

Schmucker's Benevolence from Republican Ideals to Civil War Realities¹

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"If you would be good patriots be true Christians," Samuel Simon Schmucker wrote in 1839, for "everything really noble or beautiful in human character, is made more beautiful and nobler still by religion."² Samuel Simon Schmucker's first priority was evangelism, yet he also recognized that the American experiment in self-government required virtuous citizens to succeed. Schmucker saw that the churches had, or could develop, three institutions especially well-suited to providing moral education for American citizens: the pulpit, the sabbath school and the Christian college.

The chief virtue to be cultivated by these institutions was benevolence. In our day benevolence usually means giving money to charitable causes, but benevolence was a much larger concept in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century America. Thought to be the opposite of selfishness, benevolence was expansive love which could transcend the boundaries of family, race and class to seek the spiritual, social and political well-being of others. This inquiry considers how the concept of benevolence informed Schmucker's views on Christian education in the decades before the Civil War, and then explores how the Civil War challenged Schmucker's views of benevolence as a natural human virtue.

An Optimistic View of Human Nature

The concept of benevolence took its rise as a rebuttal to philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who argued that fear and selfishness are the only human motives and that absolute power is the basis of society.³ British moral philosophy began as a rebuttal to Hobbes's offensive anthropology⁴, pressing the idea of benevolence into service and making it, for the first time, an important concept in its own right. Several philosophers worked with this concept, perhaps none more so than Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) who made benevolence so important that it all but "usurp[ed] the whole field of morality."⁵ Philosopher-theologian Samuel Clarke (1675-1729) praised benevolence as 'the basis of society' and 'the essence of

common life,' a principle based on natural law and accessible to human reason.⁶ Just as the great hidden forces of gravity and electricity operated in the physical world, so also to enlightened minds it seemed that there must be hidden forces at work in the moral world. Benevolence was that great force which held people together and gave harmony to the universe.⁷

Benevolence enjoyed considerable popularity in North America by the time of the American Revolution. This formative period helps establish the context for Schmucker's use of the concept. Gordon Wood has observed that after the American Revolution when the old ties of monarchy had been severed, many people hoped that the new nation could be held together by bonds of benevolence.⁸ Many expected that the old "monarchical connectives of family, patronage and dependency"⁹ would be replaced with expansive love toward the neighbor. Benevolence, it was hoped, would protect the nation from greed and selfishness. Benevolence thus offered a middle way between monarchy based on family ties and patronage on the one hand, and competition based on self-interest and faction, on the other hand. The concept of benevolence reflects an optimistic view of human nature in which people act, or can learn to act, for the good of the community rather than for immediate personal gain.

The concept of benevolence continued to have influence well into the nineteenth century, where it inspired reform movements and provided a basis for "all subsequent modern liberal thinking."¹⁰ In Schmucker's lifetime benevolence was commonly understood to be a natural, moral attribute which seeks the well-being of other people. The concept of benevolence was a secularized version of Christian love, a yearning for a world in which all people love each other.¹¹ It was hard to argue with benevolence, and for decades it seemed that every preacher and educator invoked it. Indeed Perry Miller (1905-1963) has said of America in 1820 that "a man could no more safely come out...against benevolence than he could advocate sexual promiscuity."¹²

Born in 1799 and reaching maturity in the age of benevolent societies, Schmucker himself was optimistic, believing that God had made human beings more 'naturally inclined' to virtue than to vice.¹³ "Benevolent feelings...constitute one of the noblest portions of our nature." When "sanctified by grace" benevolence contributes greatly to true piety, but "*even in the natural man*" benevolence constitutes "one of the purest and principal sources" of human happiness.¹⁴ Schmucker describes benevolence, or love, as a "feeling of good-will and desire for the happiness

of all sentient beings, irrespective of their character or conduct." Benevolence is an affection with which a good person loves "the whole human family, as well as irrational animals."¹⁵ Benevolence belongs to our *natural* affections and directs our love to God, to our fellow human beings and to all creatures. This Enlightenment optimism came under heavy fire in the conflicts of Schmucker's own life time, particularly as we will see in the battle which took place in his beloved Gettysburg.

Until 1860, however, the American Revolution remained the defining event in American history. Schmucker saw the initial success of the American Revolution as solid proof of God's favor toward the new nation.¹⁶ God's continuing approval of America was self-evident, since there was no other place on earth where "the great mass of the people enjoy so large a share of liberty and security for their equal rights"--with the shameful exception of slavery.¹⁷ Schmucker believed that America was God's chosen theater "for the free, unbiased development of humanity, and the settlement of the highest questions regarding its privileges, capacities, and duties, in social, political, and religious life."¹⁸ He wanted the churches to seize these unprecedented opportunities and promote the well-being of the republic which guaranteed them religious freedom.

The Church's Educational Mission

One of the best ways the churches could strengthen the republic was by providing moral education. Schmucker was an ardent believer in the legal and political separation of church and state¹⁹ yet he recognized that government and church are intimately related, first by their parallel aims to promote the people's temporal and eternal well-being; and second by their overlapping (though by no means identical) constituency. Schmucker saw church-related education as one important way to purify and protect the nation's moral atmosphere without violating the separation of church and state.

The Pulpit

Schmucker believed that preaching was an important means of moral instruction, although he did not consider moral instruction to be the chief end of preaching--that place of honor would always belong to evangelism. Schmucker clearly stated in his 1826 inaugural address as the first professor

of the Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg that the great aim of seminary education was training pastors to bring souls to Christ. Yet he also said that Christian pastors should "Indirectly aid in supporting...our free and happy government"²⁰ by means of moral suasion. As the century unfolded and the nation moved from an 'era of good feeling' toward Civil War, the preacher's moral function seems to have become increasingly urgent to Schmucker.

By 1846, in a tract entitled *The Christian Pulpit, The Rightful Guardian of Morals in Political No Less Than in Private Life*, Schmucker argued that Christian preachers have a clear responsibility to contribute to the moral education of the nation. For this reason, the pulpit could be used for moral instruction as well as for preaching the Gospel. If democracy were to work, Schmucker believed, the people must be well trained in their duties and able to monitor the conduct of their rulers.²¹ Christian preachers should therefore inculcate a sense of national responsibility and moral vitality. But they must do this within the rightful limits of their office, avoiding "mere party politics...which do not DIRECTLY involve a moral principle."²²

At least three such moral principles can be identified in "The Christian Pulpit," each with specific applications. First is the principle of benevolence, that expansive love which transcends boundaries and seeks the neighbors' good. True to that ideal, Schmucker warns against private interest groups, whose partisan clamor for patronage is selfish and detrimental to patriotism. Base competition of interests was morally corrupt and dangerous to the liberties of the country. In a time of rising passions Schmucker thought preachers would do well on occasion to use the pulpit to warn against factionalism. Schmucker wanted people to vote impartially and reasonably rather than out of party loyalty. Political appointments likewise should be made on the basis of virtue and the public welfare, not personal debts and favors. The pulpit can rightly be used to exhort Christians to vote for candidates of "unblemished moral character for all offices"²³ regardless of party or religious denomination.

Benevolence also informed Schmucker's attitude toward foreign policy. Schmucker saw the War with Mexico (1845-1848) for example, as a selfish, immoral conflict in which the United States provoked and then preyed upon its weaker neighbor. Condemning that particular war, Schmucker encouraged other ministers to do likewise.²⁴ Elsewhere Schmucker declared his patriotism: "I yield to none of you in ardent love of our republican institutions [and] in ardent love of human liberty."²⁵ Yet in

"Christian Pulpit" he warned that ministers should not condone sins committed in the name of country and he advised preachers to condemn unprincipled patriotism and its rallying cry of "our country right or wrong."²⁶ Christian preachers should remind their flocks that benevolence, not selfishness or party spirit, was to be the soul of the nation.

A second principle, closely related to benevolence and overlapping with it, is "*the universal brotherhood and equality of man in civil rights.*"²⁷ Benevolence deals with the internal motivation of moral agents who seek the good of others, while "universal brotherhood" refers to an external reality: God made all nations come from one parentage, forming one human family bound together by supreme love to God. Schmucker saw that the unity of the human family was marred by animosity between the races. For example, Schmucker noted how the American Indians continued to lose their lands because federal and state governments repeatedly broke their treaties and promises. Thus Schmucker expressed his own "humiliation" over our "treatment of the poor Indians"²⁸--though Schmucker reserved most of his attention for the relations between black and white people.

Universal brotherhood applied to legislation in both the north and the south, regulating or enforcing the low status of black people. Every "enlightened and impartial friend of our race"--not the white race but the human race--must see not only that slavery itself is wrong but that the laws of the free states "withhold from the colored man some of those equal rights which God has designed for him." Laws which deprive black people of their rights are "offensive to the Great Parent of the universal brotherhood of man."²⁹ Schmucker understood the principle of universal brotherhood to advocate full, equal rights under the law for blacks in north and south--a rare thing in 1846. He exhorted preachers as moral guardians of the nation to address these issues from the pulpit and he himself did so. He invoked this benevolent ideal of unity as the basis of human unity, believing that racial divisions could be overcome by legal changes and moral enlightenment.

One of Schmucker's favorite verses was Acts 17:26: "God hath made of one blood, all the nations of men..." and he considered it the preacher's job to apply this verse to the volatile issue of slavery. In his sermon "The Duties Resulting from the Unity of the Human Family," Schmucker said that "if God made all nations of the same blood, then all belong to the same family" and it is sinful for one person, nation, or race to enslave another.³⁰ Yet Schmucker tried to avoid stridency. Like Abraham Lincoln, Schmucker

had many personal connections to slave-holding families and could sympathize with their moral and economic dilemmas. He believed that slavery was a national sin in which both north and south were implicated.

A third moral principle held that God was "*the Supreme Ruler of Nations*"³¹ and that God's law had higher authority than any human law. The higher law is the moral law written into the nature of things, which all human beings are required to obey, even if this means disobeying the law of the land. Schmucker thought it absurd to suppose "that the great Ruler in heaven would invest his vicegerents [sic] on earth, with power to nullify and supersede the laws of his kingdom" by authorizing them to do things known to be "sinful and subversive of the highest interests of humanity."³²

Like many others of his day, Schmucker thought that the higher law of God's moral government justified disobedience to fugitive slave laws.³³ When human leaders--especially democratically elected ones--command what God has forbidden, they forfeit claims to public obedience.³⁴ The relation of God's moral government to human governments is much like the that of the federal government to the individual states: those powers not claimed by the federal government devolve upon the states. This allows discretion in local matters, but gives the states no power to contradict federal laws. If human governments dare to break God's higher laws, preachers should sound the alarm from the pulpit by proclaiming God as the supreme ruler of nations.

Perhaps with slavery in mind, Schmucker said that Christian preachers are to use the pulpit to warn the nation that "God, the Supreme Ruler, *exercises a righteous retribution over nations as such, in the present life.*"³⁵ Individual sinners will be punished after death. But nations, having no identity in eternity, must suffer retribution in this life. God may punish wicked nations with "the most signal judgments." To allay the righteous judgments of God, Christian preachers should teach people that they are accountable to God for every political action.³⁶ As in the laws of nature so also in the great moral government of God: every action produces a reaction. Punishment delayed will be that much worse when it finally falls, as Schmucker himself could testify after the Battle of Gettysburg.

Fifteen years before the war, however, Schmucker hoped that God would bless the nation for obeying sound moral principles. Peace and prosperity, steady progress in the arts and science, and advancement in civil liberty would be showered upon a righteous nation whose churches spread "pure and undefiled religion" and whose people correct what was wrong

with society. Together churches, government and people could fulfill their destiny in God's "purpose of infinite benevolence."³⁹ Schmucker was here quoting the proclamation of the Governor of Pennsylvania who had called for a day of prayer and thanksgiving, thus creating the occasion for Schmucker's discourse.

As the rightful guardians of morals both public and private, preachers could use the pulpit to "inculcate the obligation of the moral law of God"³⁹ in all matters. The moral law expresses God's will, and this will, Schmucker believed, stems from God's holy and benevolent character. The moral principles of God's law were to be taught from the pulpit and applied to all our political actions, for "morality is the same and as binding in public as in private life."³⁹

The Sabbath School

To provide virtuous citizens, the church's educational work would have to extend well beyond the Sunday sermon.⁴⁰ Schmucker recognized that "our theory of government contemplates universal education"⁴¹ and he believed that the church had a special role in educating the public through the sabbath school and the church-related college as well as the pulpit.

To be sure, the "most important and principal object" of sabbath schools is to instruct children in their "everlasting interests."⁴² But such instruction also affects their temporal interests. In his *Plea for the Sabbath School System* Schmucker proclaims, "righteousness exalteth a nation," defining righteousness in a manner typical of his era, as "virtuous conduct proceeding from proper motives."⁴³ Proper motives, in turn, are love of God's moral government and God's nature and character. Inspired by God's holiness and devoted to his law, children trained up in the sabbath schools naturally engage in "holy activity" beneficial to the nation.⁴⁴ The sabbath school exerts a "moral influence on moral agents,"⁴⁵ making them better citizens in this life and the next.

Schmucker hoped that the sabbath school, first of all, could make better citizens by promoting virtue and discouraging vice. For example, he condemns the national compulsion to turn a fast profit. Christians must vanquish—or at least resist—the vices of "speculation, corruption, injustice and dishonesty...[and the] characteristic pursuit of filthy lucre."⁴⁶ Home-grown vices were bad enough, but Schmucker also worried about immigrants whose extreme poverty carried them "void of moral principle"

to these shores.⁴⁷ By educating the new comers in the ways of virtue and respect for government both human and divine, the sabbath school could supply the upright citizens so necessary to the nation's well-being.

Schmucker believed that nations are "prosperous and happy, in proportion as they are virtuous." Therefore "the "true patriot" and "every friend of his country" should contribute liberally to cause of the sabbath schools.⁴⁸ The project would be cost effective: by improving morals the sabbath schools could reduce the need for criminal courts, empty the jails and fill the churches.⁴⁹ Here Schmucker is firmly in the tradition of Robert Raikes (1736-1811), English pioneer of the Sunday school movement. After working for twenty-five years in prison reform, Raikes organized Sunday schools to prevent children from becoming criminals. Raikes believed that "vice is preventable; begin with the child."⁵⁰ Schmucker agreed wholeheartedly.

Second, Schmucker believed that the sabbath school could guard and preserve the nations' political integrity against the menace of faction. Schmucker shared George Washington's view that party spirit is one of the "most dangerous enemies of the republic."⁵¹ The sabbath school could deflect this threat by teaching "disinterested benevolence"⁵² as the proper motive for voting and law making. By impressing on young children the fear of God, the love of moral integrity, and the virtue of disinterestedness (putting aside self-interest for the sake of the common good), Sunday schools could stabilize American institutions and help form a nation of "virtuous politicians and statesmen."⁵³ If children learned to recognize the improper motives behind "corrupt, self-interested" and partial laws, as adults they would work to change such laws.⁵⁴

Third, the sabbath school could promote biblical and constitutional literacy. The Bible was to be the primary textbook, but teaching people to read scripture made it easier to "have our Constitution and the laws defining [its] powers generally circulated, and our citizens taught to read them."⁵⁵ Just as the moral purity of the church depends on the widespread knowledge of the Bible, so too the rights of citizens are safeguarded by a widespread knowledge of the Constitution. Schmucker wanted to circulate both documents, believing the Bible and the Constitution to be intimately related. If indeed the God of the Bible reared "our happy republic" to teach the world "important lessons of civil and ecclesiastical jurisprudence"⁵⁶ then "patriots" should support the sabbath school and make sure that the rising generation is "well instructed in that republican book, the Bible."⁵⁷ Thus

Schmucker thought the sabbath school could strengthen the republic by restraining vice and promoting virtue; cultivating motives of disinterested benevolence to guide voting and legislation; and raising biblical and constitutional literacy.

Fourth, the sabbath school could instill reverence for the separation of church and state, a principle for which the Gettysburg professor was nearly as zealous as the ancient psalmist was for the house of the Lord.⁵⁸ Schmucker said that the laity benefit from the separation of church and state because this arrangement prevents too much power and wealth from accruing to the clergy. Separation gives congregations control over the choice and tenure of their ministers;⁵⁹ it also gives laity a teaching office through the institution of the sabbath school.⁶⁰ As for the clergy, separation keeps ministers free of corruption and lassitude and impels them to work for the "speedy dissemination of the gospel over the whole earth." Clergy in the United States have the political freedom to dissent from their rulers and apply the principles of moral law to the actions of their governments. Finally, separation of church and state creates conditions favorable to a new kind of clergy--not ministers drawn from some "lukewarm, self-satisfied class" as in Europe, but ministers "brought forth and matured amid the fire and heat of religious revivals."⁶¹ To promote and enjoy these benefits, the sabbath school has an obligation to preach up that inspired arrangement that makes it all possible: the separation of church and state.

It is likely that Schmucker was trying to win support for the sabbath school by showing would-be benefactors and volunteers the advantages which this effort could have for society at large. This strategy would have been important when trying to reach beyond his own immediate circles. Schmucker's views may also prompt contemporary readers to ask what effects Christian education has upon the larger society in our time. Indeed, as Stephen Carter has argued in *The Culture of Disbelief*, it is possible and necessary to preserve the separation of church and state and at the same time acknowledge the vital role religion plays in our society.⁶² Present readers may well disagree with Schmucker on a number of points, but most Christian educators today would envision some connection between their efforts and the well-being of the society as a whole.

Of all the hopes that Schmucker had for the sabbath school, evangelism was paramount; and evangelism, Schmucker believed, would be strengthened by cooperation across denominational lines. The sabbath school was the nursery for ecumenical ideals that Schmucker developed

more fully in the *Fraternal Appeal*.⁶³ The sabbath school could bring teachers of different denominations together and associate them "in the same labour of love...showing them that they all believe in the same gospel, and are travelling to the same heaven."⁶⁴ Interdenominational creeds and curriculum materials could train young people to overlook minor differences, Schmucker hoped, and when teachers and students of several denominations would pursue common goals, they could implement "gigantic schemes for the conversion of the world."⁶⁵ The concept of benevolence is active here, for Schmucker wanted Christians to transcend older loyalties and find higher unity, "an expanded sympathy" for those destitute of Christ, until salvation extended around the world.⁶⁶ Schmucker hoped that sabbath schools would hasten the millennium and fill "heaven with blissful heirs of salvation." Thus the sabbath schools had a higher calling, but an important by-product of that calling was to support the nation with virtuous citizens.

The Church College

Schmucker hoped that his agenda for the sabbath school would be carried out at a higher level by Christian colleges. Schmucker regretted that it took Lutherans so long to create institutions of higher learning. Such schools would have invigorated church and the nation much sooner and the rewards would already be forthcoming.⁶⁷ Schmucker himself was instrumental in founding what is now Gettysburg College, the first permanent Lutheran college in the United States.⁶⁸ This school in turn helped give rise to several others, including Wittenberg University and Muhlenberg College.⁶⁹

In 1854, some 27 years after the beginning of Gettysburg College, Schmucker gave the address at the laying of the cornerstone of a Lutheran Collegiate Institute in Shamokin, Pennsylvania. That address gives his mature views of the nature and purpose of college education, in which students learn of the various "departments of truth...physical, intellectual and moral" on which God constructed the earth, with the "Bible, and the liberty to study it...as the basis of our civil and religious liberties."⁷⁰ To be educated in a Christian college was to be "enlightened," to act upon "benevolent principles," to recognize the "higher law" and to uphold the moral law in public and private life. To be so educated meant knowing that "republicanism and christianity are based upon the same principles of *liberty, equality, and fraternity*" and then striving to live by those

principles.⁷¹ Christians should support Christian higher education so that the best and brightest young people might be "elevated in intelligence as becomes the rational creatures of God"⁷² and provide leadership in this enlightened republic.

Schmucker was especially eager to prepare young men for the "*higher offices* of our government and for the several *learned professions*."⁷³ The enlightened and educated person is better qualified for civil and domestic duties, financially and morally able to support the gospel ministry and to advance those enterprises of benevolence "calculated to promote the welfare"⁷⁴ of the people. To educate leaders is to increase the likelihood for "our own effort at self-government...to prove successful."⁷⁵ The permanence of free institutions depends on young people studying and comprehending the great principles on which those institutions are based. These principles, Schmucker believed, were set forth in the Declaration of Independence and in "the golden rule of Christianity...the law of Christian love."⁷⁶ When this law of love or benevolence is recognized by civil as well as religious leaders, it can direct public and private acts.

Higher education, Schmucker insisted, should not be entrusted to non-Christians. Since religion is the highest human interest affecting all other interests, a college which neglects God can not fulfill its mission in society. But should a college fall into the hands of unbelievers, Schmucker advised Christians to withdraw their financial support until faithful leaders could be secured. Not that institutions of higher learning should be conducted by "bigots or sectarians"; rather colleges should be led by people of "enlightened, liberal christian views and character."⁷⁷ Thus Gettysburg College was set up to be "nonsectarian in character" even though in the early days it was controlled by the seminary board of directors.⁷⁸

The Seminary

The seminary was to be the pinnacle of the church's educational system, and Schmucker was firmly convinced that the purpose of seminary education was to train pastors "to bring souls to Christ."⁷⁹ His 1826 inaugural address at the Lutheran Seminary shows that Schmucker prized above all "hopeful piety" among seminarians, with natural talents for the ministry running a close second. Seminary education should center on the study of Scripture and theology and should also welcome free inquiry into

the sciences--which inquiry, he trusted, would always show the harmony of science and revelation.⁸⁰

Much as Schmucker prized the natural virtue of benevolence for American citizens, he did not think it sufficient equipment for ministry. Virtue in and of itself does not make a minister; indeed "an unconverted minister, though moral, spreads a deadly influence" through his congregation.⁸¹ Benevolence is mentioned in the inaugural address but it does not dominate. For example, Schmucker wants churches to find a middle passage between past errors of superstition and priest craft and the future hazards of anarchy and despotism.⁸² This is in the spirit of republican benevolence, that transitional ideal between monarchy and competitive democracy. Schmucker thought the church needed pastors who were both converted and educated. At the end of his inaugural address Schmucker said that well-educated and pious ministers "*indirectly* aid in supporting the fabric of our free and happy government; for intelligence and virtue are the pillars of our republic."⁸³

American principles of government and the virtue of benevolence found a place in Schmucker's seminary teaching. For example in *Elements of Popular Theology* (first published in 1834) Schmucker traced "republican principles" including benevolence to the Lutheran Reformation in Germany.⁸⁴ The seeds of liberty, civil as well as religious, were sown by the reformers. The same principles which led Martin Luther to resist the papal hierarchy led our fathers to erect the standards of liberty on these Western shores, exploded the absurd doctrine of passive obedience to kings, and taught the crowned heads of Europe that their subjects have rights, which can no longer be trampled on with the impunity of the dark ages.⁸⁵

Although the reformers lived under "defective" forms of government, Schmucker declared that article XVI ("Civil Government") of the Augsburg Confession contains no word "inconsistent with the purest principles of republicanism."⁸⁶ Indeed, the reformers saw legitimate political activity as a good work of God. Christians are to perform their civil duties "in the spirit of Christian benevolence."⁸⁷ Schmucker asked whether the Confession did not inculcate the right of revolution when it said that Christians must at times "obey God rather than man." For Schmucker it was but a short step from the Augsburg Confession to the Declaration of Independence, "when in the course of human events" a revolution is justified.

In *Popular Theology* Schmucker also discussed the relation of church and state, the balance of powers in the federal government and

various theories of Constitutional interpretation. He dealt with issues such as slavery, nullification and secession and thus sought to prepare his students for the political context in which they would carry out their pastoral labors. Schmucker wanted to contribute to the moral health and stability of the nation as well as the church.

Benevolence and Depravity

Another text, Schmucker's *Psychology, or Elements of a New System of Mental Philosophy, on the Basis of Consciousness and Common Sense* was first published in 1842. It shows us an ebullient Schmucker, a man still believing in progressive enlightenment, benevolence⁸⁸ and public virtue, a man not yet overtaken by events. Yet already Schmucker seemed somewhat hard pressed to maintain both the Enlightenment concept of benevolence and an Augustinian theology of sin and grace. He admitted that benevolence is weak in depraved human nature; that love to God "as a being of infinite perfections" is supreme in the heart of a true Christian; that benevolence may be overpowered by sin. Yet Schmucker saw traces of benevolence even in the unconverted.⁸⁹

Meanwhile, Schmucker taught his seminary students that the Lutheran church regards the "doctrine of natural depravity as a primary article of the Christian system."⁹⁰ It seemed that depravity could be combined with benevolence as a natural virtue as long as sin was understood to be voluntary.⁹¹ But by the 1850's and '60's this marriage of Enlightenment ideals to an Augustinian theology of sin and grace was coming under considerable strain. Schmucker's natural optimism was badly frayed by his controversies with Lutheran confessionalists; but the Civil War⁹² exposed the notion of "voluntary sins" as entirely inadequate. The century provided its own evidence of human depravity.

Schmucker's 1865 *Discourse on Human Depravity* suggests that his Enlightenment convictions, including the concept of benevolence as a natural human virtue, were wearing thin. In 1865 Schmucker still wanted to believe that each human being shows "God's benevolent structure and design, all tending to promote human happiness"⁹³ yet human beings failed to "practice the law of love and exercise benevolence toward each other."⁹⁴ That puts it mildly for 1865, after a monumental failure of benevolence in the land. The 'better angels of our nature' which Abraham Lincoln evoked in his first inaugural had not come to the rescue.

The Civil War seems to have pushed Schmucker toward an older, Augustinian view of sin. Instead of progress and the millennium Schmucker now saw the murder of Cain, a fratricide, as the harbinger of human history. The war showed how miserably people failed to fulfill the law of benevolence.⁹⁵ War is grim proof of depravity, when armies "shoot, stab with the bayonet, or cut down with the sword, their fellow men." Even in nations claiming to be Christian, "thousands are hurried into an awful eternity every day or week."⁹⁶ When Schmucker now spoke of the "deep malignity and fearful consequences" of sin and the "horrors of war" his hearers in Gettysburg could vividly recall the blood-soaked floors of houses and public buildings in their town where thousands of soldiers died in the summer of 1863. They could see the shattered trees, shelled buildings and blistered fields. They knew about the disgusting task of disinterring and re-burying thousands of bodies distending in the summer heat, a job for which contracted laborers earned \$1.59 per corpse.⁹⁷

In 1865 the distance between God and human beings gaped much wider than before. Compared to the darkness of human depravity the moral excellence of God was "infinite and absolute holiness" and "dazzling, blazing splendor."⁹⁸ A younger Schmucker thought that human affections were naturally inclined to love God and neighbor, pursuing the moral fitness of things. But in 1865 Schmucker declared that human affections were depraved; carnal minds were "at enmity with God."⁹⁹ The sinner cannot contemplate God's moral excellence, for "God is not such a being as natural men can love."¹⁰⁰ Schmucker closed his discourse on human depravity by warning unbelievers of the punishments awaiting them in hell.

Natural human benevolence--the virtue which was supposed to hold the republic together--had failed. But in 1865 Schmucker still held fast to *God's* benevolence. "Enlightened reason" still tells us that God's design in creating the universe "must have been benevolent and righteous" and that God's infinite power is ever at work in "executing the purposes of infinite wisdom and benevolence." The physical universe presents "astonishing evidences of the power, wisdom and benevolence of its great and unseen Architect" who exercises a "perfect moral government" over its "rational inhabitants."¹⁰¹ Such Enlightenment strains seemed strangely off-key for those apocalyptic times.

Yet Schmucker spoke to the moment in at least this much: the Civil War was a military and political contest between north and south, but it revealed an even larger conflict: a war between God and humanity.

Schmucker was poised to compare the Civil War to sinners' rebellion against God's moral government.¹⁰² He implied that human depravity has not nullified the moral law; that sinners have no legal right to secede from God's government; that if they do they must face judgement. As noted earlier, Schmucker thought of the government of God and human governments as having parallel aims. Perhaps they also had parallel histories. God's moral government withstood a great rebellion and so had the Union. Both rebellions stemmed from selfish interests (slavery being the height of selfishness); both expressed the failure of natural benevolence to direct human life.

In 1865 Schmucker still saw his harmonious and progressive vision as of old, though he greeted it from afar. "If" we were not depraved and alienated from God, he insisted, "the great purposes of benevolence and grace which God is carrying out on the earth, and for which life is given us, would constitute the objects not only of our highest regard, but of our daily efforts."¹⁰³ If only! But as things then stood only people with 'changed hearts' share God's benevolent purposes.

Schmucker almost let go of natural virtue and voluntary sin in favor of an evangelical version of benevolence in which sin overpowers human beings and grace alone imparts true benevolence. Schmucker was, however, unable to let go of moral agency, the human power to choose good or evil. He still insisted that we are only guilty of "actual, voluntary transgression of the known laws of God."¹⁰⁴ Schmucker's inconsistency points up the disjuncture between natural virtue and saving grace. Schmucker did not resolve the problem, but by speaking of "changed hearts" he admitted that natural virtue fails us and God alone can change sinners. Even in Gettysburg at the close of the war there was still the hope of conversion and salvation. That hope inspired Samuel Simon Schmucker even more than the Enlightenment concept of benevolence.

Schmucker was born to a generation for whom the Revolutionary ideals of progress and benevolence were immediate, active and powerful, yet as an older man he witnessed the carnage and fratricide of Civil War. That conflict destroyed slavery, which Schmucker had always opposed; yet it also discredited his cherished ideal of natural human benevolence and called forth a more radical understanding of human sin. Studies of Schmucker have typically focused on his role in Lutheranism, particularly the controversy over his attempt, in 1855, to revise the Augsburg Confession. Yet his writings also shed light on the broader educational

programs of American Protestantism and the changing hopes and ideals of Americans living between two great poles of their history--the Revolution and the Civil War.

Notes

¹This essay was read at the Rineon meeting and was subsequently published in the *Lutheran Quarterly* 9 (Spring 1995): 57-77.

²Samuel Simon Schmucker, Address on the Anniversary of Washington's Birthday, Delivered Before the Gettysburg Guards (Gettysburg: H.C. Neinstedt, 1839) 21-22.

³Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* [first printed 1651] (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958) 122, said that every human action, even reverence for God, expresses fear and self-interest. Our natural state is a war of all against all in which "the life of man [is] nasty, poore, brutish and short" (97).

⁴See for example Henry Sidgwick, *Outlines of the History of Ethics* (London:Macmillan, 1892) 159; Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, (London: Burns Oates & Washburn, LTD, 1959) 5:171; Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought in its British Context* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981) 5; Alasdair MacIntyre, "Egoism and Altruism" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, (New York: Macmillan, 1967) 2:463.

⁵Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 5:184.

⁶Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God* (London: W. Bothan, 1719) 113, 118.

⁷Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1991) 218. Wood may be referring to Francis Hutcheson's statement that "*the universal benevolence towards all men, we may compare to that principle of gravitation, which extends to all bodies in the universe...*" *An Inquiry Concerning the Original of our Ideas of Virtue and Moral Good* [first published 1725] in *British Moralists*, 2 vols., ed. D.D. Raphael (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 1:290.

⁸For example, James Madison closes "The Federalist No. 14" with an appeal to a country which he hopes is "knit together...by chords of affection...[as] members of one family...mutual guardians of their mutual happiness." In *The Federalist*, ed. Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961) 88.

⁹Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 219.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 218.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 218. Jonathan Edwards, "The Nature of True Virtue" in *Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University

Press, 1989) insisted that true benevolence was not a natural attribute but a gift of divine grace. Elsewhere I have argued that both understandings of benevolence (as natural virtue and as gift of grace) were active in Schmucker's thinking. See Koester, "Schmucker's Appeal for Benevolent Unity," *Lutheran Quarterly* Winter 1995.

¹²Perry Miller, *The Life of the Mind in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965) 78.

¹³Samuel S. Schmucker, *Psychology, or Elements of a New System of Mental Philosophy, on the Basis of Consciousness and Common Sense* 2d ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1847) 266.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 170 [italics mine].

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁶Samuel Simon Schmucker, *Elements of Popular Theology*, 2d ed. (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1843) 276. Page references are to the 2d edition unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁷*Ibid.* Schmucker condemned slavery as a gross contradiction of republican principles.

¹⁸Samuel Simon Schmucker, *The American Lutheran Church Historically, Doctrinally, and Practically Delineated* (Springfield: Harbaugh & Butler, 1851) 235.

¹⁹Samuel S. Schmucker, *The Happy Adaption of the Sabbath School System to the Peculiar Wants of our Age and Country; A Sermon Preached at the Request of the Board of Managers of the American Sunday School Union, Philadelphia, May 20, 1839* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1839) 13. For Schmucker's involvement in the American Sunday School Union see Abdel Ross Wentz, *Pioneer in Christian Unity: Samuel Simon Schmucker* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967) 253-57, 268.

²⁰Samuel Simon Schmucker, *An Inaugural Address, Delivered Before the Directors of the Theological Seminary of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Carlisle, PA: J. Tizzard and J. Crever, 1826) 38-39.

²¹Samuel S. Schmucker, *The Christian Pulpit, the Rightful Guardian of Morals, in Political No Less Than in Private Life* (Gettysburg: H.C. Neinstedt) 5. For similar themes more stridently sounded see F.W. Conrad, "Ministers of the Gospel, the Moral Watchmen of Nations" *Evangelical Quarterly Review* 16 (April 1865) 365-93. Conrad was a Lutheran minister in Chambersburg, PA, who collaborated with Schmucker on some ecumenical efforts. See A.R. Wentz, *Samuel Simon Schmucker*, 294, 351.

²²*Ibid.*, 8 [italics and caps. original].

²³*Ibid.*, 29.

24Ibid., 17. For Schmucker's pacifism see also 10-11, 20-22, 30. See also Samuel Schmucker, *The Peace of Zion* (Gettysburg: H.C. Neinstedt, 1853) 12-20. A.R. Wentz, Samuel Simon Schmucker, 264 comments that Schmucker's hopes for a peaceful world "showed that the Pietist in Schmucker triumphed over the Puritan in him." Schmucker did, however, take pride in the American Revolution and support the Union in the Civil War. For pacifism among American Lutheran Pietists, including Schmucker, see Paul Kuenning, *The Rise and Fall of American Lutheran Pietism* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988) 93-94.

25Schmucker, *Washington's Birthday*, 7.

26Schmucker, *Christian Pulpit*, 10.

27Ibid., 17 [italics original].

28Ibid., 24.

29Ibid., 19-20, 30. For Schmucker's anti-slavery views see *Popular Theology* 276-78. Schmucker did not support forced colonization of blacks to Africa; he favored gradual abolition, equal justice under the laws and education and vocational training to prepare blacks for a better life in the United States. See Schmucker, *Memorial of Professor S.S. Schmucker, Relative to the Binding Out of Minor Colored Children*. Read in the [Pennsylvania state] House of Representatives, March 7, 1839. (Harrisburg: Boas and Coplan, 1839). See also Schmucker, "Of Slavery: 15 Propositions" (March 1840) AMs, Schmucker papers #3750.0003, Special Collections, A.R. Wentz Library, Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg. This piece described how the rights and happiness of blacks were violated by slavery and called upon every Christian friend of civil and religious liberty, to exert his influence in every beneficial way, to vindicate the "rights of all God's rational creatures and by peaceable means and Christian appeals to their consciences, patriotism and humanity, to influence those who are violating those rights." n.p.

30Schmucker, "The Duties Resulting from the Unity of the Human Family," sermon quoted in Kuenning, *American Lutheran Pietism*, 104. For the broader biblical and theological basis of Schmucker's anti-slavery views see Kuenning, 102-16.

31Schmucker, *Christian Pulpit*, 14 [italics original].

32Ibid.

33Ibid., 16. For the "higher law" in Schmucker's own preaching see "The Law of the Lord is Perfect," AMs. Schmucker Sermons #35, Special Collections, Musselman Library, Gettysburg College.

34Schmucker, *Christian Pulpit*, 15.

35Ibid., 25 [italics original].

36Ibid., 27.

37Ibid., 3.

³⁸Schmucker, *Christian Pulpit*, 24 [italics original].

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Such views may have contributed to John R. Bodo's description of Schmucker as a "theocrat" who wanted to mold the nation according to certain Protestant values. See Bodo, *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954) 52. See also 37-38, 252.

⁴¹Schmucker, *Washington's Birthday*, 7, 10. Here Schmucker notes three pillars of the republic: industry, intelligence, and virtue.

⁴²Samuel S. Schmucker, *A Plea for the Sabbath School System, Delivered Feb. 2, 1830, at the Anniversary of the Gettysburg Sunday School* (Gett.: H.C. Neinstedt, 1830) 7.

⁴³Ibid., 8; see also 7,9.

⁴⁴Ibid., 9.

⁴⁵Schmucker, *Happy Adaption*, 3.

⁴⁶Schmucker, *Plea for Sabbath School System*, 18.

⁴⁷Schmucker, *Plea for Sabbath School System*, 17. Schmucker was not a nativist; he did not want to keep immigrants out of the country but he did want to educate them when they arrived. See Schmucker, "Benevolent Efforts in Behalf of the Germans," *Home Missionary*, April 1836, 209-11; and "Address of the Rev. S.S. Schmucker," *Home Missionary*, June 1836, 36-38.

⁴⁸Schmucker, *Plea for Sabbath School System*, 16, 32.

⁴⁹Schmucker, *Happy Adaption*, 7.

⁵⁰J. Henry Harris, *The Story of Robert Raikes* (Philadelphia: The Union Press, 1900) 48; also by J. H. Harris, *Robert Raikes: The Man and his Work* (New York: E.P. Dutton) n.d. See also Edwin W. Price, *The Sunday School Movement and the American Sunday School Union*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: The Union Press, 1917) 11-21, describes the grim conditions under which children lived in Gloucester where Raikes began the first Sunday school in 1780, and how his project addressed both social and spiritual needs. Timothy Smith, "Protestant Schooling and American Nationality," *Journal of American History* 53 (1967) 679-95, explores how Protestant education from the Sunday school to the college level helped build national moral consensus.

⁵¹Schmucker, *Washington's Birthday*, 16.

⁵²The concept of disinterested benevolence was developed by Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), a disciple of Jonathan Edwards. Disinterestedness meant forsaking self-interest for the sake of God and others. See Hopkins, *An Inquiry Into the Nature of True Holiness* (New York: Wm. Durell, 1791) vii, 258, 293-97, 479.

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- 53Schmucker, *Plea for Sabbath School System*, 20.
- 54Ibid.
- 55Ibid., 25.
- 56Ibid., 29. See also Schmucker, *Washington's Birthday*, 12. Schmucker says that the Bible and the "constitutional structure of our national government" should be taught in public schools.
- 57Schmucker, *Happy Adaption*, 21.
- 58Ibid., 10. See also Schmucker, *Plea for Sabbath School System*, 26.
- 59Schmucker, *Plea for Sabbath School System*, 25.
- 60Ibid., 15, 31.
- 61Ibid., 23.
- 62Stephen Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief* (New York: Harper Collins 1993).
- 63Koester, "Schmucker's Appeal for Benevolent Unity" *Lutheran Quarterly* Winter 1994.
- 64Schmucker, *Plea for Sabbath School System*, 31.
- 65Schmucker, *Happy Adaption*, 19.
- 66Ibid., 22.
- 67Schmucker, *The Intellectual and Moral Glories of the Christian Temple* (Baltimore: Wm. Woody, 1824) 23, 30. (The "Christian Temple" refers to the Lutheran Church in the United States.)
- 68Gettysburg Academy opened in 1827 as a preparatory school for the nearby Lutheran Seminary; the name was soon changed to Pennsylvania College; in 1921 the name was changed again to Gettysburg College. For an account of Schmucker's leadership in founding the school, see Charles H. Glatfelter, *A Salutary Influence: Gettysburg College, 1832-1985* (Mechanicsburg, PA: W. & M. Printing Inc., 1987) 1:26-36.
- 69 E. Theodore Bachmann. "Samuel Simon Schmucker: Lutheran Educator" in *Sons of the Prophets: Leaders in Protestantism from Princeton Seminary* ed. Hugh T. Kerr (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 67.
- 70Schmucker, *Address Delivered at the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Shamokin Collegiate Institute, August 2nd, 1854* (Pottsville, PA: Benjamin Bannan, 1854) 12.
- 71Ibid., 13 [italics original].
- 72Ibid., 16.
- 73Ibid., 9.
- 74Ibid., 8.

75Ibid., 10.

76Ibid.

77Ibid., 11.

78Glatfelter, *Gettysburg College*, 1:32.

79Schmucker, *Inaugural Address*, 39.

80Schmucker, *Inaugural Address*, 30. For Schmucker's role in founding the Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg see A.R. Wentz, *Samuel Simon Schmucker*, 120-35.

81Ibid., 19.

82.Ibid.

83Ibid., 38-39 [italics added].

84Schmucker, *Popular Theology*, 280-87. Abdel Ross Wentz, *Samuel Simon Schmucker*, 155-56 notes that *Popular Theology* went through nine editions and for 30 years was Schmucker's main theological textbook for seminary instruction.

85Schmucker, *Popular Theology*, 272.

86Ibid.

87Ibid., 271 [italics added]. Schmucker refers to the injunction, in AC XVI, that "charity be practiced" in civil and domestic affairs. The German phrase here is "christliche Liebe" and the Latin is "*caritatem*" (not "*benevolentia*") in *Concordia Triglota* (Concordia: St. Louis, MO, 1921) 50-51.

88See notes 12-14, above.

89Ibid., 171-75.

90Schmucker, *Popular Theology*, 123.

91Ibid., 128.

92Egil Grislis, "Samuel Simon Schmucker: A Courageous Interpreter of the Lutheran Heritage." *Lutheran Theological Seminary Bulletin* 73 (Summer 1993) 11, notes that "the trauma and suffering from the Civil War demanded a more in depth oriented theology, and hence facilitated openness to traditional Lutheranism."

93Schmucker, *Discourse on Human Depravity*, (Gett.: Aughinbaugh & Wible, 1865) 4.

94Ibid., 5.

95Ibid.

96Ibid., 7-8. Though Schmucker deplored war, he did support the Union cause. See A.R. Wentz, *Samuel Simon Schmucker*, 326.

⁹⁷Gary Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992) 22. Schmucker's own home on the seminary campus was ransacked by Confederates avenging themselves on Schmucker for his anti-slavery views. See A.R. Wentz, *Samuel Simon Schmucker*, 326-31.

⁹⁸Schmucker, *Human Depravity*, 11.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 12 [*italics mine*].

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 9 [*italics original*].



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