, they humbly confessed that their power had forsaken them.¹⁰

What is meant by the "secret arts" of the Egyptian sorcerers is not at issue here. That they were tricksters is possible. However, Quitman's rationale makes one wonder as to whether he believed in any miraculous occurrences. The backward Egyptians provided an easy literary target; but, if these conjurers' secret arts are so easily explained away, down what sort of rationalistic path does this lead? He addresses the witch of Endor event with this assessment: ". . . the famous witch of Endor was nothing else but an infamous imposter, who had acquired great proficiency in her art; and that she well knew how to turn this trade to her interest."¹¹ The villain provides a good theological scapegoat, and one might argue that the Scriptures' aims could still be accomplished in either story whether the antagonists were tricksters or genuinely called upon the supernatural. The

⁹ Martin Luther, "John 6" in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1986), 23:80 (hereafter *LW*).

¹⁰ Quitman, *Treatise on Magic*, 44.

¹¹ Quitman, *Treatise on Magic*, 47.

juxtaposition in both stories of the supernatural powers of good versus evil provides a context through which the acts of God are powerfully recorded. If the Egyptians could so easily duplicate the plagues using common scientific principles, who is to say Moses engaged in no sleight-of-hand himself? Quitman himself seems to anticipate where this line of reasoning will take him, and he addresses this concern:

This sacred book [the Bible] is no encyclopaedia, or source from whence the knowledge of all the arts and sciences must be drawn. Its authors wrote in a simple and uncultivated style, accomodated to the unpolished genius of remote antiquity; so that from the forementioned accounts we can infer nothing more than that those notions prevailed in their time. In this regard, therefore, we ought to follow the advice of the fathers of the primitive church, who laid it down as a maxim: that in dubious scriptural passages, we must first enquire, what reason dictates and what daily experience teaches, and explain such passages accordingly; and since the art of magic or supernatural operations, performed by the agency of spirits, cannot be proved by reason or ascertained by experience, it follows that the scriptures cannot be applied to this case.¹²

Although this passage contextually follows the two magician discussions, the language does not proscribe the use of reason to deny God's miracles in the scriptural narrative. This is about as close as Quitman comes to denying the miraculous. Naturally it is difficult to construct a theology out of that which is unmentioned, but perhaps it is significant that even Jesus' miracles are omitted from any specific discussion in the catechism (save the virgin birth and the resurrection.) Later in the catechism, Quitman is able to discuss the Seventh Commandment, even mentioning "the presence of our Lord at the wedding of Cana" without mentioning the first miracle!

In Quitman's understanding of the universe, as it is in many contemporary strands of biblical criticism, God works only through the natural laws he has designed. For God to do otherwise negates reason and, therefore, himself. Within the hymnal, one hymn ascribes to God very different titles than those traditionally ascribed to him, "Supreme and universal light! Fountain of reason! Judge of right! Without whose kind, directing ray, in everlasting night we stray. Assist us, Lord, to act, to be, what all thy sacred laws decree; worthy that intellectual flame, which from

¹² Quitman, *Treatise on Magic*, 57.

thy breathing spirit came.”¹³ Here again is Adam’s rationality the necessary prerogative for being human; he now owns that “intellectual flame” which, apparently, is breathed by God’s spirit. Perhaps Quitman has in mind some notion of Aquinas’ classification of animate beings; regardless, it seems a dangerous prospect to consider one’s intellect the guarantor of one’s humanity or soul. A line from another hymn clearly exhibits this idea of equating the soul with the intellect, “And men, whom reason lifts to God, Tho’ oft by passion downward driv’n.”¹⁴ The dichotomous relationship between reason and passion echoes a Gnosticism that never seemed to die throughout intellectual history – if one could only deny the sensual in favor of the intellectual, one would somehow attain spiritual closeness with God.

This high view of reason naturally involves a diminished concept of sin as well as an optimistic understanding of humanity’s moral and spiritual capabilities. To view one’s generation as somehow more enlightened than the superstition-prone ancient civilizations, to the extent that the Scriptures need new interpretation, involves an optimistic and progressive view of human history which Quitman himself champions:

Reason suggests; that since God as a wise and benevolent being cannot have produced the world without a certain good purpose; it would be absurd to suppose, that he should have left it to chance, or should discontinue to employ the best means of advancing it, to the end for which it is created.¹⁵

He elsewhere lauds the *Zeitgeist* by observing that the nineteenth century will prove to be even grander in aspirations and realized potential than the eighteenth, which he calls the age of reason, “. . . the present century is deemed to surpass all former ages in philosophical knowledge, so the inhabitants of the United States of America are often styled in public print, the most enlightened nation on earth.”¹⁶ This idea of continual cultural improvement, be it moral or spiritual, is the necessary result of the rationalist elevation of human reason and, as quoted from Quitman earlier, not only reverses the orthodox view of theological anthropology, but

¹³ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 192. All references from this hymnal are to page, not hymn, numbers.

¹⁴ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 55.

¹⁵ Quitman, *Catechism*, 23.

¹⁶ Quitman, *Treatise on Magic*, 26.

places the human mind in a position to judge faith, which by its very definition cannot be proven, and likewise elevates the human mind above the mind of God. In fact, reason seems to define human existence: "Thy goodness like the sun dawned on our earliest days ere infant reason had begun to form our lips to praise."¹⁷ What goodness is this? The orthodox Lutheran might say that this is God's working in baptism; before reason is developed, the Holy Spirit works faith in the heart. This hymn, however, neither reflects this, nor is it reflected anywhere else in the hymnal or catechism. This ambiguity suggests that a different interpretation is needed, an interpretation more in accord with rationalist theology. Indeed, one may read in this an exclamation of praise only enabled by reason, before which time one is merely dependent on God's benevolence through parents (this is stated clearly elsewhere in the catechism.)¹⁸ What improvement does this signify? Is one less dependent on God the more reason one attains? What implications does this sort of thought have for those who cannot reason—small children, yes, but the mentally handicapped as well? Is their dependence upon God somehow indicative of a less human status? Luther believed otherwise when he wrote, "He who does not kill and bury his reason and become as a little child does not enter into the kingdom of heaven."¹⁹ Luther reflects here the teaching of Jesus himself (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17).

II. Sin

As Voltaire's maxim goes, one must define the terms in order to engage in a productive discussion. Within his catechism, Frederick Quitman really does not give a theologically useful definition of sin except to respond to the question "What is sin?" with the befuddling-correct statement, "Everything that is inconsistent with the law of God."²⁰ This definition certainly accords with Christian orthodoxy; yet, Quitman's entire catechism is replete with the Pelagian notion of sin as a mistake to be

¹⁷ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 177.

¹⁸ Quitman notes that parents are entitled to the love of their children because of "Not only the care and trouble they take in rearing and educating them, but also their greater experience and ability to direct their offspring"; *Catechism*, 66. He goes on to define parents, or "superiors," as "Aged persons, and all those that excel in mental faculties and moral goodness"; *Catechism*, 67.

¹⁹ Martin Luther, *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, ed. Ewald M. Plass (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 1162 = Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Schriften]*, 65 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993), 47:328.

²⁰ Quitman, *Catechism*, 89.

corrected and improved rather than a crippling spiritual condition inherited from Adam. Quitman's theological position might best be summed up by one of his intellectual descendants, Samuel Simon Schmucker:

Dr Kunze, probably the most learned of our older ministers, and no less distinguished for his piety, than learning, in his history of the Christian Religion, thus expresses his views on the imputation of Adam's sin: "To derive original sin from the first man's being the federal head or representative of the human race, seems not satisfactory to a mind inclined to derive or expect only good and perfect things from the good and perfect Creator. By one man's disobedience, it is true, many were made sinners, but not on account of an imputation of this man's sin, but because by him, sin entered the world."²¹

Even in the rationalist viewpoint, Adam's fall provides more than an exemplar for humanity's sinfulness, as it has introduced a brokenness not originally present in God's creation. However, it is through following Adam's example rather than a resulting spiritual condition that sin has befallen subsequent generations. Quitman declares, "That the divine image, after which man was originally created, has been stained by sin, and as often disfigured by brutal iniquity; but that, by means which God has graciously offered and continues to offer, it may be restored and preserved in its native lustre."²² This sin does not necessarily cripple the will or a Christian's moral capabilities, for when Quitman poses the question, "Is the improvement of the will, of great importance?" he responds with the rather optimistic opinion, "Yes, for the more the inclinations are improved, the more fertile they will be of good works, and the more productive of happiness in life."²³ The disparity between actual and original sin in rationalist theology bears witness to the difference between the Pelagian and Augustinian views of sin and of the exact meaning of "sinful nature" bespoken in scripture (Eph 2:3; Ps 51:5). To confess in the words of Psalm 51 that one was "sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" implies a characteristic state neither

²¹ Samuel S. Schmucker, *The American Lutheran Church, Historically, Doctrinally, and Practically Delineated* (Springfield: D. Harbaugh, 1852), 174.

²² Quitman, *Catechism*, 21.

²³ Quitman, *Catechism*, 18.

earned nor avertable, which precedes any subsequent sinful actions.²⁴ Luther himself acknowledges that hereditary guilt seems unjust and is certainly unreasonable:

To wise reason and worldly wisdom it seems to be a big, stout lie that the entire human race should die because of the guilt of a single human being. For it certainly appears exceedingly unfair and absurd on the part of God to react so oddly to Adam's folly and to take a position so foolish as to judge that because Adam bit into an apple he brought about the death of all human beings who come after him down to the end of the world.²⁵

Luther's understanding of original sin is also reflected in Article II of the Augsburg Confession and Apology. This certainly had been the predominate view of the Lutheran Church and is evidenced in Lazarus Spengler's hymn, "All mankind fell in Adam's fall, one common sin infects us all; From sire to son the bane descends, and over all the curse impends."²⁶ In contrast, one wonders how much more in common Lutheran rationalists might have had with deists such as Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Jefferson than with the Lutheran reformers of the sixteenth century.

Quitman's view of sin curiously leads him into eschatological ponderings. When addressing the question of why good people must suffer evils, he responds, "That this life is not a state of perfect retribution, but rather a state of probation and trial, and that the very sufferings of the pious are intended as a means for their moral improvement, and to render them more fit for the enjoyment of eternal glory."²⁷ Here two matters are of interest, the first being humanity's potential for improvement. Unencumbered with *Erbsünde* ("hereditary sin"), humanity is free to conquer the bonds of ignorance and superstition (a word of which Quitman is particularly fond) in order to achieve happiness on earth.²⁸ This

²⁴ For further biblical evidence of original sin in the Scriptures, see Charles A. Gieschen, "Original Sin in the New Testament," *Concordia Journal* 31 (2005): 359-375.

²⁵ Martin Luther, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15," *LW* 28:114.

²⁶ *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 369:1.

²⁷ Quitman, *Catechism*, 29.

²⁸ It is not unreasonable to presume that a number of the hymns collected within the hymnal come from Quitman himself. Although there is no way to prove authorship, Quitman uses a number of phrases and words in the catechism, which also appear in many hymns. The fact that these words ("superstition" [or "dismal superstition"],

catechetical statement is reflected in a stanza of Hymn 83 in Quitman's hymnal: "Blest trials those that cleanse from sin and make the soul all pure within, wean the fond mind from earthly toys to seek and taste celestial joys."²⁹ While acknowledging the very scriptural context of Christian suffering, does this stanza imply that sin (or at least "trials" brought on by sin) somehow sanctifies? Interestingly, this "cleansing from sin" to make the "soul all pure within" really harbors baptismal implications yet only subconsciously. One question from the catechism answers a totally different question than it is even supposed to raise: "Would man left to himself, and destitute of particular divine aid have been able to rise to moral perfection?"³⁰ That moral perfection is possible is not even debated, only the means of such perfection is of dispute! Sin not only does not constitute a crippling condition, it is a means toward moral improvement. The second matter of interest in eschatology is that Quitman frequently utilizes the theological and poetic tension between present and future eschatology. Absent from his hymnal are the eschatological doxologies in the final stanzas of, say, Charles Wesley's hymns. Although Quitman threatens with hell and often waves the carrot of eternal bliss, his teleology is one that leads to happiness and intellectual fulfillment on earth rather than in heaven. After all, moral improvement renders one "more fit for the enjoyment of eternal glory." Calling sin a "perversion of God's benevolent designs," Quitman expounds that ". . . it is the great aim of all and every divine commandment to promote the welfare of mankind in general, and of every individual in particular, and consequently every transgression of this law is destructive to human happiness."³¹ Arguably, this may be one definition of sin, but it seems a rather destitute one. Sin seems to have negated the world's enjoyment of itself rather than having brought pain, death, and destruction. Naturally, if Adam merely introduced sin to creation thereby setting a bad example for ensuing generations, one might expect that such a theology will have profound implications on Christ's atonement.

"earth, air, skies," "influence" [in relation to God], "dignity" and "reasonable") are unusual for either a catechism or a hymnal at least suggests a significant representation of his own hymns.

²⁹ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 64.

³⁰ Quitman, *Catechism*, 92.

³¹ Quitman, *Catechism*, 91.

Sin and conscience are as closely aligned in Quitman's theology as they are in traditional Lutheran theology. For both, the law is manifest on the human heart through the conscience, but Quitman's understanding of the word *conscience* is colored by an individualistic approach. Not only does God write his law upon the conscience, one is also bound to uphold the dictates of his conscience above all other outside forces, religion included. The third stanza of Hymn 349 testifies to this individualist faith, taking Halle Pietism to its logical conclusion but in a way that would have horrified the older Pietists: "Who with another's eye can read? Or worship by another's creed? Trusting thy grace, we form our own, and bow to thy commands alone."³² The human conscience seems to work synergistically with God's natural law in order to produce an individualistic law workable with a person's heart, namely, the conscience. This really reverses the *ordo* with which traditional orthodoxy has approached God. Whereas the Creed(s) had formed the basis for the Christian life and imbued collective meaning to the Christian and indeed defined what the Christian was as well as what he or she was not, this *ordo* places the human conscience, or reason, above any sort of specific law from God (at least as revealed in the Scriptures). Quitman anticipates modern biblical criticism as he subtly subverts the role of faith when he asks: "By what means can we preserve and improve the power and operations of conscience? By the continual study and attention to the true sense of the word of God, and rational consideration."³³ The Scriptures and faith, therefore, must be approached by and filtered through this human "rational consideration," a thought which not so discreetly places human reason above divine faith. The fifth stanza of Hymn 330 really equivocates God with the conscience: "While conscience, like a faithful friend, shall thro' the gloomy vale attend, and cheer our dying breath; shall, when all other comforts cease, like a kind angel, whisper peace, and smooth the bed of death."³⁴ In essence faith, intellect, and natural law coalesce to form that trustworthy conscience: faith is provided by God and insures the human acts rightly; the intellect, being capable of overcoming sin, can reason properly, and natural law can easily be deciphered (through reason) to reveal about God's will whatever cannot be discovered through the first two processes.

³² Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 238.

³³ Quitman, *Catechism*, 19.

³⁴ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 225.

To equate one's conscience with the surety of God and his revelation results in sin becoming merely that which counters the conscience. Indeed, that seems evident from the first stanza of Hymn 349, "All-seeing God! 'tis thine to know the springs from whence wrong opinions flow; to judge, from principles within, when frailty errs, and when we sin."³⁵ To hold a wrong opinion is to have reasoned wrongly and, therefore, to have separated oneself from God, a natural consequence of human frailty. With a theology of sin that does not curse and a conscience that does not convict with the decrees of the law, it should not be surprising that this section of the catechism is as close as Quitman ever comes to describing the tripartite nature of the law being a curb, mirror, and rule. Quitman's liberty from sin likewise prevents him from understanding the real freedom of the gospel.

III. Atonement

If the doctrine of original sin is subsumed to a Pelagian idea of preventable actual sins, one might expect Quitman's doctrine of the atonement to lose much of its justifying power. In theologizing on that great evangelical verse from the third chapter of John, Quitman states as follows:

That God is a propitious father of the whole human race, that, as a pledge of this truth, he had sent his only begotten son into the world, so that if men repent of their errors and sins, and believing in Jesus Christ as their saviour, take him for their guide, he will not only pardon their sins, but also enable them, by the assistance of his holy spirit to lead a godly life, and in this manner prepare and render them meet for a better and happier world.³⁶

This language exudes the non-confrontational deism prevalent at the time—as one can virtually hear strains of Schiller "*Über Sternenzelt musst ein lieber Vater wohnen*"—while Quitman expounds on the glories of this "propitious father" at the expense of the Son. To equate errors and sins was natural to Quitman, who stood closer to Aquinas than to Luther in holding reason as capable as faith in revealing God's will. In the section entitled "Repentance and Conversion" in his hymnal (there is no "Confession and Absolution" section) is found a hymn that illustrates the intellectual nature of rationalist faith: "Blest Instructor! From thy ways,

³⁵ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 238.

³⁶ Quitman, *Catechism*, 36.

who can tell, how oft he strays! Save from error's growth my mind, leave not, Lord, one root behind."³⁷ In hymnology's likely sole instance of addressing God as "Instructor," Quitman moves the worshipper from any sort of doxological *orthokardia* as might be found in the German Pietists or the English Evangelicals to a type of dry intellectual accession to no particular doctrine whatsoever. Intellectual error is sin, and from this error does Christ save humanity. Wrong opinions necessarily negate reason, which necessarily stands contrary to God and his law, which hearkens back to Quitman's original definition of sin being anything "inconsistent with the law of God." In a sermon, Quitman notes that Christ's atonement resulted in the deliverance ". . . from ignorance and superstition, from sin and misery. . . ." ³⁸ Within Quitman's editorial corpus, the prayers to deliver from superstition are copious and lengthy. To a thorough-going rationalist, error and superstition were cardinal sins.

Quitman also exhorts the Christian to "take him [Christ] for their guide,"³⁹ again not a theologically indefensible position except when viewed within the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Socinianism, in which the role of Christ as savior was lessened and his role as an example to follow was heightened. In following Christ's example, he says, the Christian is pardoned from sin (again, in a Pelagian sense) and is enabled "by the assistance of the holy spirit to lead a godly life" so that happiness in this life may result. Although this is prose in a catechism, one can veritably hear a missing doxological eschatological stanza at this point: Is the only result of the redemption from sin the increase in happiness on earth? Quitman does not deny the existence of heaven or life after death, but its diminution seems really to foreshadow later nineteenth-century theological developments with the Social Gospel movement. Furthermore, rationalist ideals presupposed that religion had a quantifiable purpose and a measurable goal. Closely related to the decadent Pietism that preceded it, rationalist thought valued the clear presence of the fruits of the spirit, which were not only tangible but also provided proof by which other humans could judge their own inner faith. The concept of mystagogy, whether in a sacramental context, a liturgical sense, or in one's personal faith, bore little weight in the minds of those whose philosophy required a measurable result in order to be useful. Quitman writes elsewhere about

³⁷ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 171.

³⁸ Quitman, *Three Sermons*, 9.

³⁹ Quitman, *Three Sermons*, 9.

his lack of concern for the unknowable, only begrudgingly acknowledging its existence: "Mysteries, in the proper sense of the word, are in direct contradiction to a revelation. What we do not know, can affect neither our understanding nor our heart, and of course, cannot be a proper subject of our religion."⁴⁰ Rationalist theology is one of practical, not speculative, religion.

Whatever might be said about this catechism's theology, it can fairly be said that Quitman did not skirt difficult questions in favor of harmless platitudes. He addresses the issue of universalism in the question which asks whether "all those who are destitute of the light of the gospel, and consequently are unaquainted with Christ are to be damned?" He answers:

Far be this from the righteous judge of all the earth: for how should they believe in him of whom they have not heard. Rom. 10:14. God will rather deal with them according to the measure of their religious knowledge, and the opportunities they have for improving it.⁴¹

Once again, Quitman returns to the idea of intellectual improvement as the greatest import to any religionist (Christian or otherwise) as well as a type of works righteousness in which God judges one's heart and life based on their intellectual attainments. Although knowledge of the Christian God is limited to those who know his revelation in the Scriptures, reason is available to all and only through reason can one discern God's character. Thus, Quitman states: "Reason and revelation are the only sources, from which religious knowledge is to be decided. . . . Are not both reason and revelation descended from heaven, always in harmony and supporting each other?"⁴² Accordingly, Quitman never denies the existence of hell, but tempers it with the warning that, ". . . the servant that knows his Lord's will, and has not acted according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that did know not, and did omit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him also shall be much required."⁴³ It is because reason and faith are complementary that salvation may logically be found at the end of rational ponderings. As long as one does not know

⁴⁰ Quitman, *Three Sermons*, 9.

⁴¹ Quitman, *Catechism*, 48.

⁴² Quitman, *Three Sermons*, 40.

⁴³ Quitman, *Catechism*, 122.

the gospel in order to reject it and so long as one does no wickedness, Quitman's heaven is universally attainable.

IV. Christology

Only in rationalist systematic theology could one discuss the concept of the atonement while only peripherally mentioning Christ. Quitman's Christology is perhaps as difficult to deal with as his notion of sin; in many cases, one must construct his theology by inferring negatively from what is not said about Christ. Quitman's rationalism neither denied Christ's existence, nor even his divinity in a certain sense. The section of the hymnal entitled "Mission and Nativity of Christ" provides some evidence for incarnational theology, and even greater evidence of poor poetry. Hymn 96 notes: "Of angels, praising God, and thus warbling their choral song: 'Glory to God, from whom on high All-gracious mercies flow! Who sends his heav'n-descended peace to dwell with man below.'"⁴⁴ A few hymns later one sings of God saying: "'Go, my beloved Son. . . Be thou their Saviour, thou their guide.'"⁴⁵ Once again, being savior and guide are equated: Christ's life serves as a model of moral perfection for humanity. Christ's divinity is referenced in a number of stanzas that observe that God's face is seen in Christ's face ("Ye, who see the Father's grace, beaming in the Saviour's face"⁴⁶), although by logical extension Quitman takes this to a rather Socinian conclusion elsewhere: "So may my conduct ever prove my filial piety and love. Whilst all my brethren clearly trace their father's likeness on my face."⁴⁷ Quitman's incarnational theology may not be exactly adoptionistic, yet the reader is left with a supposition at least that they are as capable of showing God's face as Christ is (this is not unreasonable given Quitman's essential rejection of the sinful nature.) Perhaps one should not attempt to wrench a theological system out of hymns that, by their very nature, preach little doctrine, yet the inclusion of these hymns demonstrates that Quitman at least viewed Christ as preexisting before his incarnation and that he had some sort of divine mandate.

The idea of divine mandate may be a good starting point in dealing with such Christology. Whereas more orthodox theologians might connect their

⁴⁴ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 71.

⁴⁵ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 75.

⁴⁶ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 88.

⁴⁷ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 182.

Christology with some kind of mention of the Trinity, Quitman's reasoning never leads him into any explicit mention of the Trinity; instead, he makes clear that Christ had the blessings of God:

Q: Do you perceive herein also an evidence for the divine authority of Jesus and His doctrine?

A: A very striking one: for it is morally impossible that such a person as Jesus, descended from a humble parentage, destitute of the means for receiving a learned education, bred among an illiberal, bigoted and perverse generation; without any influential connexions, or powerful aid, and in spite of the most desperate opposition; should have formed the extensive plan, of reforming the whole human race and saving them from errors and sin without an express divine commission. In this all embracing plan, which is still successively carried on, we cannot but perceive the finger of God.⁴⁸

Not only does he here equate sin and error again, one can also ascertain Quitman's own priorities by the nature of this question and answer. That he notes Christ's thriving success *despite* his lack of education, family connections, and the presence of a bigoted bunch of brutes trying to thwart him, implies that such advantages might very well help a modern individual (recall Quitman's thoughts on the moral perfection of the post-apostolic generations). Indeed, Christ's example shows that he ". . . delivered mankind from the prevailing superstition and ignorance and imparted to them all the necessary religious instruction of which they were susceptible."⁴⁹ Here Christ is again portrayed as the heavenly instructor sent down to preach moral doctrines in order that humanity might have an example of how likewise to succeed.

Within the section of the hymnal entitled "Sufferings and Death of Christ" are several hymns that are taken from other authors, the most notable is Isaac Watts' "Alas! And did my Saviour Bleed." This hymn obviously made Quitman and Wackerhagen uncomfortable, as they excised almost half of it, finally including only four of the original six stanzas. Omitted was the second stanza ("Thy body slain, sweet Jesus! Thine, and bathed in its own blood, while all exposed to wrath divine the glorious sufferer stood!"), which admittedly hearkens back to the prior

⁴⁸ Quitman, *Catechism*, 31.

⁴⁹ Quitman, *Catechism*, 34.

century with its English blood-soaking, and the third ("Was it for crimes that I had done He groan'd upon the tree? Amazing pity, grace unknown, and love beyond degree!"), which manifests clearly Watts's Calvinist doctrine of innate depravity as well as referring to the word *grace* as a concept that becomes less important as humanity is given more potential for spiritual improvement. Quitman edits Watts's fourth stanza and makes it the second, altering the original "When God the mighty Maker dy'd" to "When Christ, the mighty Saviour, died." Perhaps this is the single instance in the hymnal where Quitman did not wish to confuse his reader with heretical Trinitarian tendencies—perhaps he wanted to make clear that it was not God the Father who died on the cross. But it is also possible, and more likely given evidence found elsewhere, that he wished to dissociate as much as possible Christ's humanity from God's divinity.⁵⁰ Quitman's Trinitarian theology will be explored below.

One leaves this section of the catechism with a tantalizing query that raises more questions than it answers. The question, "Why is Jesus styled, the only begotten son of God?" receives the mystifying reply, "As well on account of his exalted dignity and pre-eminence above all created beings, as on account of the great love, which his heavenly Father has manifested for him."⁵¹ Unclear here is whether Christ is preeminent above *other* created beings like himself, which would place Quitman at odds with two of the ecumenical creeds, or whether he is preeminent above the created beings by the fact that he is *not* created like them. This obfuscation may be due in part to the flowery, rationalistic language of the time which inherits from Pietism a wanton use of the term *love* as well as various endearments for God the Father, while deriving from more deistic humanism such concepts as "exalted dignity," which could function either as a theological description or as a sociological view of the Italian Renaissance. One does not know! It is not difficult to believe, based on the ambiguities found elsewhere in his catechism, that Quitman may be intentionally vague. The times that he is precise as to his meaning prove that he *can* be clear in defining his reasoning or his terms. In this instance, the heresy-prone reader might be led into Arianism.

⁵⁰ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 106. The unedited Watts hymn is found in *The Poetical Works of Isaac Watts, DD*, Vol. IV (London: Apollo Press, 1802), 13.

⁵¹ Quitman, *Catechism*, 34.

V. Pneumatology and the Trinity

It has already been mentioned that Quitman is ambiguous toward the doctrine of the Trinity, and it is the nature of this ambiguity that is of interest. Some writers may not mention certain doctrines, simply taking them as a matter of fact and possibly focusing their theology on less-covered ground; however, one would think a hymnal should contain the essential truths of its particular religion. One would further expect a catechism to devote itself to the nature of its particular God. Quitman's writings do neither. As mentioned, the hymnal contains no doxological stanzas. In fact, they seem to have been omitted intentionally. Bishop Ken's great evening hymn, "All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night" is shorn of three stanzas, including the doxology!⁵² The Holy Spirit receives scant attention in either the catechism or hymnal. In treating the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, Quitman spends only the first four questions (out of 34) dealing with the Holy Spirit, and these answers are not only short, but vague. He mentions that to the Holy Spirit ". . . the sacred writers ascribe . . . not only every talent and gift, which is requisite to raise and to enlarge the kingdom of God in general . . . but also every good quality of which the christian is possessed."⁵³ His next answer devotes a sentence to the reception of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, while the next expounds on the powers the apostles received at Pentecost. So much for the Holy Spirit in the catechism.

In the hymnal's lone section devoted to the Holy Spirit, entitled "The Influence of God's Holy Spirit," are found a mere fourteen hymns, some of which do not even mention the Holy Spirit. By way of contrast, the Father and the Son each received multiple categories, including "The Perfections of God," "Divine Providence and Government," "The Mission and Nativity of Christ," "Christ's Example," and "The Office of Christ." One cannot help but infer from the lack of trinitarian thoughts and the curious heading "The *Influence* of the Holy Spirit" that, for Quitman, the Holy Spirit is perhaps only a veiled metaphor for God's occasional activities in humankind. After all, the deism which so permeated the intellectual ethos of the time did not particularly allow for a God active in human affairs—this deity had created all and given humanity the intellect to improve themselves and would leave the world at that. The orthodox notion of the

⁵² Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 271.

⁵³ Quitman, *Catechism*, 42.

Holy Spirit as the active agent in the world and the person in whom the church on earth is collected stands in contrast to the great "watchmaker in the sky" who has divorced himself from human interaction. That Christ lived physically on earth to set a moral example also makes rationalistic sense—one can strive to moral perfection based on his characteristics. A doctrine of the Holy Spirit who is living and active in the church, however, threatens rationalistic independence. Hymn 190 addresses this: "For ever blessed be the Lord, my Saviour and my shield! He sends his Spirit with his word, to arm me for the field."⁵⁴ Note first that this stanza contains the only reference to the Holy Spirit in its three stanzas. Second, this passing mention, which somehow qualifies it for inclusion in the section devoted to the Holy Spirit, does not negate a deistic understanding of God's activities. God arms Christians, specifically through his word, to go out on their own. This is not an entirely unorthodox idea, as Lutheranism has always held to the importance of word and sacrament as means that strengthen faith, but this singular mention seems to imply a sort of abandonment by God, not out of cruelty, but because humanity has all it needs to improve itself. This is consistent with rationalist ideals.

The Holy Spirit as a distinct person with his own personality does not find expression in any of Quitman's writing. His concept of the Holy Spirit accords more with an impersonal, magnetic force pervading the universe through which God acts. Students of heresies might call this Macedonianism, or the idea that the Holy Spirit is a power rather than a person. If this is accepted, the entire doctrine of the Trinity must be reconstructed as some sort of dualism. The first stanza of Hymn 186, still under the so-called Holy Spirit section, perhaps alludes to this as it says: "Thine influence, Lord! Is felt throughout nature's ample round. In heav'n, on earth, thro' air and skies, Thine energy is found."⁵⁵ The only time this hymn mentions the Spirit is in the third stanza when it implores, "Father! Thy Spirit grant, to guide our doubtful way." Only the capitalization of the word *spirit* implies that there could be any sort of trinitarian confession. Even so, this pneumatology strongly suggests an impersonal, divine, guiding, and universal influence rather than a distinct person. To slight the Holy Spirit even further, the hymnal contains only four baptismal hymns, none of which explicitly mentions or even overtly suggests any activity of the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁴ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 135.

⁵⁵ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 132.

To make a case, albeit a weak one, for Quitman's trinitarian orthodoxy, one could turn to the second stanza of Hymn 107: "Thus doth th' eternal Spirit own and seal the mission of the Son; the Father vindicates his cause, while he hangs bleeding on the cross."⁵⁶ At least here all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned in one breath, and they seem to be engaged in independent activities found in the Scriptures. Admittedly, this may be an overly-optimistic, modern, and trinitarian view of this verse; nevertheless, it still cannot be said that there is not expressed here a type of macedonianism.

VI. Ecclesiology

A pneumatology silent as to the personality of the third person of the Trinity naturally results in an ecclesiology likewise devoid of much spiritual content. From a denominational perspective, Quitman refused to bind himself to anything but the Scriptures. The symbolic documents of the Reformation held only passing historical interest as he did not consider himself bound to shallow ecclesiastical traditions, doctrinal or otherwise. He writes of these good-natured reformers: "They were men of probity, and consequently did not hesitate to make public profession of their faith; but these symbols, which were mistaken by their too zealous followers as invariable forms, have unhappily become a partition-wall, which . . . will divide the protestant church."⁵⁷ He appeals to historical precedent as he continues to plead for an organic and progressive, rather than a static, church:

. . . the friends of Luther ventured even in his life time to differ from him, in some doctrinal points. And as the great reformer was silent to these improvements by his friends; it appears as well from this circumstance, as from many expressions, contained in the works, which were published by him in the later part of his life, that he approved of these emendations. Thus the dogmas of the entire moral incapacity of man, and of the absolute or unconditional divine decrees, which most of the reformers had imbibed . . . were very early discarded from the list of the creed of the Lutherans, and the more rational and scriptural doctrines of free agency and universal grace substituted in their place.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 78.

⁵⁷ Quitman, *Three Sermons*, 7.

⁵⁸ Quitman, *Catechism*, 175.

Quitman cleverly proves (through Luther's silence or lack of objection) that he must eventually have agreed with the more rational principles to which he was so virulently opposed his entire recorded career. Luther must have been enlightened later in life whereby he rejected innate human sinfulness! Why Luther would suddenly become agreeable to doctrinal compromise, when his entire career was predicated on his courageous stands, can only be traced to a rationalist yearning for superficial agreement and peace. After all, much like the modern evangelicals, Quitman thought little of denominational beliefs or differences. Several of the hymns attest to this unionism: "Let party feuds no more have place nor tongues be 'set on fire for hell'"⁵⁹ and "Let party-names no more the Christian world o'erspread: Gentile and Jew, and bond and free, are one in Christ their head"⁶⁰ are only two hymns that convey a lack of importance placed on doctrine.

Not surprisingly, Quitman expects religion to attain a practical, measurable goal in much the same way as Charles Finney's "New Measures" claim to do. This teleological approach is evident as he defines the kingdom of God as "every institution which God has employed, and continues to employ for raising man to higher moral perfection; but this word is, in a particular sense, applied to the church of Christ."⁶¹ He then asks what distinguishes the Christian ministry from all other religious institutions:

That they are not allowed, like the abettors of superstition, to rule over the consciences of others, or to arrogate to themselves civil, or spiritual authority, or to pretend to a supernatural mediatorial power: but that it is their chief duty, as faithful pastors, to attend to their spiritual flock; to instruct, to exhort, and to comfort them, with all meekness, to lead them by their advice to religious knowledge, and godliness, without employing any other weapon in defence of truth, but reason and argument.⁶²

Rather than defining the church as that which is built around God's word and sacrament or the ministry as that which is marked by any semblance of the office of the keys, Quitman's church presupposes an aim

⁵⁹ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 281.

⁶⁰ Wackerhagen and Quitman, *Hymns*, 239.

⁶¹ Quitman, *Catechism*, 43.

⁶² Quitman, *Catechism*, 43.

of improvement and perfection. He states, "[I]t is one of the chief ends of the religion of Christ, to deliver the world from the bondage of superstition."⁶³ In styling itself as the educator of the masses, Quitman's church minimized its creedal constraints, instead of returning to that supposed glory of the early church and of the apostles themselves as evidenced in the simplicity of the Apostles' Creed, which of course historically follows by several centuries the Nicene. Nevertheless, Quitman attributes the accretion of the futile doctrinal ramblings of the supposedly-later Nicene Creed by observing: "as long as religion was more a concern of the heart, than of the understanding, the number of articles of the Christian faith was but small, which is evident from [the number of articles] of the commonly called Apostolic Creed."⁶⁴ Of course, this catechism reduces this creed even further by overlooking some of its essentials (i.e., the nature of the Church) while focusing on needless theological ephemera (i.e., "Is there life on other planets?").⁶⁵

VII. Critical Analysis

Friedrich Heinrich Quitman, although less-studied than other principals in American Lutheran history, has only himself to blame for the amount of negative scholarly publicity he has received through the years. His brand of insipid and anemic spirituality sets forth little to warrant its serious consideration in the twenty-first century, except to note it as being the nadir against which Lutheranism had no choice but to react with some sort of confessional revival. Abdel Ross Wentz, therefore, writes of Quitman's catechism: "It denied the inspiration and authority of the Bible and set at nought all the main doctrines of the Lutheran Confessions and the Apostles' Creed. A few years later he published a hymnal and a liturgy. This was also un-Lutheran and un-evangelical throughout, and it was

⁶³ Quitman, *Treatise on Magic*, iii.

⁶⁴ Quitman, *Three Sermons*, 6.

⁶⁵ Quitman, *Catechism*, 22. "Since the kingdom of God is boundless, and the worlds which he has created not to be numbered, it is not probable, that the everliving God should have left these numberless mansions destitute of rational inhabitants: And since we perceive that the creator has observed a regular progress in the nature and constitution of his creatures on earth; we may with reason suppose that his gradation extends beyond the terrestrial world." Quitman then continues with a discussion of angels, demons, and "messengers."

officially rejected by the synod. . . . The Quitman catechism did not sell.”⁶⁶ Certainly it takes little exploration to verify Quitman’s denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures. As is usually the case, the question becomes rather what kind of inspiration he had in mind. The prior analysis of his denial of the Egyptian magicians and the powers of the witch of Endor do not necessarily constitute a denial of the other miracles mentioned in the Scriptures, since neither involves a direct act of God. In fact, Quitman stands with orthodoxy in some profound ways. He acknowledges that creation occurred in six days⁶⁷ and he affirms Christ’s miracles:

Our Saviour himself refers to them in his answer to the message from John the Baptist. Where he says: Go and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and to the poor the gospel is preached.⁶⁸

In relation to Christ’s virgin birth he states that Jesus did not “come into the world like other men,” rather, “he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, or, by a direct intervention of God’s almighty power.”⁶⁹ Quitman likewise throughout the catechism references Christ’s literal resurrection—never does he attempt to reason it away. Given his propensity for political and ambiguous language elsewhere, there is no doubt what he means here. He acknowledges the major miracles as they relate to Christ’s life, but he is blaringly silent about others. Given his historical critical approach to the Scriptures, one can cautiously form a type of systematic theology here. Quitman many times implores the Christian to read the Scriptures in terms of a modern understanding and with the foolishness of the superstitious ancients in mind. The casting out of demons or the healing of the sick might be attributed to healing in a natural and scientific way; other miracles might be attributed to mass hysteria or to the superstitious ancient mind. The accuracy of the minor miracles did not concern him—as did the reality of those involving Christ—as much as he lamented the miniscule (in his mind) doctrinal differences between denominations. Quitman gives few clues as to how he can accept some miracles and not others—if one can rise from the dead, then feeding a few thousand people

⁶⁶ Abdel Ross Wentz, *The Lutheran Church in American History* (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1933), 116–117.

⁶⁷ Quitman, *Catechism*, 14.

⁶⁸ Quitman, *Catechism*, 30.

⁶⁹ Quitman, *Catechism*, 35.

or changing water to wine does not seem incongruous. Perhaps evidenced in this conflict is that the man of faith could not totally be engulfed within a rationalist mindset. Even for Quitman, reason would eventually reach a point from which only faith can proceed.

Setting Quitman within his pietistic-turned-rationalist historical background, Sydney Ahlstrom regards Quitman's catechism as "a monument to the enlightened theology of that age, a skillful effort to Americanize German rationalism."⁷⁰ With all his faults, Quitman was still no deistic Jefferson or atheistic Voltaire. His theological anthropology might have been Socinian, and he may have understood sin as only a minor inconvenience; but perhaps his Hallensian upbringing allowed him to concede his inability to achieve perfection, when he writes with an unusual amount of personal expression: "Man is naturally liable to frailty and error, and even the wisest among us is not exempt from this deficiency."⁷¹ This is far from a Lutheran or Calvinist notion of sin, yet one may detect the still voice of faith carrying on when reason and human achievements have reached their zenith. Luther Reed derides Quitman's hymnal by noting that "Some of its forms were highly objectionable, and its entire tone reflected the low doctrinal and liturgical spirit of the time."⁷² Yet, Quitman's liturgy at the end of the hymnal still contained the Apostles' Creed in the baptismal service.⁷³ His catechism still contains five of the six chief parts of Luther's catechism (confession is omitted), and the section devoted to the Apostles' Creed is the most extensive. His creedal confession stops there, never mentioning the Athanasian Creed and only in scorn referencing the contentious and complex verbiage of the Nicene

⁷⁰ Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 378.

⁷¹ Quitman, *Three Sermons*, 12.

⁷² Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947), 174. For a brief analysis of the sacramental implications of the hymns included and omitted from the *Hymns*, see Peter C. Cage, "Sacramental Hymnody in American Lutheran Hymnals During the Nineteenth Century," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66 (July 2002): 195-220. For a definitive analysis of Quitman within the broader historical and hymnological context, consult Carl Schalk, *God's Song in a New Land* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995).

⁷³ Douglas C. Stange, "Frederick Henry Quitman, DD: The Flowering of Rationalism in the American Lutheran Church," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 39 (July 1966): 67-76.

Creed. He holds up only the Apostles' Creed as the example of true, unadulterated Christian doctrine.

The sort of rationalism practiced in the North American colonies and advocated by Frederick Quitman was unable to replace God's true word and sacraments. Douglas Stange sums up Quitman's accomplishments thus:

When Quitman died in 1832, at the age of 72, the main impetus in rationalistic theology and liberalism in the American Lutheran Church died with him. His catechism never had taken hold. He traveled little outside the Ministerium and his impact was largely confined to his own people. The hymns he had collected and the liturgy he had fabricated possessed the greatest longevity, but in the end, they too, were overtaken in the rise of a nascent liturgical revival.⁷⁴

In 1817, Claus Harms reacted to German rationalism with his own 95 theses inciting a call to arms to reclaim historic Christian orthodoxy. The rise of the LCMS a few years later was spurred by immigrants who wished to be Lutheran in doctrine and practice, deriding Prussian unionism while risking their lives on a voyage to a new country. The Henkel family would become salt and light, publishing an English *Book of Concord* and almost single-handedly keeping the Tennessee Synod from lapsing into rationalism or revivalism, much to the constant scorn of Samuel Simon Schmucker. C. F. W. Walther's *Kirchengesangbuch* of 1847 evidenced a return to the normative *Kernlieder* of the Reformation, allowing the worshipper to hear and to sing about the sacraments without confusing justification and sanctification, and to proclaim the truths of the Scriptures in song without merging law and gospel into an ill-conceived muddle. Quitman's theology epitomized the times. In his *Zeitgeist* he was as rationalistic as he could be while still being considered a Christian. That a renewal of confessional Lutheranism was inevitable even without Quitman is probable—the Saxon immigrants probably knew nothing of his dealings. Yet, his catechism's publication and subsequent poor sales might have been the impetus for the Ministerium to publish its next catechism, more faithful to Luther's, in 1829.⁷⁵ Only three years after the publication of his hymnal, Quitman was part of a committee that developed the *Gemeinschaftliche Gesangbuch*, a hymnal for the union of Reformed and

⁷⁴ Stange, "Frederick Henry Quitman, DD," 75.

⁷⁵ Stange, "Frederick Henry Quitman, DD," 72.

Lutheran churches in Pennsylvania. While hardly an exemplar of confessional hymnody, this hymnal at least represents a slight retreat from Quitman's previous cold rationalism—not only is this indicated by its reverting to the German language, but the hymnal contained one hymn by Luther and eleven by Gerhardt! Only in comparison to the hymnal of 1814 can this be seen to be an improvement.⁷⁶ Quitman's example taught some propitious lessons during a time when Lutheranism was struggling with its identity in a world characterized by secular rationalism and evangelical revivalism. One cannot but wonder if early twenty-first century American Lutheranism can also learn from Quitman so that more do not follow the rationalistic path he mistakenly marked out for an earlier generation.

⁷⁶ The *Gemeinschaftliche Gesangbuch*, published at the anniversary of the Reformation in 1817, contained hymns of many of the German rationalists such as Sturm, Lavater, and particularly Gellert. Although Quitman was part of the hymnal committee, this volume seems to have been assembled with a greater variety of theological input and is arguably less representative of Quitman's own theological leanings than it is simply a mirror of the unionistic theological trends of the time. For a more detailed discussion of this hymnal, see Carl Schalk, *God's Song in a New Land*, and Benjamin Kolodziej, "Realms in Conflict: Rationalism and Orthodoxy in Early Nineteenth-Century Hymnody," *The Hymn* 53 (July 2002): 22–29.