

216 HENKEL, DAVID – [REV. DAVID HENKEL]

Printer & Engraver

New Market

Printer and engraver in the family-owned Henkel Press (1809-12) at New Market.

The Henkel family was one of Lutheran evangelicals who conducted a press in New Market that produced imprints supporting their ministry. Their crusade was founded on the idea of an unadulterated Lutheran canon focusing on the Augsburg Confession of 1530. Yet the acculturation of German settlers into English language and ways in early-Republic America was then distancing those immigrants from their ethnocultural roots. So if the Henkels were to advance their style of "confessional Lutheranism," they needed to also preserve German language and culture as well. Thus the output of the Henkel Press was a combination of religious and linguistic imprints – religious ones promoting their theological perspective, linguistic ones encouraging the use of German by their followers and prospective adherents. Both genres sustained an itinerant ministry stretching from southern Michigan to northern Georgia, though focused primarily on the family's home hearth in the Great Valley regions of Virginia and North Carolina.

David Henkel was perhaps the most influential of the five sons of Rev. Paul Henkel (217) who followed him into the ministry. Like brother Andrew (215), he started out as a printer and engraver at the family's press. Andrew had been trained in the craft in Philadelphia as brother Ambrose (214) conducted the family press and trained his brothers as engravers on his return in 1809. But in 1812, the seventeen-year-old David left New Market to preach.

Henkel was first licensed in South Carolina; the following year he was licensed to preach in North Carolina as well. But he was refused ordination by the North Carolina Synod in 1816 for his adherence to the family's conservative theology. The refusal marked the beginning of a schism within that decade-old Synod between those who wanted to democratize the Lutheran faith and those, like the Henkels, who wanted to hew closely to fundamental Lutheran tenets. There was also an element of personal animosity in the conflict as those uneducated in Lutheran theology objected to the legitimacy claimed by those who had been so educated. The ensuing controversy came to a head in late 1819, when the liberals seized control of the synod (through extra-constitutional means) and the conservatives, led by Paul Henkel, formed a new Tennessee Synod; in short order, David Henkel was ordained and took on the leadership of the breakaway synod. In that role, Henkel wrote and published extensively in the following two decades, often using the New Market press now conducted by eldest brother Solomon (218) to issue his publications. The commonality among those publications is their refusal to accept diluted versions of the original Lutheran doctrines brought from Germany a century before. Yet in doing so, Henkel and his brothers were willing to translate fundamental documents of the faith into English as a way to counter the charges of elitism and popery leveled against them by the liberalizers.

The controversy was still unresolved when Henkel died in 1831. Thus it was left to his sons, brothers, and nephews to carry on the fight for "confessional Lutheranism" in America.

Personal Data

Born: May 1 1791 Staunton, Augusta County, Virginia.
Married: May 17 1814 Catherine Hoyle @ Catawba Co., North Carolina,
Died: June 15 1831 Lincoln (now Catawba) County, North Carolina.
Children: Mary Eleanora (b. 1814); Susanna A. (b. 1815); Elizabeth Ann Leah
(1818-62); Polycarp Cyprian (1820-69); Socrates (1823-1901);
Cicero (1825-79); Flora (1827-1901).

Sources: Imprints; *Henkel Memorial* (1910); *Life Sketches of Lutheran Clergy*.