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The Amana Society, 1867-1932: Accommodation of Old World Beliefs in a New World Frontier Setting

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THE AMANA SOCIETY, 1867-1932: ACCOMMODATION OF
OLD WORLD BELIEFS IN A NEW WORLD FRONTIER SETTING

By

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Dissertation

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the religious character of the Amana Society from the death, in 1867, of Christian Metz, the inspired leader who brought the group to America, to the time of the Great Change in 1932 when the religious and economic interests of the society were separated. While some attention has been directed in other studies to Amana as a communal group, almost no attention has been given to its religion. This study will begin with a brief history of the society from its inception in eighteenth-century Germany to the time the community moved to Iowa. This is necessary not only to set the context of the study but also to introduce the connections Amana has with the Inspirationist doctrines of the French Camisards and Boehmist influences in Radical German Pietism. These connections, absolutely necessary to understand Amana's religion, have not been made in previous studies of the society.

The dissertation will continue with a presentation of the doctrines and worship patterns of the Amana Society. These doctrines have never been systematically presented in other studies. They, too, must be taken into

consideration if one is to understand why Amana responded as it did to its rapidly changing environment at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

The major thrust of this dissertation will be an analysis of the religious developments of the society from 1867 to 1932. The generally accepted view of Amana's religious development, which has been presented in the course of historical investigations, states that the social changes which occurred within the community reflect a breakdown of the group's religion. This is the conclusion of Barnett Richling's master's thesis, Diane Barthel's recent work on Amana, and a host of magazine articles about Amana published across the years.¹ This dissertation challenges the generally accepted theory of spiritual declension and offers evidence to support another view.

The following presentation will attempt neither to give a sweeping religious history of the society nor to give a social analysis of the evolution of the community.

¹Barnett Richling, "Sectarian Ideology and Change in Amana" (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1974); Diane Barthel, Amana: From Pietist Sect to American Community (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); Marcus Bach, "Amana: The Glory Has Departed," The Christian Century, August 28, 1935, 1083-1086.

The central agenda will be, rather, to investigate the religion of the society as it was taught and lived throughout the period of study, with special attention being given to the significance of the changes which took place. The dissertation will conclude by suggesting an interpretation for these developments which challenges the spiritual declension theory and presents Amana's faith in a new light.

Previous Work in the Field

Since Amana was a closed commune until the twentieth century, few outsiders visited the colonies in the early years of their existence. One of the first outsiders to see the colonies in operation and write about them was Charles Nordhoff, who visited in 1875.² Information was incomplete until the State Historical Society of Iowa published the first full presentation on the Amana Colonies in 1908 in Amana: the Community of True Inspiration by Bertha M. H. Shambaugh.³ It offers not a scholarly presentation but rather the conclusions of a lay observer. The book is composed of a collection of two-or-

²Charles Nordhoff, The Communistic Societies of the United States (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 25-63.

³This work was reprinted in 1932 with a section added on the Great Change under the title Amana That Was and Amana That Is.

three-page essays she wrote on various aspects of Amana life and history. Her bibliographical information is often incomplete and difficult to locate. However, even with its flaws, Shambaugh's work has remained the chief source of information on Amana until recent years and is still in print.

Francis DuVal wrote his Ph.D. dissertation in 1948 on the life and leadership qualities of Christian Metz. The study gave careful consideration to Metz but contributed little to an understanding of Amana's religion. Without a doubt, the best and most complete presentation of the Amana Colonies was made by Jonathan Andelson in "Communalism and Change in the Amana Society: 1855-1932," his Ph.D. dissertation submitted in 1974. In it Andelson studied Amana's communalism from a sociological point of view and offered plausible reasons for the society's abandoning its communal economic organization in 1932. He did an excellent job analyzing the social development of the community but did not explore the religious thought of the society or the influences the religion had on the changes the community experienced.

The most recent Amana study was conducted by Diane Barthel in Amana: From Pietist Sect to American Community, which was published in 1984. She devoted most of her attention to twentieth-century developments in Amana and

said very little about its religious thought. She accepted the spiritual declension theory as an explanation of the social changes which occurred prior to and following the Great Change. An examination of her references shows very little use of primary resources available in the Amana museum and archives. Her presentation is little more than a compilation of what others have written about the community.

Discovery of New Material

Besides the fact that no one has given direct attention to the religious thought of Amana and the role it played in the development of the community, a new study of the society is warranted by the fact that new material, offering new insights, has recently been made available through a number of sources. The Amana Heritage Society has made a concentrated effort over the past several years to obtain copies of all extant writings about the Amana Society for its museum. Consequently, more material is available today than ever before. Old records and books are brought to the museum almost every time a building is renovated or a deceased member's personal effects are examined. For example, when Jonathan Andelson presented his study in 1974, minutes of the Great Council meetings (Bruderraths Beschluesse) were available only through 1900. Today copies are available through 1932. Andelson

only had access to the Inspirations-Historie⁴ through 1923. Today the work is complete through 1933 (with the exception of 1924-1925 which was lost at the print shop), with excerpts through 1939.

A second source of information is the microfilm holdings which the museum started in 1985. Some material remains in the private possession of Amana members who will not surrender it to the museum but who did allow it to be microfilmed. Other material in the archives, too old and delicate for public display, is now available on microfilm.

The oral histories have also been a valuable addition to the museum holdings. Realizing that members who remember life in Amana prior to the Great Change were slowly dying, the Heritage Society taped lengthy interviews with 120 of the oldest members. These interviews have recently been transcribed and are available for study.

⁴The Inspirations-Historie is the official record of the Amana Colonies written by the designated elder. It gives an account of the significant events of each year, special services conducted in each village, admonitions by elders to the members, and an obituary for each member who died in the colonies. Emphasis is placed on the spiritual life of individuals and the community, with little recorded about business dealings in the commune.

The last new aid to research is the effort being made by Janet Zuber to translate significant Amana religious material into English. She began this work in 1977 and continues to this day searching out and translating works which add new insight to the religious dimension of the society. Her efforts are bringing a whole new perspective to the Amana picture.

This dissertation makes use of all of these sources of new material and is much more complete because of them. Consideration of this new information, together with a new look at the primary sources, has made this presentation possible and offers a new interpretation of Amana's religious thought and the role it played in the community from 1867 to 1932.

CHAPTER I

A HISTORY OF THE AMANA SOCIETY TO 1867

Amana Today

Many images come to mind with the mention of the word "Amana." Refrigerators, microwaves, finely crafted furniture, woolen products, excellent restaurants, sprawling farmlands, or large herds of beef cattle are the kinds of things most people think of when they think of Amana. The Amana trademark is recognized nationwide as a symbol of excellence in many different fields. Amana products, which are distributed coast to coast, have their common origin in the Amana Colonies located in east central Iowa.

The seven Amana Colonies are situated on a 26,000 acre plot of land in Iowa and Johnson counties. Each community is named according to its relative location on the property. There is East Amana, High Amana, Main Amana, Middle Amana, South Amana, West Amana, and Homestead. Within the various villages are found the bakeries, woolen mills, furniture shops, restaurants, and a refrigeration plant which have made the colonies famous. Between the settlements are the rich farmlands on which the bountiful crops and beef herds are raised.

One of the major sources of information to the public about the Amana Colonies comes from its tourist trade. With several hundred thousand visitors passing through the shops, restaurants, factories, and museum each year, the story of Amana is becoming widely disseminated in our society. Most first-time visitors to the colonies arrive with some awareness of the Amana reputation. Some even know of its past experience as a communal group, since its communal system was one of the longest lasting and most successful in American history. Most, however, do not come with a knowledge of the rich religious heritage of the community, which is its very raison d'etre. One of the major thrusts of the modern-day Amana Heritage Society, since its inception in 1968, has been to educate visitors to the religious aspect of its existence and make it a central feature for a proper understanding of the Amana Society.

The word "Amana" itself is found in Song of Solomon 4:8 and means glab trau or believe faithfully. This is exactly what the members of this group have sought to do: to remain true to their faith which began more than two hundred and fifty years ago and has its roots in the evolution of European religion of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A brief historical review will set the context for the development of Amana's faith.

The Pietist Movement and
Radical German Pietism

The religious scene in Western Europe at the end of the seventeenth century was one of great unrest. Just when matters seemed to be settling after the turbulent events of the Reformation, religious dissent again erupted all over Europe and England. Laity and clergy alike began to complain that their churches were becoming too interested in academic, theological debates to the neglect of the spiritual matters of the heart. These dissenters wanted more emphasis placed on spirituality. Such concerns eventually evolved into movements, known by various names in each country. The German movement, from which the Amana Society eventually evolved, was known as Pietism. Pietism is not an easy movement to characterize, because it developed in so many different directions with a variety of leaders.¹ Because this study deals with the the Community of True Inspiration, as the Amana people

¹Churchly Pietism was represented by those associated with Halle and found its greatest response in northern Lutheran Germany. Another form of churchly Pietism centered in southern Germany around Württemberg. The Moravian Brethren or Herrnhutters, under the leadership of Count Nicolas Ludwig von Zindendorf, represented another type of Pietism in Germany. The Reformed Church also had a branch of Pietism within it. Then, to these four must be added the many different strains of Radical German Pietism which permeated the land.

were first known in Germany, the following presentation will look at Pietism only as it relates to this group.

The Pietist movement strongly believed Lutheranism needed reform, and this reform would come best through a renewal of faith and personal ethics. Pietism, thus, sought to continue the work begun in the Reformation. The leaders adopted much of Luther's agenda and quoted him often, especially with regard to corruptions within the church (the Lutheran Church this time!), the priesthood of all believers, and the return to vital piety.

One of the outstanding leaders of the Pietist movement in Germany was Philipp Jacob Spener (1635-1705). Though not the "Father of Pietism," his name became synonymous with the cause. He studied languages, literature, and history in Basel, Geneva, and Tübingen from 1659 to 1662 and then became an assistant preacher in Strassburg. He began a successful pastorate in Frankfurt in 1666. By 1670 some of his members expressed a desire to get together informally on a regular basis to discuss spiritual matters. Spener conducted these private devotional gatherings, or collegia pietatis as they were called, twice a week in his home. Much to his dismay, the meetings led to separatist tendencies and some of the members of his group stopped attending church services. He encouraged them to return for as long as he remained in Frankfurt (until 1686). Most did return by 1690. This

episode, however, points to the separatist faction which ultimately led to a split in the Pietist movement.²

Spener is most remembered for his Pia desideria or "Pious Desires" which he wrote in 1675. In it he advocated a Christian life which involved more than going to church and accepting correct doctrine. Christianity, he taught, must make a difference in the way believers live. The work also called for improvements in the established church and offered six suggestions to help the Lutheran Church. They were

1. There should be more discussion of the Word of God among the laity.
2. The laity should practice the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers.
3. Christianity is not just knowledge of doctrine, but an ethic to be practiced.
4. Religious disagreements must be carried on in a spirit of love and gentleness.
5. Future preachers should be educated in the ways of piety, as well as intellectual knowledge.
6. Sermons should be preached for the edification of the simplest hearer.³

While some did not like the book, it received hearty support from those discontent with the established church. Some of Spener's supporters wanted to work within

²Theodore G. Tappert, introduction to Pia Desideria, by Philip Jacob Spener (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 8-14, 19-20.

³Philip Jacob Spener, Pia Desideria, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 87-122.

the church to bring reform, as he did. Others thought it was a hopeless cause and advocated total separation from the church.

By the end of Spener's life, the cause of Pietism was firmly established in Germany, as well as several other European countries. He spent his last years trying to restrain the more radical elements of the movement, but a break between the churchly and radical groups was already in the making.

August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) was one of the best at putting Spener's ideas into practice. After his conversion at the age of twenty-four, Francke became a follower of Spener. He was removed from his pastoral position in 1690 because of his pietistic tendencies. At this time he became the professor of Greek and oriental languages at the University of Halle and pastor at a church in the suburb of Glaucha. All the professors at Halle were Pietists, which helped create a receptive atmosphere for Francke's social work. Francke established a school for poor children, an orphanage, an infirmary, a Bible society for the distribution of inexpensive Bibles, and a foreign mission society, among other things.

The Halle form of Pietism emphasized conversion, evangelism, social action, and the practical aspects of personal piety, but it continued to operate within the structure of the state church. Those of the more radical

persuasion could not go along with this support. Francke showed sympathy with the radicals in his early years at Halle but eventually realized that the two groups could not be held together. As explained in Schaff-Herzog,

A sharp distinction must be drawn between Pietism and separatism. The former sought to achieve its projects of reform inside the Lutheran Church, and took current dogma and recognized organizations as its bases; while the latter had lost all hopes of the future of the church which it assumed to be moribund, and accordingly on principle took up a⁴ position outside the existing status of the Church.

Chauncey Ensign points to 1706 as the final break of the Pietist movement into the churchly and radical wings. Their positions grew farther apart as time passed. In 1714 Francke removed the Inspirationists from Halle as the school took a definite position against Inspirationism, one of the chief tenets of the radical wing. Churchly Pietism remained firmly established within the ecclesiastical structure. The radicals, however, wondered how their comrades in the faith could be part of an organization that had drifted so far from the New Testament ideal and was now persecuting them.⁵

⁴Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. 9, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1911), 63-64.

⁵Chauncey David Ensign, "Radical German Pietism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1955), 101-3.

It should not be assumed that Radical German Pietism is synonymous with separatism, though this became a major distinction from churchly Pietism. Some radicals, like Gottfried Arnold, remained in the established church. Furthermore, radicalism represented a whole system of thought with separatism as only one component of it. While some scholars have held that no unifying principle or system of thought may be found among the diverse groups calling themselves radicals, Emanuel Hirsch discovered that the ideas of Jakob Boehme may be found in all of them.⁶

Boehmism characterized the whole radical movement but has been difficult to trace. At the time, the radicals did not think of themselves as a movement. They left the church and, not desiring to form a sect, wanted only to be known as Christians belonging to the universal church. They used the thought of Boehme, but did not want to be associated with his name. He had a reputation in Christian circles for being an unorthodox fanatic. The radicals believed Boehme had some good ideas, but they could not acknowledge him as their source. Furthermore, none of the radical groups adopted the whole system of Boehme's thought. Rather, they selected ideas here and

⁶Ibid., 15-16.

there which resonated with their own beliefs. Yet, as one studies the whole radical tradition, the influence of Boehme is obvious.⁷ More will be said about Boehme's life and system of thought in the next chapter.

The radical movement took several different courses with as many leaders. In tracing the history of the Community of True Inspiration, one must look to occurrences within one of these courses of the radical movement. It is not possible at this point to recount all that was happening with the Boehmists and Philadelphians in England or the transfer of the Philadelphian Society to Germany, though these movements will be discussed in chapter II. It should simply be stated that the radical movement played an important part in the religious activity of Europe and England at this time. Consequently, the formation of the Community Of True Inspiration did not happen within a vacuum but was one piece of a much larger whole.

The Formation of the Community of True Inspiration

The Inspirationist story begins with the phenomenon of Inspirationism in France at the end of the seventeenth century. The revocation of the Edict of

⁷Ibid., 17-19.

Nantes in 1685 left about two million Protestants without freedom of worship. Force, in various forms of persecution, was applied in an attempt to return them to the Catholic Church. Protestant ministers either left their work or left the country. Thus, without clergy those Protestants who did not return to the Catholic Church had to find spiritual leadership elsewhere. This leadership came mainly from refugee clergy and poor laity.

"New Prophets," as they were called, spread across the land around 1688. Many were adults, but hundreds were children. More than sixty children received the gift of prophecy in one home in Dauphiné in 1688. These young prophets went across the land fulfilling the prediction of Joel with their preaching, which was accompanied with shaking, falling, choking, and convulsions. With enthusiasm renewed by this prophetic hope, Protestants remained resistant to both church and state. Known as Camisards,⁸ these religious freedom fighters made numerous night raids on Catholic Churches and thwarted attempts to drive the Protestant influence from France. They called themselves the "children of God" and their camp the "camp of the Eternal" as they made their destructive sweep to

⁸The term is taken from the French word for "night attack" (camisade) or from the white shirt they wore over their clothes (camisole).

rid the land of "Babylon and Satan" as they called the Roman Catholic church and its priests.⁹

Such resistance was countered by official attack against them which resulted in war. Four hundred and sixty-six villages in Upper Cevennes were destroyed by the authorities in 1702, leaving 20,000 homeless. Knox reports that eight priests and four thousand lay Catholics were killed in 1704. The New Prophets often assisted the Camisards in their bloodshed and destruction. These skirmishes continued until 1710 when the Camisard effort was finally defeated.¹⁰

The New Prophets left France at this time and traveled to Switzerland, Holland, and England. Since they did not find favorable acceptance in England, four of them traveled through Northern Europe in 1711, spreading their message of condemnation in the cities and churches across the land. They did not find a receptive ear even among the Huguenots, perhaps because of their pronouncements against the French Reformed pastors.¹¹

⁹Hillel Schwartz, The French Prophets (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 17-23; Jackson, Vol. 2, 368.

¹⁰Ensign, 294-95; Schwartz, 22-26.

¹¹Ensign, 296.

A second trip was conducted in 1713 to visit Halle. Here they met a receptive audience among the German Pietists. Francke even accepted them until their separatist tendencies threatened the church, at which point he opposed their efforts. Interest had been aroused among the more radical Pietists, however, and a lovefeast was held. Thirty-one attended the service. During the course of the evening, Johann Tobias Pott, Johann Heinrich Pott, and August Friedrich Pott, brothers studying medicine, law, and theology, respectively, at the University of Halle, received the gift of inspiration. The Pott brothers assembled a traveling group and went across the land as itinerant evangelists spreading this new message from the Spirit of God.¹²

By the time the gift of inspiration had been given to the Pott brothers, significant developments were taking place in another part of Germany in the spiritual pilgrimage of Eberhard Ludwig Gruber. Gruber was born in Stuttgart in 1665. He entered the theological seminary at the University of Tübingen in 1684. Gruber did well in his studies and was highly regarded by his professors. He was promoted to a class consisting of students being educated for assistants to royalty. His master's thesis

¹²Ibid., 297-98.

was entitled "Papismus Irreconciliabilis" and was written in Latin. After his ordination in 1688, Gruber took the position of Repentent at the Tübingen Stift which he held until 1692. He was assistant minister at Grossbottwar from 1692 until 1707. During his years in the ministry he studied the writings of Johann Arndt, Johannes Tauler, Jakob Boehme, Philipp Spener, Wilhelm Johann Peterson, Gottfried Arnold, and Thomas a'Kempis.¹³ He found his own thought in harmony with the teachings of these men and felt a growing dissatisfaction with his church's teachings and practices. Thus, in 1707 he left the established church and began a search for a community of faith more in keeping with his beliefs.

Gruber began attending a prayer group in Stuttgart led by Dr. Hedinger. Here he met Johann Friedrich Rock (1678-1749), who was to become his lifelong friend and religious co-worker. Rock, the son of a Lutheran minister, was a harnessmaker by trade. He had become dissatisfied with the lack of spiritual vitality in his church and began attending the prayer group in search of a deeper piety. The two men continued to meet together

¹³These authors remained favorites for the members of the Community of True Inspiration throughout both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Amana residents still own numerous volumes of their works.

after Dr. Hedinger's death and finally were ordered either to return to the established church or leave the land. They moved, together with their families, to Himbach in 1707 in order to enjoy a more solitary life.

One of the annoyances they wanted to escape was the frequent appearance of itinerant, Inspirationist evangelists who were traveling throughout Germany conducting prayer meetings with anyone who would join them. Gruber and Rock were not successful in avoiding these zealous prophets, however. On November 15, 1714, the Pott brothers, along with Johanna Melchior, Eva Catharine Wagner, and Gottfried Newmann, Melchior's brother-in-law, arrived in Himbach. Gruber and Rock heard of their arrival and decided not to visit the prayer meeting. The evangelists, however, had traveled to Himbach specifically to talk with them. A meeting was arranged; Gruber and Rock were surprised to find themselves in harmony with the group and decided to join them. The first official prayer service for the new association, called the Community Of True Inspiration, was November 16, 1714.¹⁴

¹⁴Gottlieb Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1714-1728, trans. Janet W. Zuber (Amana: Amana Church Society, 1977), 11-12.

The Expansion of the Community

The leaders of the new community traveled throughout Germany, Switzerland, Alsace, and the Netherlands, preaching their message and establishing congregations wherever an interest was shown. When the evangelist was ready to move on to his/her next preaching assignment (usually received through inspiration), a lay leader, known as an elder, and two helpers were appointed to conduct all future prayer meetings of the newly formed congregation.

These congregations were not officially organized bodies, but existed as loosely-joined families who agreed to gather together to strengthen their faith. The groups were not left completely to fend for themselves, however. The evangelist left them with printed materials about the Inspirationist faith and practice, wrote them frequently, and visited them from time to time to check on their progress and work out any problems arising since the last visit.

In the years that followed, a total of eighty-six congregations were established throughout central and southern Germany, Alsace, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and eastward to the current Polish border. The leaders did not want their group to be called a sect or be recognized as an officially organized religious body. In 1726 the inspired Word of the Lord came saying,

You are not to establish a Sect with the purpose of dictating to one another. . . . In this way all sects are begun. . . . Therefore, you should in all things, in every concern, whatever may happen, ask My [Mouth for] counsel, regarding how each matter is to be handled now and again.¹⁵

The evangelist's usual method was to go into a village and deliver a message which most often expressed the displeasure of the Lord over the current situation in the local church, i.e., the corruption of the clergy, the spiritual and moral laxness of most church members, etc. There were always those townspeople who agreed with the assessment. After the condemnation, a prayer meeting was announced to pray for a change in the current situation.

As might be supposed, such disruptions of the status quo incurred the immediate wrath of most city officials. Usually, the evangelist was jailed, tried before the magistrates, fined and/or beaten, and officially escorted out of the area with the warning to never return. Such disturbances often left a fledgling congregation by the time the evangelist left town! As soon as the clergy or city officials discovered this new congregation, they issued the strictest of orders that no more prayer meetings were to be conducted. Members continued to meet, nevertheless, and widespread

¹⁵Ibid., 148.

persecution of these groups ensued. The history of this movement is filled with accounts of bloody beatings, loss of employment and/or homes, and ultimately the expulsion of members from the province.

Out of necessity the persecuted members moved to provinces which were more tolerant of their religious convictions. As Inspirationist members found each other, they settled together on rented estates, which permitted them to live as they wished. From time to time government policies in certain areas changed, forcing groups to move from one estate to another, as in the case of Ronneburg in 1725.¹⁶

In the midst of all the persecutions and disabilities, the Inspirationist community continued to grow. Efforts stopped briefly in 1728 to honor the passing of E. L. Gruber on December 11. Gruber had greatly assisted in the progress of the cause. His passing did not hinder the growth of the community since strong leadership was still given by Rock.

The radical wing of the Pietist movement had been separated from the churchly wing for several years by this time. The Inspirationists remained a part of this separation from the official church. However, they were

¹⁶Ibid., 139-40.

soon to come in contact with a group of churchly Pietists who would have a profound impact on their community for many years.

The leader of this group was Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf; his followers were known as Moravians. They met first in Herrnhut, Saxony, then later spread around Germany, with many coming to the United States. Zinzendorf is also remembered for the powerful impact he had in the spiritual development of John Wesley, who was instrumental in the great revival of the eighteenth century in England. At this point in the story, however, it is the relationship between Zinzendorf and J. F. Rock that deserves attention.

In September 1730, Zinzendorf accepted Rock's invitation to visit the congregation at Himbach. Zinzendorf observed the community, read through their recorded history, and was favorably impressed. He is quoted as telling the community leaders,

We see, Brothers, that God's grace is working as powerfully among you as it does among us. Among us the Lord's Work progresses within the Church and among you it indicates separation from the Church. Every person works in the way which the Lord directed and ordained for him. No one should hinder the other, nor mislead him. In the understanding of this, we of our Community are hereby extending to you in your Community the faithful handclasp of brotherhood.¹⁷

¹⁷Gottlieb Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1729-1817, trans. Janet W. Zuber (Amana: Amana Church

After visiting the congregation in Hanau a few days later, Zinzendorf declared the Community of Herrnhut and the Community of True Inspiration to be one congregation in the true spirit of Jesus. Discussions were conducted during the next two years over the possibility of uniting the two groups. In a service held on August 28, 1732, Rock and Zinzendorf shared communion from a common cup and announced that their groups would soon unite.

This union never took place, however. A rift subtly developed between the two leaders which ultimately led to a complete break. Some have concluded that neither man wanted to submit to the leadership of the other, but this is probably not the real reason. Each could have still been actively involved in overseeing the congregations after the merger. More than leadership boundaries was at stake.

The division was not over the separatist issue, either. Zinzendorf had openly stated an allowance for that difference from the beginning. Nor was the problem to be found with their many theological differences. Zinzendorf stated that he did not agree with Rock's rejection of physical baptism and infrequent celebration

of communion. Nevertheless, on such theological differences, the two agreed to disagree.¹⁸

The crucial issue which divided the two men, and ultimately their groups, was the nature of the messages given in inspiration. The doctrine of inspiration will be presented in chapter II. At this juncture, suffice it to say, that the Community of True Inspiration believed that divine decrees spoken through inspired leaders carried the same authority as Scripture. Zinzendorf seemed to acquiesce to this practice at first, though he felt it was a hindrance to the effectiveness of the community. Zinzendorf's permissiveness continued until he felt the inspired messages were becoming too personal and critical. For example, Rock addressed an inspired message to Zinzendorf personally and to the Herrnhut congregation that they should not be so interested in material things.¹⁹

The next few years were filled with an exchange of letters, insults, and hard feelings between the two congregations and their respective leaders. Zinzendorf and Rock met twice in 1736, but the two had reached an

¹⁸Ibid., 26.

¹⁹Ibid., 28.

impasse. In the last testimony of Rock against his former friends, he quoted the Lord as saying,

I will appoint a strong angel who is to expose you (the Herrnhuter Gemeinde) bare and naked, so that man can say and, yes, even many among you will say: We thought you were a pure virgin, yet you are a most abominably defiled whore.²⁰

This incident between Zinzendorf and Rock has been related as an illustration of the type of struggles which sometimes transpired even among the Pietist sects themselves. Attention has already been drawn to the struggles the Pietist sects had with the government and the established church. A third type of struggle for these groups was personal tensions from within. For example, a story is threaded through the Inspirationist history about a member of the Community of True Inspiration named Dr. J. Samuel Carl. It seems he fell into disfavor with the leaders of the community in a personality difference that ultimately led to his leaving the fellowship and moving to Copenhagen. It appears that he continued to believe the Inspirationist doctrine, however, for he evangelized in Copenhagen and established an Inspirationist church there which exists to this day.²¹

²⁰Ibid., 85.

²¹Ibid., 72. Knowledge of this congregation was brought to the attention of the Amana Society in recent years when an Amana elder visited a congregation in Ohio

Years of Transition

By 1747 Rock was too weak and sickly to make his rounds to the Inspirationist congregations. More and more, leadership passed to the elders of the congregations who were "most especially called upon to be faithful shepherds and guardians."²² Struggles and conflicts emerged from time to time among the elders, but these were resolved agreeably. The leaders realized they might soon be without a superior leader. They were right; Rock died March 1, 1749. This brought a major transition for the entire community, because it was the first time since their inception they had been without an inspired leader. Leadership passed to thirteen elders who oversaw the work of the various congregations. Scheuner writes of this transition,

Through God's grace, they sought to continue and advance the Lord's work on the established foundation. The Lord was with them and granted many merciful blessings so that the congregations grew and spread. In fact, in the following years, new awakenings occurred in many towns and locations which had previously been as though dead.²³ Thus, many new members joined the communities.

and found that their heritage went back to Denmark and Dr. Carl.

²²Ibid., 97.

²³Ibid., 110. This became an important indication to the Inspirationists that God was continuing to work through them, even though there was no inspired leader.

Details of the life of the community are not as complete after the death of Rock. The preserved records indicate that the evangelistic tours, persecutions, and relocation of members to territories with greater religious tolerance continued. From time to time religious awakenings are reported even in communities where Pietist assemblies were strongly forbidden. An account from 1753 reads,

So it was in almost every town to which the Brethren came: the more the authorities forbade such assembly, the more desirous and eager the people became. . . . In one town there were so many people assembled that they could barely be contained in the living room, kitchen and bedroom of a house. Everyone present longed for and indicated acceptance of the Word.²⁴

An individual awakening of interest is that of Count Adolph von Zinzendorf, nephew of Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf. Adolph held a high position in the court of Denmark and, after a religious awakening, left his position to join a Pietist community. He seemed to not have been pleased with the way his uncle handled the affair with Rock and the Inspirationists. His search for

This same external indication of God's favor, as measured by their outward success, was used when the last inspired leader died in the new community in Amana in 1883. In fact, this account of the Inspirations-Historie was published the year following her death, perhaps as a reminder that divine guidance would be with the new community just as it had been with the old.

²⁴Ibid., 129.

a spiritual fellowship led him to the Community of True Inspiration where he remained a faithful member until his death.²⁵

By 1770 another transition was being made in the Community of True Inspiration. At the death of one of the brothers, Scheuner writes, "The old founders were now called away one by one, and the number of faithful leaders was regrettably decreasing."²⁶ Although brothers were being appointed to assume leadership roles in the local congregations, a shortage of leadership developed as the traveling overseers passed away. Brother Johann Caspar Low, the last charter member of the community, died on November 22, 1775, at the age of eighty-three. Scheuner says Low's death marked the beginning of the community's decline.

The most serious blow to leadership came on October 11, 1779, when P. G. Negel died unexpectedly at the age of sixty-four. He was regarded as the most significant leader of the community since the death of Rock in 1749. Janet Zuber, who is now translating the historical accounts of the Amana Society, refers to Negel as the bridge between the old and the new community. No

²⁵Ibid., 183.

²⁶Ibid., 217.

one assumed his place of leadership until the awakening in 1817.²⁷

From Negel's death onward, the historical account takes a pessimistic tone as the community suffered retrenchment and a lack of strong leadership. Consequently, few facts are recorded about this period. One significant activity did occur during this time, however, which indicates that the community was still alive. It was during this "dark period," as it is often called, that the members of the Community of True Inspiration gathered the testimonies, historical accounts, diaries, and hymns of the past and printed them for future generations. This proved to be of benefit to the revived community of the nineteenth century. These records remain a source of information and inspiration for the Amana Society today.

The last officially recorded event of the old community was an elders' conference held in 1813. The remaining records mostly recount the deaths of each of the significant community members. One of the members of the old community who had an impact on the new was Jakob Andres, an elder from Ronneburg. He had been a pillar of the faith in one of the few communities that maintained an

²⁷Ibid., 308.

active congregation during this transition period.²⁸

Andres disciplined a young man named Christian Metz in the Ronneburg group. This training became a valuable foundation for Metz's leadership in the reawakened community. Andres is an example of those members who kept the coals of faith burning until new life came to the community.

The Reawakening

Awakening came to the Community of True Inspiration in 1817 from an outsider named Michael Krausert. Krausert was born in Strassburg and grew up with "a strong desire toward inner calm." Scheuner characterizes his spiritual condition by saying, "There had been with him a mysterious yearning and urgency for a certain something--which he himself could not comprehend."²⁹ He left Strassburg in search of "something which would serve to satisfy the longings of his heart." When he reached Bischweiler, Alsace, he met Wilhelm

²⁸DuVal indicates that there were only five congregations which remained organized into the nineteenth century. They were Ronneburg, Lieblos, Himbach, Neuwied, and the Haag, the latter two not being active. Francis Alan DuVal, "Christian Metz: German-American Religious Leader and Pioneer" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1948), 49.

²⁹Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1729-1817, 302.

Nordmann of the Inspirationist congregation. Nordmann gave him copies of Rock's testimonies which he studied eagerly. In these testimonies he found something that resonated within his own heart, and he experienced a renewal in his soul. He then visited the other Inspirationist congregations.

On September 11, 1817, he gave his first inspired testimony to the Ronneburg congregation. It was a call to reawakening.

Oh Ronneburg! Ronneburg! where are your former champions, the older defenders of the faith? They are no longer to be found and weaklings dwell in the citadel. Well, then, do you not want to become strong? The eternal power is offered to you.³⁰

The old elders, with the exception of Wilhelm Nordmann and Abraham Noe', were suspicious of this new inspiration. Christian Metz and Wilhelm Moerschel, two of the young men of the Ronneburg congregation, also believed in Krausert and became involved in the reawakening efforts by preaching the call to renewal. As Krausert traveled to the various Inspirationist congregations preaching his call to revival, a polarity developed between those who accepted and those who rejected his authenticity. Those who accepted became part of the new community. The old community eventually died out.

³⁰Ibid., 303.

The first six years of the reawakening were filled with turmoil as the principal figures vied for control of the new community. Some claimed inspiration; others did not. Each developed a following, usually at the expense of maligning the character of the other leaders. Leadership changed hands several times before it came to rest on Christian Metz. A brief overview will recount the significant facts of the power struggle.

One day, in the fall of 1817, Krausert and his traveling party arrived in Sulz. As Krausert talked with Inspirationists, a young girl named Barbara Heinemann was brought to meet him. They discussed spiritual matters briefly. He was impressed with her and in an inspired testimony indicated that she, too, was soon to receive the gift of inspiration. This came as quite a surprise to Heinemann, who had only recently learned of this community. One night while working as a waitress in a large restaurant in Sulz, she began contemplating her own death. In seeking preparation to meet God, she took her problem to an old Inspirationist woman who helped her find peace with God in an awakening of her soul.

Heinemann began attending the Inspirationist meetings in Sulz and soon met Krausert. He accepted her immediately into his traveling party and directed her, through inspiration, to leave town with them without even

packing a bag or telling her father good-bye.³¹ Tension soon developed between Heinemann and the other members of the traveling party, probably because of her lack of education, her low social status, and the attention Krausert was giving her.³² Krausert's wife especially held her in disdain.

Heinemann's first inspired testimony, confirming Krausert's prediction, was given December 26, 1818. Shortly thereafter persecution of the Inspirationists increased, and Krausert's entire party was arrested in Bergzabern. While in jail, Heinemann was introduced to Christian Metz, who had also been arrested. After their release, the travels and testimonies continued through Krausert and Heinemann with the former still in control of the new community. In the summer of 1819, Heinemann got into an argument with Krausert's wife and sister-in-law over a trivial matter. Krausert punished Heinemann by sending her to a secluded farm near Birstein for a period

³¹Such unusual requests were common among these people not only to test their faithfulness to the directions of the Lord but also perhaps to strengthen the authority of the leaders over the members. Refusal to obey such directives often resulted in discipline, which will be discussed later.

³²She is often referred to in Amana writings as "a humble and unlearned servant maid." Bertha M. H. Shambaugh, Amana That Was and Amana That Is (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 35.

of time. Such punishments helped keep Heinemann in the subordinate position.

While Heinemann was still serving her punishment on the farm, Krausert and his part arrived, fleeing a supposed persecution in the area. Members of the Birstein congregation lost confidence in him due to his cowardice. Metz spoke a testimony against Krausert in which he quoted God as saying,

You run about thus and are like a hireling who has seen the wolf and has abandoned to him his flock and deserted. Is this the true faithfulness of the shepherd? . . . Why then do you³³ lose courage now and desert ere you were sent away?

Krausert realized he was losing control of the community. In an effort to maintain his superior position, he ordered five of the community's leaders, including Metz and Heinemann, punished by placing them in their bedrooms without food or drink for a day. He then declared there would be no more inspired testimonies. Metz agreed to comply; Heinemann did not. As a result Krausert had a revelation that Heinemann was pregnant and promptly banished her from the community. Contrary to his own rule, Krausert gave an inspired testimony denouncing Heinemann. The elders of the community finally realized what was happening, brought Krausert and Heinemann before

³³Ibid., 224-25.

their assembly, and exiled Krausert from the community for a specified period of time. He never returned.³⁴

Heinemann was the only inspired leader at this time, since Metz had lost his inspired power for a short while. Philipp Moerschel became the First Elder of the leading community in Ronneburg. Heinemann testified that Moerschel and Abraham Noe' were to oversee the communities but later had disagreements with both which resulted in them leaving the community. Heinemann remained the sole inspired instrument of the community until 1823. While all of this was taking place, Christian Metz was beginning to assume an important place of leadership in the community.

Leadership under Christian Metz

In January 1823, Metz again became divinely inspired. May brought the loss of Heinemann's gift of inspiration, probably due to her desire to marry George Landmann, a school teacher in Bischweiler.³⁵ The community could not sanction such an action by their

³⁴Gottlieb Scheuner, Barbara Heinemann Landmann Biography, trans. Janet W. Zuber (Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Company, 1981), 20-23.

³⁵Heinemann regained her gift of inspiration in 1849 after the community moved to America and retained it until her death in 1883.

inspired leader. She did marry shortly thereafter and was banished briefly from the community. She continued to hold to the beliefs of Inspirationism, however, and recounts in her biography how she and her husband were persecuted and imprisoned for their faith.³⁶ With Heinemann out of the picture, Metz surfaced as the sole leader of the new community, a position which he maintained unchallenged until his death in 1867.

The period from 1823, when Metz became the chief leader in the community, until 1843, when the group emigrated to America, was a time of preparation for relocation. Metz continued his travels to the various Inspirationist congregations; resistance of the old elders to the new community continued but in time ceased to be an issue as energies of the group concentrated on the renewed civil and ecclesiastical persecutions against separatists.

The issues of the renewed persecutions were the same as they had been in the persecutions of a hundred years before: refusal of members to swear oaths, perform baptismal rites, participate in military service, or send their children to Lutheran schools. Even though the Inspirationists did not send their children to state-supported schools, they continued to pay taxes to

³⁶Scheuner, Landmann Biography, 32-33.

support these schools. As in the former persecutions, dissidents were ordered to comply with the rules or leave the territory. Thus, in 1828 migrations to more tolerant regions began. The Grand Duke of Hessen-Darmstadt offered them the most freedom, so many moved there.

Metz made arrangements for the immigrants to occupy large estates, leased with their pooled resources. They went first to Marienborn (1828), then Herrnhaag (1828), on to Arnsburg, which they renamed Armenburg (1830), and Engelthal (1835), until finally nearly half of the Community of True Inspiration was located on these secluded estates. Andelson estimates there were about 400 members on the estates with perhaps another 600 scattered throughout the rest of Germany, Alsace, and Switzerland.³⁷

It was in this new-found sanctuary that a way of life developed which equipped the community for the communal structure they adopted in America. Each member worked at his/her own trade and earned an individual income; the land was farmed cooperatively with the profits equally divided among the workers. Children were taught together, and eventually meals were taken together for

³⁷Jonathan Gary Andelson, "Communalism and Change in the Amana Society: 1855-1932" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1974), 38-39.

economic reasons.³⁸ Each family or individual member remained financially independent in this estate system, however. Cloistered living not only created a buffer from persecution but allowed the community to create a social structure which molded the members into an homogeneous unit.

The 1840s brought renewed trouble from several sources. Political unrest in Europe caused the government to feel threatened by separatist groups. Consequently, persecutions began to reach the Inspirationists on their estates. Fines and disabilities were imposed which made life uncomfortable. Rent for the estates grew so prohibitive leases could not be maintained. Added to these problems were the droughts in this region which plagued the whole decade. There were no crops to harvest in 1841 as the situation grew more desperate. Finally, in 1842, citizenship was denied to all foreigners living on the estates. On July 27, 1842, Metz brought God's direction with this testimony:

Your goal and your way shall lead towards the west to the land which still is open to you and your faith. I am with you and shall lead you over the sea. Hold Me, call upon Me through your prayer when the storm or temptation arises. . . . Four may then prepare themselves.³⁹

³⁸Ibid., 40.

³⁹Shambaugh, Amana That Was, 53.

The four men selected for the journey were Christian Metz, William Noe', Gottlieb Ackermann, and George Weber. Weber's eleven-year-old son Ferdinand also traveled with the group.

Immigration to America

The group left Armenburg on September 5, 1842. They arrived in New York City on October 26. Following the advice of the ship's captain, they made contact with George Paulsen, who directed them to a piece of property in Chautauqua County, New York. They arrived in Buffalo on November 12 and immediately studied the prospects of a land purchase. They decided on a 10,000 acre plot of the old Seneca Indian Reservation and placed a contract for \$10.50 an acre on November 26. Metz and Noe', due to a translation error, thought the offer had been accepted. It had not; the owner wanted more than twice that much for land near the city.

The Inspirationists, after casting lots three times, decided not to make a counter offer. Instead, a new contract was written for 5,000 acres of the plot farthest from Buffalo at a price of \$10 an acre.⁴⁰ At

⁴⁰ Jonathan Andelson and Diane Barthel both quote \$10.50 as the price of the land, but that contract was superseded by this new one.

this point they received a letter from Germany telling of misfortunes there and advising them to forget the move and return home immediately. The committee decided to ignore the advice and consummated the land deal in February 1843. A third contract, signed in April, was necessary to clear up all technicalities, or so they thought. By the time the final contract had been signed, fifty immigrants had already arrived to take possession of their new property.⁴¹

The labors of clearing land, building roads, planting trees and crops, digging wells, erecting fences, and building houses started immediately. The second group from Germany was already on its way. Suddenly all work stopped! The Seneca Indians ordered the Germans off their reservation. It seemed the Inspirationists had not been given a clear title to the property. The conditions for the signing of the Indian treaty allowing for the sale were questionable and appraisals of the land had not been made. In the sight of the law, the Indians still had full possession of the property. The land dispute continued in court for three years. During this time, the colonists were subject to many destructive attacks by the Indians,

⁴¹An additional 3000 acres of land was purchased after the settlement of the land to allow for the group's expansion.

who attempted to drive them from the property. After much litigation and the signing of more treaties with the Indians, the matter was settled in favor of the colonists, who by this time had reached eight hundred in number.

The Germans would have had an extremely difficult time with all the business contracts, court appearances, and legal technicalities had it not been for the unexpected appearance in August 1843 of Charles L. Mayer. Mayer had been a member of the Zoar commune. He was impressed with Metz and the beliefs of the Inspirationists when Metz visited Zoar during the land negotiations. Mayer decided to join the Inspirationists. He was a good businessman, understood the laws of the land, and spoke excellent English, which made him a very helpful member of the new settlement.

The Ebenezer Society

The Germans now began a peaceful life on their property as the Ebenezer Society. The name was taken from I Samuel 7:12 and was selected because the Lord had helped them get established in this place. The diversified membership represented all walks of life and professions. This presented a problem, however. Some members were quite wealthy, while others had to borrow from the society treasury to pay for passage to America. The poor members

could make good wages working in Buffalo, but this would break down the solidarity of the community.

The solution proposed for this dual problem was a communal operation of the society. Both rich and poor made sacrifices to the system: the former lost control of their money, the latter gave up higher wages and a more self-determined life in the city. As Lankes describes the arrangement, the land, buildings, machinery, and livestock were common property. Household furnishings and small tools were private property. Food, shelter, and medical care were provided by the society, while clothing and household items were the responsibility of each member. Every member received an annual cash allotment from the common fund for the purchase of these items.⁴²

The colonists created six communities, listed in the order of their settlement: Middle Ebenezer, Upper Ebenezer, Lower Ebenezer, New Ebenezer, Canada Ebenezer, and Kenneberg. The village system was adopted from the estate system they had been accustomed to in Germany. The Ebenezer Society was fairly self-sufficient in its operation. Any goods and services not available in one

⁴²Frank J. Lankes; The Ebenezer Society (West Seneca, New York: West Seneca Historical Society, 1963), 67.

village could be found in another, thus avoiding the problem of having to depend on Buffalo for necessities.

The land was used for gardens, orchards, and vineyards and provided pasture for the many horses, oxen, sheep, hogs, dairy and beef cattle. The forestland provided lumber for building material and fuel for heat. Each village had a store, a meeting house, a bakery, a meat market, and a school. At least one village had a blacksmith shop, locksmith shop, wagon repair shop, tailor, shoemaker, cooper, cabinet maker, or millwright. The villages also operated a saw mill, grist mill, oil mill, brewery, stonequarry, brickyard, and pewter manufacturing shop. Such diversified interests not only kept everyone busy but also made it unnecessary for village inhabitants to travel off the property where they might be influenced by the world. Roads passed around the villages to keep members isolated from the outside.⁴³

The Ebenezer Society was blessed with prosperity over the next several years, but this prosperity brought with it a host of problems which ultimately resulted in the group's transfer to Iowa. One reason often cited for the move from New York is overcrowding and the need for

⁴³Andelson, 47; Lankes, 87-97.

more land.⁴⁴ While it is true that the population had grown to more than 1200 by 1850, and the plot purchased in Iowa was 26,000 acres, it is doubtful that the Ebenezer property was overcrowded. Over half of the land was still uncleared at the time of its sale, thus more than 4800 acres were still available for expansion.⁴⁵

A more likely reason for the transfer was the loss of the Society's sense of isolation. The city of Buffalo, which grew from a population of 5,141 in 1825 to 74,214 in 1855, was drawing ever closer to the Ebenezer community.⁴⁶ Not only were outsiders visiting Ebenezer, but, as elders feared, members were making frequent trips to town and were becoming influenced by the world. Even those who did not venture into town were soon to find outsiders at their front door. At the time of the transfer from Ebenezer, a railroad survey had just been completed which indicated the new railroad was to pass through the middle of Ebenezer property. The elders greatly feared the long term impact of such encroachment by the world.

⁴⁴Andelson, 57; Barthel, 31.

⁴⁵Lankes, 116. Lankes points out that by 1855 the society was farming 2,200 acres with 4,812 acres remaining in undisturbed forests.

⁴⁶Barthel, 20.

Another dangerous influence was the large German population living in Buffalo. About thirty thousand Germans lived in the area when the Community of True Inspiration began its exodus from Ebenezer. These comrades were working at good jobs and enjoying some of the nicer things in life without the social and economic constraints of communalism under which some of the Ebenezer members were beginning to chafe. Discontent began to grow in Ebenezer.

As the city grew closer, there was also the pressure from the outside to conform to the American life style. The members of the Ebenezer Society were different; they did not fit into established norms of dress, behavior, and individual expression which characterized the American way of life. Society leaders felt it would be better for members if they were not watched by outsiders. Lankes suggests that there may have also been some resentment from outsiders over the prosperity of the colonists.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the nearby city offered a variety of entertainments. Metz frowned on such diversions as worldly. The city was also a showcase of material possessions. These goods signaled several dangers for the

⁴⁷Lankes, 116.

communal group. Purchases would take money out of the closed economic system of the society. These possessions could create an attitude of discontent as members saw the acquisitions of their neighbors and wanted the same for themselves. Elders also feared that such material interests would be sought at the expense of spiritual development.

Yet another complication for the community was caused by the Buffalo Hydraulic Association which provided power for area mills. As the Little Buffalo Creek filled with silt, the manager of the Buffalo Hydraulic Association raised the dam rather than properly dredging the waterway. Consequently, the waterwheels on the mills in Ebenezer did not always work properly, and the land along the creek was subject to flooding and erosion.⁴⁸

A further reason for the move was the fear by Metz and the elders that members were growing too comfortable in their situation. Members found themselves in the double bind of working hard to prosper, then suffering ill side-effects from that prosperity. The community had known many years of persecution and hardship in Germany. They had come to America and experienced the struggles and hardships with the Indians and the backbreaking work of

⁴⁸Ibid., 117.

building six new settlements. Yet, for the past several years, circumstances had gone extremely well for them. The leaders felt the people needed a new challenge and struggle. Thus, in August 1854, Metz delivered the inspired direction the community was to take:

There is one more remedy against the decline, namely to change the place of abode so that there will be struggle and hardship--a separation. You will have to leave your property and go to a place where it is bare and scant, like the children of Israel in the desert, on account of your disobedience, dissatisfaction and ungratefulness.⁴⁹

The Transfer to Amana

Christian Metz, Carl Winzenried, Ferdinand Weber, and Charles L. Mayer were appointed on September 4 to scout out land in Kansas. After a month's search, they returned to Ebenezer with no prospect for a new settlement location. In December, the Community sent John Beyer and Jacob Wittmer to search for land in Iowa. They returned with a favorable report, and on May 31, 1855, they went back to Iowa with Frederick Heinemann and Carl Winzenried to make a purchase.

The land they selected was a 26,000 acre piece of property in Iowa and Johnson counties of east-central

⁴⁹Andelson, 63.

Iowa, about twenty miles northwest of the capital in Iowa City. The plot was a combination of government land and privately-owned farms. The 3,300 acres of government land was purchased for \$1.25 an acre, with the farmers receiving more.⁵⁰ The property had everything the settlers wanted: fertile farmland for livestock and crops, forests for fuel and building materials, a sandstone quarry for building materials, clay for bricks, the Iowa River for the mills and irrigation, and, most of all, isolation.

The wagon train left Ebenezer on July 9, 1855, with the first group of thirty settlers, representing each of the six Ebenezer villages. This first group, responsible for getting the settlement started, consisted mainly of farmers, carpenters, and masons. The next group departed two months later as the well-planned phase-out of the Ebenezer villages began. The closing of villages in New York was paralleled with the formation of new ones in Iowa. New Amana villages were started as the need arose, and the population was equally distributed among them. Immigrants were selected according to their skills and relocated in the various villages according to the need for each skill. Consequently, friends in Ebenezer were

⁵⁰Ibid., 66.

not usually settled together in Amana. Elders in each village oversaw the resettlement.

The order of the formation of the villages was: Main Amana, South Amana, West Amana, High Amana, East Amana, Homestead, and Middle Amana. The reason the sixth village does not have an Amana name is that the society purchased the whole village in 1860 in order to secure exclusive rights to the railroad, which had just reached that point. The purchase provided a means of transportation for their excess goods to market without having to come in contact with the outside world. Since the railroad was located at the edge of the property, leaders did not feel it would hinder the society's isolation.

Two attempts were made to sell the entire Ebenezer property; both failed. Thus, it was decided to subdivide the land and sell it in individual plots. The property went on sale September 2, 1856 and continued for the next nine and one-half years. An interesting event occurred during the first year of sale which illustrates the generous heart of these Germans. When the panic of 1857 hit the area, all land sales stopped. Purchase prices were reduced twenty percent to encourage buyers. When this tactic worked, the elders refunded all former buyers

twenty percent of their money to keep the sale fair!⁵¹ Auctions were held periodically to sell possessions and livestock not being transferred to Iowa. The last seven colonists left Middle Ebenezer on December 30, 1864. The Amana colonies were populated with 1,224 members at that time.

The settlers had learned much from their pioneering work in New York. Consequently, deliberate attempts were made to recreate life in Amana much as it had been in Ebenezer. The crops and livestock were the same, as were skills employed by the members. The settlements had the same mills, shops, and craftspersons as before. The interrelatedness of the villages made them almost completely self-sufficient and independent from the outside world. Their hardy surplus of goods and produce was exported to area farmers and markets, thus generating an income for the purchase of items they could not produce themselves.

By the time the move was completed, the society was settled in its life style. Since this move had taken nearly ten years, growth of the villages took place in manageable proportions. Most problems in the communal system had been worked out by the time the last settlers

⁵¹Lankes, 125.

arrived at the end of 1864. The Society was established in a routine that would continue well into the twentieth century.

Just over two years after the resettlement was completed, Christian Metz, the instrument of the Lord who had led these people from the early days of the awakening in Germany, through the estate system, to the new world, and now to their western settlement in Iowa, died on July 27, 1867, at the age of 72. This one man had given leadership to the Community of True Inspiration through these many transitions spanning two continents and five decades. He had given his people the Lord's direction through his 3,654 testimonies. The community would continue in his absence, but would it be the same? This is where the major thrust of this study begins. However, before addressing that question, it is necessary to take a look at the religious beliefs of the society and see the role faith played in the community.

CHAPTER II

THE DOCTRINES AND WORSHIP OF THE AMANA SOCIETY

The sole purpose for the existence of the Community of True Inspiration was for its members to practice their religious beliefs. Some of those beliefs came from the Lutheran tradition, some from the churchly Pietism of Spener and Franke, some from the radical Pietism of Boehme and others, and some from the writings of the community itself.

It became evident, as seen in chapter I, that an understanding of the thought of the radical Pietist movement in general, and the Inspirationist movement in particular, will involve some understanding of the key figures and their ideas which fed into and shaped these movements. Therefore, it will be appropriate at this point in the study to take a quick look at this background.

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Background

The uniting influence of the entire radical movement was the thought of Jakob Boehme. Born in 1575 in the village of Ah-Seidenberg in Ober-lausitz to a poor, peasant couple, he was raised with good religious

instruction but without much formal education. He married Catherina Kuntzschmann in 1599 and opened a cobbler's shop in Görlitz. The next year, he saw the sun's reflection in a pewter dish and had a mystical experience in which he said he learned the secrets of the universe. He had other mystical experiences over the next twelve years. In 1612 he wrote his discoveries in a book entitled Aurora or Day-Dawning. A wide circulation put his work into the hands of a local Lutheran minister, Gregory Richter, who persuaded the civil authorities to forbid Boehme from any further writings. Boehme obeyed the restriction for several years, then began writing again in January 1619. Nine of his manuscripts were published under the title Der Weg zu Christo or The Way To Christ in January 1624. He was exiled as a result of this publication, but friends supported him well until his death in November 1624.¹

Many of Boehme's ideas were adopted by the Community of True Inspiration, though it did not mention his name directly or refer to any of his works for the reasons discussed in chapter I. There is no certain proof that the community leaders and members read Boehme

¹Peter Erb, introduction to The Way of Christ, by Jakob Boehme (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 1-8.

directly. It is certain from the historical accounts, however, that they read the works of his disciples.

One of the chief sources of Boehmist influences on the Inspirationists was the writings of Johann and Johanna Petersen. The Petersens came in contact with Philipp Spener in their early adult lives and were married by him in 1680. The more radical wing of the Pietist movement was displeased with the wedding but thought it was just a spiritual fellowship until they "fell with children," as the radicals called it. While maintaining many radical Pietist ideas, the Petersens remained within the boundaries of the established church until they were banished from the land in 1692 for their radical notions. Wealthy friends cared for them the rest of their days and encouraged their writings.

The early writings of the Petersens reflect the influence of Spener, while later years brought more radical notions. They were particularly noted for their views on the book of Revelation and eschatology, along with their propagation of the ideas of Jane Leade and the Philadelphian Society.² The most significant Philadelphian doctrine which they popularized, to the

²The Philadelphian Society will be discussed later in this chapter.

point of its becoming a central tenet of the radical Pietist position, was the concept of the eternal restoration of all things. Spener urged them not to discuss this concept, but in 1699 they came forth with acceptance of the doctrine in Das ewige Evangelium der Allgemeinen Wiederbringung aller Creaturen. Three more volumes were later published by them on the subject. Johanna died in 1724 and Johann in 1727.³

The second most important source of Boehmist influence on the Inspirationists came from Gottfried Arnold. He was born in Annaberg, Saxony in 1666 and lost his parents at an early age. Working his way through school, Arnold received his master's degree from Wittenberg University in 1686. He became an instructor in several impressive homes and developed a strong friendship with Spener. Arnold had strong ideas about the evils of the established church and lost his job in 1693 for trying to reform his employer's home. He developed friendships with many separatists in the area but did not attend their meetings.

³Schwartz, 197-98; John M'Clintock and James Strong, ed., Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. 8 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1891), 38; Jackson, Vol. 8, 499-500.

Arnold was interested in studying early church history. He wrote an historical account on this subject entitled Die erste Liebe (The First Love) in 1696, which became a significant work for separatists. In it he characterized the first three centuries in the church as exemplifying the model set up by Christ. This period was followed by the fall of the church when it united with the state during the reign of Constantine. This characterization pleased Pietists and led to Arnold's appointment as professor of church history at Giessen in 1697.

He soon gave up his position, however, because he felt the academic community hindered him from his fellowship with Christ and encouraged a desire for money and honor. In the years that followed, he wrote extensively in the areas of church history and mystical theology. Many of his concepts came from Boehmist sources, which he, in turn, mediated to separatist groups.

Two of Arnold's actions in 1701 and 1702 brought him into disfavor with Pietists more radical than himself. In 1701 he married Anna Maria Sprogel. The radicals thought the Arnolds' marriage was a spiritual fellowship until they, as with the Petersens, "fell with children." The year 1702 marked Arnold's return to an official position in the church as court preacher in Altstadt. He served as pastor of two more churches before his untimely death from scurvy in 1714 at the age of forty-seven. He,

like the Petersens, represented a radical position, softened somewhat by the churchly influence of friends like Spener.⁴

Another mutual friend of both Arnold and Johann Petersen was Johann Georg Gichtel. A full presentation of his life and work need not be presented here, since he had no direct impact on the Inspirationists. It should be mentioned in passing, however, that Gichtel was a close follower of Boehme and translated the first complete collection of Boehme's writings into German in 1681 and 1682. He gave his life to the study and explanation of Boehme's thought.⁵ It was Gichtel's friendship and influence that encouraged both Arnold and Petersen to read Boehme. They, in turn, adopted many of his ideas into their writings, which were read by groups like the Community of True Inspiration. This is only one of the sources of Boehmism in Inspirationist thought. It is noteworthy that Gichtel broke fellowship with both Arnold and Petersen as a result of their marriages.

⁴Peter C. Erb, ed., Pietists: Selected Writings (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 11-16.

⁵Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Work and Hope: The Spirituality of the Radical Pietist Communitarians," Church History 39 (March 1970): 73-83.

Yet another Boehmist influence can be noted in the lives of Arnold and the Petersens through their participation in the informal meetings of the Philadelphian Society. This society had its origin in England and was the chief proponent of Boehmism in that country in the seventeenth century. John Pordage, a former rector in the Church of England, brought Boehmist teachings to England. He wrote several books on Boehmist mysticism which were translated and read by the radical Pietists.

The most significant English Boehmist to affect the radicals, however, was Jane Ward Leade. She met Pordage in 1663 and committed herself completely to his work in 1670 as a fifty-year-old destitute widow. She had visions which impressed the members of Pordage's group so much they made her their leader upon his death. Her work, entitled The Heavenly Cloud Now Breaking (1681), came to the attention of Baron Knyphausen who had all her Boehmist material translated into German.⁶

Leade's group of followers slowly developed from 1694 to 1697 into what became known as The Philadelphian Society. Their publication, Theosophical Transactions, began in 1697. Their desire was not to become a sect but

⁶Schwartz, 46; Niles Thune, The Behmenists and the Philadelphians (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1928), 60-61.

to seek a spiritual restoration as they promoted love for others in the beginning of the sixth state of the church, the Philadelphian age.⁷ They prayed for the Spirit of God to break in on the current Sardis age of the church and usher in the new age of love.

This whole concept of the Philadelphian age involved notions of the millennial reign of Christ. The Philadelphians did not present definite details about the millennium, but saw only the coming age of the Spirit in powerful demonstrations as the world was made ready for Christ. They did, nevertheless, say more about the end times than Boehme had. The most popular Philadelphian doctrine to be adopted by the radical Pietists was the eternal restoration of all things. It was best defined by Leade, though Pordage hinted at it. She wrote of it in The Enochian Walks With God (1694) and A Revelation of the Everlasting Gospel Message (1697). In the latter she said she had not accepted the notion until a revelation from God in 1693 convinced her of its validity. Though Boehme had not taught the doctrine, he would have been open to this new revelation from the Holy Spirit.

⁷This refers to the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 which many people interpreted as being characterizations of various ages of church history.

The Philadelphians were not widely accepted in England, but did make quite an impact in Germany where their Boehmist concepts were readily received by radical Pietists. Several attempts were made shortly before and after 1700 to organize the Germans into an official Philadelphian Society with an accepted creed. All attempts failed since these separatist Germans did not want formal organization or any part of a sect spirit. Organization attempts were abandoned by 1703 when the group ceased public meetings in England. Nevertheless, the influence of Philadelphian thought had made its impact on radical Pietism.⁸

This brief historical sketch illustrates the fact that the religious scene in Germany at the beginning of the eighteenth century was alive with activity. The visions, dreams, prophecies, and revelations being experienced across the land, together with the Philadelphian hope for better days ahead, created a ready atmosphere for the advancement of the radical Pietist cause. Such is the background for the formation of the Community of True Inspiration.

⁸Schwartz, 47-51; Thune, 119-23; M'Clintock and Strong, Vol. 5, 304.

Doctrines of the Amana Society

The doctrines of the Amana Society are clearly articulated in their official statements, most of which go back to the founding days under Gruber and Rock. The documents which most succinctly present these doctrines are Der Glauben (an adaptation of the Apostles' Creed), Katechetischer Unterricht (adult catechism), Glaubensbekenntniss (Confession of Faith), "The Twenty-Four Rules For True Godliness," and "The Twenty-One Rules For The Examination Of Our Daily Lives."

Der Glauben

Der Glauben reads,

We are unanimous in believing in one almighty God, the Father, Maker of heaven and earth and all that is visible and invisible; and in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only Son, born of the Father to the salvation of the entire world, God from God, light from light, light which illuminates all mortals who come into this world (John 1:9), true God born of the true God, not created by the Father in the same way as all else is created. Jesus came from heaven for all mankind and for our salvation and He became flesh through the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and became man. It was also for us that he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered, died and was buried, descended into hell and arose on the third day, according to the scriptures, and ascended into Heaven where He sits to the right of the Father. He will come again in glory to rule the living and the dead and of His reign there shall be no end. And we believe in the Lord, the Holy Spirit which emanates from the Father and the Son and gives life. Along with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is honoured and conjointly addressed in prayer. This Holy Spirit which spoke and worked through the prophets still speaks and works today. (Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17-18). It speaks and works toward repentance and renewal of the heart, toward chastisement and punishment, so that we

should renounce our ungodly natures and worldly desires and live disciplined, righteous and godly lives in this world. (Titus 2:12-13; 3:4-8)
 According to the content of those passages, we perceive and acknowledge a holy universal Christian church, a Communion of Saints, regardless of their stand, within or without a religious creed, a forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and an eternally blessed life. Amen.

For the most part, Der Glauben reads the same as the standardized form of the Nicene Creed except for the underlined portions. These additions represent particular doctrines of the Community of True Inspiration. The first added sentence refers to the community's emphasis on present-day inspiration by the Holy Spirit. A full presentation of this doctrine will appear later in this chapter. The sentence which follows is a Pietist concern for a strong emphasis on repentance and renewal of the heart. This renewal involves a complete renunciation of all worldly desires, so that one can live a life of holiness. The third underlined phrase presents their perception of themselves as part of the body of Christ, even though they are not part of the recognized ecclesiastical structure. Also in this phrase is their acceptance of all Christian faiths.

⁹Glaubensbekenntniss (Amana: Amana Society Press, n.d.), 1-2.

The Catechism

The most complete and best organized presentation of the faith of Amana is their Kateschetischer Unterricht. This adult version of the catechism is far more detailed than the children's version. Since the text of the catechism is eighty-four pages in length, attention will only be given to those doctrines which are particularly important in the life of the Amana community or which are different from orthodox Protestant thought.

The first unique concept is the idea of two falls. The first fall was by Adam and was an inward fall. Satan tempted him in his soul, and Adam surrendered to false pride and self-destruction. The second fall was the traditional one with Eve and the consumption of the forbidden fruit. This second event was the outer fall of humanity in which it lost the image of God and took on the image of Satan, manifesting itself in pride, lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, envy, hatred, and wickedness. As a result of these falls, humanity is born into the world with original sin, lives in total depravity, and is destined to live a life of grief. God does not leave the human race in this condition, however, but has instituted a plan of redemption. The catechism says the period of time from the fall until the coming of Christ was 4,500

years. No explanation is offered for selecting this length of time.¹⁰

The concept of a double fall comes directly from Boehme. Before the fall Adam was androgynous, having both sexes, and could reproduce magically "without tearing and opening his body and spirit." Satan was jealous of Adam's creative ability and tempted him in his imagination or will to desire earthly things which led to his spiritual fall. In this fall he lost his magical creative ability and became filled with lust. God put Adam to sleep and divided his body into male and female with each having a passionate desire for the other. Reproductive methods were fashioned after the animals. Humanity became filled with vanity and the desires of a fallen imagination. This inward fall made the outward fall inevitable.¹¹

One cannot understand the attitude of the Amana Society toward marriage, sex, and child bearing without a proper understanding of this Boehmist concept of the fall. Adam had been in a place of special honor and possessed the magical powers of creation. Sex and marriage are a constant reminder of the terrible fall from this high

¹⁰Katechetischer Unterricht von der Lehre des Heils (Amana: Amana Society Press, 1909), 8-14.

¹¹Jakob Boehme, The Way to Christ, trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 145-48.

place. Humanity is now filled with vanity and animal passions. It has "become beasts in their bodies" with "bestial organs for reproduction, and the stinking intestines in which the desires of the flesh enclosed the vanity (nausea)." God has been very displeased with humanity since the fall.¹² Thus, to remain single is to avoid associating oneself with the taint of this whole disgusting mess. Another element involved in the Amana attitude toward marriage is that they perceive the single state to be better because it demonstrates one's ability to resist physical urges toward sex and shows a greater degree of self-control, a highly prized virtue among Pietists.

The Community of True Inspiration sees the plan of God's redemption falling into three economies or time periods: the economy of the Old Testament law and prophets, the economy of Jesus' ministry, and the economy of the grace work of inspiration.¹³ The major portion of the catechism explains these three periods. The discussion of the period of the law begins with the story

¹²Ibid., 149.

¹³The phrase Gnadenwerk der Inspiration or Gnadenwerk des Herrn is the most common designation by the Amana Society for God's dealing with them. The idea of grace work is found on almost every page of their historical account.

of Abraham and moves through the patriarchs. It is interesting to note that each Old Testament figure is described in pietistic terms as having the virtues Amana residents are urged to have, i.e., Abraham possessed purity and showed total obedience to God; Jacob and Esau were a contrast between godliness and worldliness; Joseph illustrated how one may have to suffer in God's grace, and so forth.

The catechism places emphasis on the Ten Commandments, an important part of Amana liturgy, but quickly points out that salvation is found only in Christ and not in keeping the law. The discussion shifts immediately to a presentation of the law of the Spirit, a central concern for Pietists. This law is "discipline and leading of the soul through the light of grace, or the knowledge of the will of God in the inner person."¹⁴

The second economy is the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The catechism presents an orthodox Protestant Christology with no surprises. It emphasizes the offices of Christ as King, High Priest, and Prophet, in that order. Amana writings frequently focus on the high priestly role of Christ.

¹⁴Katechetischer Unterricht, 21.

The twofold nature of sin is emphasized in the discussion of repentance. Not only must one realize the need to be forgiven of outward acts of sin but must also deal with the sin nature or "indwelling deep corruption of the human heart, a condition which is worthy of condemnation by a righteous and holy God."¹⁵ The believer must constantly be aware of this sin nature and guard against any manifestations of it in the outer life as s/he displays hate or disgust for all sin and a fervent longing for salvation.¹⁶

As the Old Testament characters provided examples of commendable virtues for the Amana believer, so, too, the lives of the New Testament apostles are worthy of consideration. These apostles illustrate the importance of a "deep humility and destruction of self through inner and outer suffering and battle" as good examples of true followers of Jesus Christ. Notice the Pietist concerns again. This section on the apostles ends by showing how, after giving the spiritual gift of apostle, God gave the gift of prophecy (I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11) which renews in the church age the important Old Testament

¹⁵Ibid., 29.

¹⁶Ibid., 30.

ministry of giving the divine word directly to God's people.¹⁷

The presentation on conversion offers several insights into Amana theology. It begins by placing a strong emphasis on God's prevenient grace at work in the human heart. Not only does God work "indirectly through the outer Word" of Scripture, but also "directly through the Spirit of God" who brings a person to a realization of his/her spiritual need which results in a deep cry of the heart for deliverance from the sentence of death. The reconciling blood of Jesus Christ stands as a mediator between a righteous God and the poor soul.

While salvation is by grace through faith, as Luther taught, there yet remains a strong emphasis on exercising free will in choosing this salvation. This emphasis is also found in Boehme who saw salvation gained through an act of the will. Ensign characterizes Boehme as saying, "He who, through God's grace, desires heaven, in that moment possesses it."¹⁸ A reinforcement of the free will concept is also found in the repudiation of any form of predestination both in Boehmist and Inspirationist thought.

¹⁷Ibid., 33-34.

¹⁸Ensign, 43.

In conversion the burden of sin is lifted and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is imparted to the human heart. Sin, however, remains in the flesh and must be struggled against daily in the lifelong process toward purity. (The concept of the process of purity [Reinigungsprozess] plays an extremely important role in Amana writings.) The idea of process in salvation is also strongly emphasized in Boehme's writings.¹⁹ The believer must remember that, because of free will, two ways are always available. The first is the "life of the cross and scorn of the world through mortification of the flesh and denial of oneself in a daily war against sin until the end of this earthly life." The second way is "the pleasure, love, and lust of the world" which leads one back into a life of sin. Because of free will, backsliding is always a possibility but can be avoided.²⁰

This section closes with a call to trust God and stay away from sin. Emphasis is particularly placed on denial of self, the world, and all that belongs to it. One should seek Christlike perfection. This is not by one's own power, but rather a gift of God's grace. Nevertheless, the believer must do his/her part in seeking

¹⁹Boehme, 240-41.

²⁰Kateschetischer Unterricht, 35-37.

to do right and in avoiding evil. Boehme said of this, "Heaven and hell are present everywhere." The difference "is only the changing of the will either into God's love or (into) wrath."²¹ The end of this process of purity is the salvation of the soul or being united with Christ for eternity.²²

The next section of the catechism deals with the means of grace. The discipline, or training of grace, in the believing soul is that feeling which one has in one's heart of God's pleasure or displeasure with the daily process of perfection. In this training one becomes increasingly aware of any indwelling sin and avoids it because it hinders the work of grace. The measure of grace can be increased by faithfulness in obedience in following the will of God and by rejection of all sin. It can be lost by disobedience, deception, or even small hindrances. The believer must constantly be on guard against these, for they can lead to spiritual death. It may be necessary for the Spirit to use outer suffering to break the power of sin and return the believer to the work of grace. The best guard one has is prayer and watchfulness, which leads to a serious war against sin and

²¹Boehme, 182.

²²Kateschetischer Unterricht, 38-40.

the enablement to distinguish daily between the work of grace and darkness. This whole concept of the discipline of grace plays a major role in the life of the Amana Society.²³

The baptism presentation discusses three types of baptism; the Inspirationists reject one and accept the other two. The first is water baptism. This is rejected as unnecessary, even a hindrance, to salvation. Baptism cannot make one a Christian any more than circumcision makes one a child of Abraham. Rejection of water baptism is one of the reasons they were persecuted in Germany.²⁴

The second type of baptism is with fire and the Spirit, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. This baptism plays an important place in Inspirationist thought as it initiates one into a life with Christ which leads to the third baptism with the cross and suffering. The believing soul, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, must follow Christ's example by suffering and dying. The "old man with all its lusts and desires" must die in the heart of the believer. This death comes through inner and outer suffering and

²³Ibid., 41-45.

²⁴Ibid., 45-46; Glaubensbekenntniss, 3.

oppression which "the soul submits to in patient perseverance and willful submission." There is no other way to salvation than by this narrow path.²⁵ This concept of following Christ's example is also found in Boehme. He said the believer must "put on" Christ, be tempted, crucified, and resurrected with Him. Self-will must die.²⁶ This doctrine presented a problem to the Amana Society at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries when suffering and oppression ceased to plague the community. Chapter III will discuss this more fully.

While the Inspirationists reject the sacrament of water baptism, they accept the celebration of the Lord's Supper. They do not partake of the elements as often as most Protestants, however, since at least two years pass between observances of the ritual. A full presentation of this practice will be given later in this chapter.

The justification discussion begins with a correction to the way most Protestants view the subject. The Inspirationists have the understanding that justification is not the work of God alone. A synergism is involved, so that the believing soul must cooperate

²⁵Ibid., 45-49.

²⁶Boehme, 182-84.

with God in the process by holding "the old man daily and hourly in judgment" so God's righteousness can shine through the "new man."

Consequently, they were opposed to a Lutheran concept of imputed righteousness with God imputing the merits of Christ to the believer. Righteousness necessarily involves a striving toward moral perfection. Emphasis is again placed on the process of purity as the concepts of justification and sanctification are united.²⁷ This union became one of the central themes of both the old and new communities of True Inspiration. The catechism's discussion of justification-sanctification sounds much like Boehme in "On True Resignation." He also saw the two concepts as two sides of the same coin in the process of purity.²⁸

The last discussion in the second economy deals with an interpretation of the history of Christianity as a fall away from God. The church, following the time of the apostles, created an atmosphere of "godly unity and simplicity in Christ Jesus." It later added heathen teachings which led a great number of Christians into "the night of superstition." The church drifted into dead

²⁷Kateschetischer Unterricht, 51-52.

²⁸Boehme, 114-36.

form, the use of images of saints, and the practice of meaningless ceremony. In the course of time, the church lost the true spirit of Jesus and turned toward evil. This interpretation of church history was popular with many separatist sects in eighteenth and nineteenth century Germany. The Community of True Inspiration probably adopted their ideas from Die erste Liebe by Gottfried Arnold.

God brought a new light into the church, however, through the Reformation under Luther and his fellow workers. The means of this new light was the Bible (both Old and New Testaments), which the Spirit of God made living and powerful, bringing new light and life to the awakening of many hearts. Unfortunately, after the Reformation people fell back into superstition, false freedom, and unbelief, which led to reason being placed on the throne. God responded to this by raising up preachers filled with the Holy Spirit, who exhibited great power and might in telling the world of God's displeasure. They experienced the hatred of the unrepentant who love darkness more than light. This opposition was good, for it indicated participation in the cosmic battle between good and evil which has gone on since the fall of humanity. However, in the divine plan, God will

ultimately break through the darkness with mighty light and truth.²⁹

This breakthrough has already occurred in salvation history as humanity entered the third economy, the grace work of Inspiration. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not cease with the writings of the Old and New Testaments. Rather, in these last days, it is more powerful than before. God raised up messengers in France, England, and Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who were new prophets, acting as trumpets of God to awaken Christianity out of its slumber. The purpose of this new "economy of the Spirit" is to bring God's people together in unity, to awaken sinners to repentance and new life, and to bind the true brotherhood together as in the book of Acts. This is a fulfillment of the prophecies found in Joel 3:1-2 and Isaiah 59:21; 60:1-2. The current Community of True Inspiration is dedicated to fulfilling this great promise of God's grace and stands as an open door to reveal God's will to the world.³⁰

²⁹Katechetischer Unterricht, 56-57. Radical Pietists usually accepted and sometimes welcomed persecution because it reinforced their conviction that they were on God's side and were being attacked by Satan's forces.

³⁰Ibid., 59-64.

The validity of this new word of inspiration, the catechism continues, can be proven both outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly, it agrees with the word of the Old Testament prophets; inwardly, it is validated by the sealing and confirmation of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Further, the new word of inspiration is accompanied with a godly power revealing the secrets of the heart and conscience, which only the Spirit of Jesus can do. It is for this reason the Inspirationist historical accounts emphasize the inspired leaders' ability to predict future events or to know facts s/he could not possibly have known without divine intervention. Such incidents were recounted to authenticate the inspired message.

This new word manifests itself in two ways. The first is through prophetic revelations from God which only a divinely appointed instrument or Werkzeug can give. These revelations are of two types. In Einsprache, or the written word, the Holy Spirit gives a message for the inspired instrument to write down. Metz and Heinemann both began with this gift. In Aussprache, or the spoken word, the Spirit gives a message for the prophet to speak directly. Aussprache is accompanied with unusual bodily movements and an alteration in the pitch of the prophet's voice. Because of the importance of these divine messages, scribes accompanied a Werkzeug at all times and recorded every message received in inspiration. These

testimonies, as they were called, were bound into volumes and have been read both privately and publicly by the Community of True Inspiration from the time of their utterance to this day.

The second way this new word manifests itself is through the "inner word" which every believer can receive. The catechism gives only a brief explanation of this inner word but refers the reader to E. L. Gruber's "Instruction on the Inner Word" which explains the concept in detail. Gruber makes his presentation of "Instruction on the Inner Word" in the form of forty-one questions and answers, using numerous Scriptures to explain his position. He defines the inner word as "nothing other than God's direct, friendly conversation in Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit with His children and all who believe truly and profoundly, to their daily instruction, and to their eternal salvation."³¹

Actually, the inner word is present in all people, though it operates in different ways. In the unconverted the inner word is present as "God's judgmental voice within the soul," bringing conviction for sin. In the

³¹E. L. Gruber, Teachings About God's Inner Word, trans. Janet Zuber (Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Company, 1981), 51.

heart of the believer, this word is present as a "loving father's voice," bringing joy and peace.³²

The inner word in the heart of the believer is also known as the direction of the Holy Spirit for the daily decisions of life. The more one responds to this voice, the clearer it becomes. Gruber goes into great detail explaining how one recognizes and responds to this inner word. His method of preparation for receiving this word is worth noting.

1. Advancement of one's consciousness so as to become more singularly God-aware
2. Renunciation of love for the material and transient
3. Virtue and moderation
4. Genuine cheerfulness and alertness
5. Constant attentiveness toward the God-determined time and hour of revelation
6. Praying unceasingly with a constant sighing and thirsting for grace.³³

Gruber explains this doctrine of the inner word as best he can but finally comes to the conclusion that it "is better explained by experience than words."³⁴

The last section of the presentation on the third economy of inspiration explains the purpose of the Community of True Inspiration and how it relates to other

³²Ibid., 53-54.

³³Ibid., 64-65.

³⁴Ibid., 55.

Christian congregations. The overarching goal of the community is that Christ, the hope of glory, will be established in the heart of every believer associated with their fellowship. The means of this establishment is through repentance and a change of mind, faith in Jesus Christ, a striving after purity and sanctification, and becoming firmly fixed in the pure love of God and others. While Inspirationists believe they have a better way to God than any other denomination or religious group, they do not see theirs as the only way. Rather, the true Body of Christ is invisible or spiritual and found "among all Christian individuals and parties."³⁵

Inspirationists referred to the established church which was dead in formal ritual and doctrine as "Babel," a common designation of Boehme. Boehme writes, "I only point to the hypocritical whore of Babylon who pursues her whoring with the stone church, and calls herself Christian when she is a whore-brat."³⁶ While the Community of True Inspiration did not call the established church a "whore-brat," it did adopt the tower of Babel analogy from Boehme³⁷ and separated itself from the church. They

³⁵Katechetischer Unterricht, 68-76.

³⁶Boehme, 163.

³⁷Ibid., 157, 162-65.

frequently stated they did not want to be thought of as a sect, but rather as brothers and sisters of the invisible and universal church of Jesus Christ.

The catechism closes with a discussion of eschatology. The most obvious omission is a detailed presentation of the millennial reign of Christ, an important part of many other radical German Pietist theologies. This document treats the subject simply by quoting Revelation 20:4-6 and saying there will be a first resurrection of the saints, followed by a thousand-year reign of Christ, and finally a general resurrection of all people for judgment. This brief statement indicates that millennial notions did not occupy a significant place in the theology of this community. An examination of much of their other writings nets the same finding.

One concept that is developed in the eschatology presentation is the idea of the mark of the beast. This mark will appear at the end of time and, in fact, may already be evidenced in our society today. People are currently carrying the mark in subtle ways without realizing it. Such subtleties include "great fleshly certainty, pride, display of clothing, vain honor of the flesh, independence, and worldly or unfair profit, not to mention crude vices and horrible wickedness" of the

world.³⁸ Inspirationists were constantly warned by their leaders to guard against these evils in their lives.

The eschatology discussion continues with a presentation of the concepts of heaven and hell. Those who accept Christ's salvation and persevere to the end will go to heaven, where there will be degrees of reward according to the life lived on earth. The unrepentant will go to hell, but not for eternity, as explained in the final doctrinal presentation of the eternal restoration of all things.

According to the eternal restoration doctrine, there are two fires of purification. The first is by grace in this life; the second is by anger and punishment after death. Yet, what of the phrase "eternal punishment" in Scripture? The Inspirationist response is that even the scriptural word "eternity" must have its limits when applied to hell. The redeeming power of the blood and death of Jesus Christ reaches even to the fallen spirits of the visible and invisible world and brings them, in the course of many eternities, back to their origin, i.e., God. Sin had a beginning, and, therefore, must have an end. This will all be accomplished so that "God may be all in all" (I Corinthians 15:28). The Community of True

³⁸Katechetischer Unterricht, 78.

Inspiration read the writings of Johann and Johanna Petersen on eternal restoration and most likely adopted this concept from them and from the corresponding Philadelphian influence which pervaded Germany at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The closing comment of the catechism regarding eternal restoration is that, while it is scriptural, many people do not believe it. Therefore, this "high and important secret of God" will remain hidden and unknown.³⁹ It is noteworthy that while the doctrine remained part of their official theology, no mention of it is made in Amana writings. The leaders either inherited something they did not understand or else did not find it supportive of other doctrines they wanted to emphasize. A discussion of this problem will follow in chapter III.

The Confession of Faith

The third document which presents the beliefs of the Amana Society is the Glaubensbekenntniss or Confession of Faith. This document had its origin in the heat of persecution. Local citizens of Darmstadt asked government officials to inspect Inspirationist schools during the spring of 1839. The community presented this statement of

³⁹Ibid., 84.

faith to the Ministry at Darmstadt in April of that same year to further inform the officials of their beliefs. No decision on the matter was reached by the time the community left for America in 1843. The Confession of Faith remains in print today for the education and edification of Amana Church Society members.

Der Glauben is presented first, followed by a consideration of each doctrine. Attention has already been given to the Inspirationist positions on water baptism, communion, and inspiration. Regarding confirmation, children of the community were to be instructed by parents and teachers for an early knowledge of Scripture and virtuous living. Sometime between the ages of fourteen and sixteen a child appeared before the public assembly and promised to follow the Covenant of Faith and "The Twenty-Four Rules Of True Godliness." The only other ritual involved in confirmation was for the child to shake hands with all elders present in the service.⁴⁰

While the majority of the group practiced marriage, it was an accepted state only after certain stipulations were met. First, marriage was to be entered into only after serious consideration. If a couple

⁴⁰Glaubensbekenntniss, 3-4.

decided they wanted to proceed with it, they asked the elders' approval of the wedding. The man had to be twenty-four years of age and the woman twenty-one to make application. They were then assigned an engagement period, usually a year in the nineteenth century, but reduced to as little as three months in the twentieth. The length of engagement depended largely on their ages.

Next, the individuals were resettled into different villages during the engagement period to test their love. If the desire to marry was still present after the probationary period had expired, the ceremony was performed. The intent of this procedure was to keep a high respect for matrimony and dissuade any who were not entirely serious from entering into the bond. Inspirationists always felt the single state was more spiritual and frequently quoted Paul's statement in I Corinthians 7:38, "Marriage is good, but to remain unmarried is better." They felt a single person could be more consecrated to the service of the Lord.⁴¹

The community took its stand against oath taking on the basis of Matthew 5:34, 37 and James 5:12. It will be recalled that this was one of the central charges brought against the Inspirationists by the civil and

⁴¹Ibid., 4-5.

ecclesiastical authorities in Germany. Instead of taking an oath, they shook hands as a promise of their truthfulness. While lying is perjury against civil authorities, they believed taking an oath is perjury against God.⁴²

Inspirationists pledged themselves to be loyal and obedient to civil authorities and to pray for the government. They followed this principle with great conviction in Amana, as will be shown later. While it is not officially stated here, it might be added that an unwritten amendment to this principle was that they pledged loyalty to civil authorities as long as those authorities did not make requests contrary to their religious beliefs.⁴³

The next section of this document deals with the organization and operation of the society. These functions were placed in the hands of elders, who were selected by the inspired leader as long as s/he lived and were approved by current elders. After the death of Barbara Heinemann Landmann, the last inspired leader, elders were selected by the Great Council from a nominating list drawn up by the head trustee of a

⁴²Ibid., 5-6.

⁴³Ibid.

particular village where that elder was to serve. It was the responsibility of the elders to look after the spiritual and material affairs of the society.

There were two governing bodies of elders. The first, known as the Bruderrath or Council of Elders, took responsibility for each village. It was composed of all the elders of the village. The two leaders of the local council were the Head Elder, who looked after spiritual affairs, and the Resident Trustee who watched over the business concerns. This council made management decisions for the village businesses and labor force, heard requests regarding housing, allotments, etc., made arrangements for the various local church services, and considered courses of action for problems with the membership. Each local council was responsible for the operation of that particular village, but it ultimately answered to a central authority in the form of the Great Council or Grosser Bruderrath.

The Great Council was the highest authority in the Amana Society. It was composed of thirteen members⁴⁴ who were elected annually from the local eldership by a popular vote of the entire membership of the society.

⁴⁴This number was selected to equal that of Christ and the apostles.

Though an election was held in November of each year, it was an unwritten rule that no elder was ever voted out of office! Thus, election into the Great Council became an appointment for life. This governing body watched the affairs of the local villages and maintained a balance between the profits and losses of the various businesses, made management decisions, scheduled and made arrangements for the special religious services of the society, watched over the spiritual life of the community, and heard petitions brought before them. These petitions ranged from requests from outsiders to join the society to local residents wanting permission to marry.

"The Twenty-Four Rules"

The fourth major document of the Community of True Inspiration is "The Twenty-Four Rules for True Godliness." This material was received in inspiration by E. L. Gruber's son, Johann Adam Gruber, at Büdingen on July 4, 1716. It played an important role in the original community and was adopted into the new community at the suggestion of Peter Mook in the spring of 1820. The rules are currently in their second English translation and remain an important document for the Amana faith today. The following is a brief summary of each rule.

1. Remove all crude or subtle idols from your heart.
2. Have nothing to do with crude sins or sinners or subtle sins within or without. Do not idly waste time, which steals time away from God.

3. Live an exemplary life before outsiders. "But most of all, avoid associations, which hinder growth toward godliness."
4. Develop a sensitive conscience and be open to the Spirit's leading for your life.
5. Refrain from all falseness, lying, and hypocrisy for God will give the gift of discernment to the community elders in order that they might point out such inconsistencies in your life.
6. Do not envy the talents which the Lord has given another member of the community.
7. Guard against malice toward one another, which all are prone to have.
8. Accept physical and spiritual suffering, sorrow, and tribulation which make your faith stronger.
9. There should be no suspicion, mistrust, or taking of offense of fellow members. Each should be an example for the others.
10. Devote yourself to achieving inward and outward calm.
11. These rules are actually a covenant with God which must be kept sacred and true.
12. Become a love slave of God and do not give in to negligence, idleness, or laziness.
13. The husband is the head of the household and should be a good spiritual example for his wife and children.
14. Train your children in the ways of godliness and virtue that they may grow up to serve God.
15. Remain steadfast and do not grow weary in your spiritual work.
16. Children should be raised hearing good reports about the church services from their parents.
17. God wants to fill your heart with the everlasting love of the Holy Spirit and to abide and work in you.
18. Visitors are to be welcomed to the services if they are of good intention, but if they are abusive, hypocritical, sarcastic, and unrepentant, they are not to be admitted.
19. If visitors desire to come back, acquaint them with your rules and doctrine and see if they are sincerely concerned for their souls. Guard against wolves who will get in and scatter the sheep.
20. When new members join the community, watch their lives to see that they measure up to their profession and promise.
21. The elders will frequently visit the members of the Community and point out any lacking in their lives. If a person does not heed the warning,

- s/he shall be expelled from services for awhile.
22. Accept the warnings and reprimands of the fellowship so that pride does not enter in and embitter your soul.
 23. Do not allow religious observances to become a routine but rather make them meaningful and earnestly seek a love that will unite the fellowship.
 24. Members are to promise publicly before the assembly⁴⁵ that they will keep these twenty-four rules.

A quick perusal indicates that, rather than being statements of theology, these rules are admonitions for personal piety and harmony within home and community. The rules are evenly divided between personal and social concerns. References will be made in subsequent chapters to several of these rules as they apply to the life of the society.

"The Twenty-One Rules"

The final document for consideration is "The Twenty-One Rules For The Examination Of Our Daily Lives" written by E. L. Gruber in 1715. This set of rules, as with the former, deals more with ethical practice than doctrinal belief. The rules illustrate the kinds of pietistic concerns which dominated both the old and new Communities Of True Inspiration. While they are not printed today as part of Amana's religious instruction,

⁴⁵Johann Adam Gruber, "The Twenty-Four Rules for True Godliness" (Amana: Amana Church Society, 1985).

they are still revered as part of their heritage. The following is an unabridged presentation of The Twenty-One Rules:

1. Obey, without reasoning, God, and through God your superiors.
2. Study quiet, or serenity, within and without.
3. Within, to rule and master your thoughts.
4. Without, to avoid all unnecessary words, and still to study silence and quiet.
5. Abandon self, with all its desires, knowledge and power.
6. Do not criticize others, either for good or evil, neither to judge nor to imitate them; therefore contain yourself, remain at home, in the house and in your heart.
7. Do not disturb your serenity or peace of mind--hence neither desire nor grieve.
8. Live in love and pity toward your neighbor, and indulge neither anger nor impatience in your heart.
9. Be honest, sincere, and avoid all deceit and even secretiveness.
10. Count every word, thought, and work as done in the immediate presence of God, in sleeping and waking, eating, drinking, etc., and give Him at once an account of it, to see if all is done in His fear and love.
11. Be in all things sober, without levity or laughter; and without vain and idle words, works, or thoughts; much less heedless or idle.
12. Never think or speak of God without the deepest reverence, fear, and love, and therefore deal reverently with all spiritual things.
13. Bear all inner and outward sufferings in silence, complaining only to God; and accept all from Him in deepest reverence and obedience.
14. Notice carefully all that God permits to happen to you in your inner and outward life, in order that you may not fail to comprehend His will and to be led by it.
15. Have nothing to do with unholy and particularly with needless business affairs.
16. Have no intercourse with worldly-minded men; never seek their society; speak little with them, and never without need; and then not without fear and trembling.
17. Therefore, what you have to do with such men do in haste; do not waste time in public places and

worldly society, that you be not tempted and led away.

18. Fly from the society of women-kind as much as possible, as a very highly dangerous magnet and magical fire.
19. Avoid obeisance and the fear of men; these are dangerous ways.
20. Dinners, weddings, feasts, avoid entirely; at the best there is sin.
21. Constantly practice abstinence and temperance, so that you may be as wakeful after eating as before.⁴⁶

The usual Pietist concerns of serenity, honesty, self-abandonment, temperance, reverence, holiness, and watchfulness are found here. Several of these admonitions influenced the Amana life style. For example, rule one on obeying superiors became an important part of the authority base of the communal system. Rule seven's directive to "neither desire nor grieve" had the double duty of reprimanding those members who got their eyes on material possessions and of helping members maintain an even emotional posture through extreme difficulties. In reading the historical accounts of life in Amana one soon realizes that these people took this admonition to heart and had an amazing composure in the face of some very extreme circumstances. This virtue is still characteristic of Amana residents today.

⁴⁶Shambaugh, Amana That Was, 243-44.

Rule eight on loving one's neighbor and withholding anger was important in the communal days when hundreds of people worked and lived so closely together. They got along with an amazing harmony and cooperation as they practiced this rule. Reverence for God and spiritual things, as stated in rule twelve, was always a part of the community mindset. Even the most rebellious member did not act irreverently toward God or the church. Rule fourteen became an important gauge for judging God's pleasure or displeasure with the individual or society. Examples of this will be highlighted in chapter III. The isolation desired by the community when it came to America was not because they thought they were better or holier than other people, but, rather, as rules sixteen and seventeen indicate, because they feared such associations would distract them from their spiritual striving, which was the very reason for living on this earth.

Rule eighteen has received a great deal of attention in Amana research. It is sometimes cited in relationship to Amana positions on marriage.⁴⁷ As has already been stated, it is more likely that community views on marriage stem from Boehmist sources rather than

⁴⁷Barthel, 7.

from statements like this one.⁴⁸ It is possible to interpret this rule in the same category as the two rules which precede it, i.e., that spending too much time with the opposite sex in meaningless conversation and activity takes the keen edge off of more spiritual concerns. This interpretation seems more likely since both E. L. Gruber and his son J. A. were married and had children. Furthermore, Amana's views on marriage are far more developed than such a brief statement would warrant.

Worship in the Amana Society

Religion for the Amana Society was not only doctrines to be believed, and an ethic to be practiced, as this chapter has shown, but it was also a life to be lived. An important feature of living their faith was involvement in the many regular and special worship services of the society. The Inspirations-Historie gives detailed accounts of these many services from the beginning of the new community until well into the twentieth century. Much can be learned about their public worship from a study of these accounts. The following is a list and brief description of these public assemblies.

⁴⁸The term "magical fire" is a phrase of Boehme.

Regular Worship Services

Regular worship services were held eleven times a week in the Amana Colonies. Morning services were held on Sunday, Wednesday, and Saturday. A service was held on Sunday afternoon, and evening services were conducted every day of the week. The evening prayer services, called Nachtgebet, met informally for about fifteen minutes and were regarded by members as a peaceful way to close the day.⁴⁹ The morning and afternoon services were more formal with a standardized order of worship. These services lasted about an hour, sometimes a little longer.⁵⁰ Each service contained congregational singing from the Psalterenspiel (the official Amana hymnal) without instruments, public reading of Scripture with comments by the elders, prayer with the congregation on its knees, a recitation of the Lord's Prayer and Der Glauben, and readings from the inspired testimonies. When an inspired leader was living and present in a service, the

⁴⁹F. B., Oral History interview 27, Interview by E. H., March 20, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 10. The Amana Heritage Society has requested that initials be used instead of names since many of the individuals interviewed are still living and wish to remain anonymous.

⁵⁰M. B., Oral History interview 55, Interview by C. Z., March 7, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 8.

proceedings were often interrupted at any given point for the presentation of a new inspired word from the Lord. These were not to be anticipated, but viewed as a special visitation of the Lord's presence. Elders presided over the services in rotation, so no elder was in charge of a particular congregation. These same elements are still present in Amana worship services today, though the order has changed over the years.

Along with the regularly scheduled services, the community also had a special service on Ascension, Pentecost, and Thanksgiving Days. They had daily morning services during Passion Week, a two-day celebration of Easter, and a two-day celebration of Christmas. These are in addition to other special services which will be discussed under separate headings later in this chapter.

Worship services were conducted very reverently. Men gathered at one entrance to the church building, women at the other. At the appointed time they rang a bell and entered the sanctuary through their respective doors. All talking ceased and did not resume until everyone exited the building. Men sat on one side of the building, women on the other, in the order of their age, with children in front.

The church building itself reflected an attitude of reverence and simplicity. It was a rectangular structure with windows all around. The walls were painted

white or pale blue. Floors were made of plain hardwood. The only objects in the sanctuary were simply constructed wooden benches placed parallel to the long wall, divided by a center aisle and a table at the center of the room facing the congregation. The elders present in the service sat behind the table with the oldest one at the center.⁵¹

Dress for worship also represented reverence for the Lord. Men wore their best suit of clothing, which was always made of dark, plain cloth and fashioned without any stylish characteristics. Women wore a particular garb which had the intention of preventing the sisters from becoming competitive in their manner and style of dress. Over their simple calico print dresses they wore a black apron and shawl with a black bonnet on their heads. One complaint by some of the members was that this particular dress for worship meant they had to change clothes as much as three times in one day!⁵² The traditional dress is still worn to worship services by Amana women today.

⁵¹The building and rituals surrounding the worship service remain the same today.

⁵²E. B., Oral History interview 33, Interview by W. R., February 25, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 13.

The congregation did not always meet together for services. Many of the gatherings were divided into three spiritual orders or Versammlungen of the community. The divisions were based on a combination of age and perceived piety. The first group consisted of those deemed most spiritual and carried the minimum age of thirty-five for admittance. The members of the second group were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five, with the third group containing the members ages fifteen to twenty-five. Children were involved in a training session similar to Sunday school during these divided services. The groups met in various homes or the church building.

Members were promoted and demoted between the divisions for various reasons. Promotions were usually made on the basis of age if there were no violations of the principles of the society. Demotions were made for discipline of some offense, for marriage, or for childbearing. The demotion usually lasted one year and reminded the members of the standard of ethics by which all agreed to live. Demotions for marriage and childbearing did not carry immoral connotations but reflected adherence to Boehmist teachings on the issues. These demotions were a regular practice of the society since about seventy-five percent of the members married and had children.

The division of the community into three groups was a carry-over from the eighteenth-century community. The former society used the groupings a little differently, however. The old community adopted the plan in 1717. The first group was for those completely convinced of the doctrine of inspiration. The second was for inquirers who were not sure about inspiration but wanted to learn more. The third was reserved for children and the spiritually immature.⁵³

Special Annual Observances

In addition to the regularly scheduled services and the special-day observances, the community had other rituals which they practiced throughout the year. The following is a brief description of each, in the order in which they occurred. The new year always began with Unterredung or the annual Spiritual Examination in which each member of the society stood before the elders and gave an account of his/her spiritual life. Unterredung was practiced in the eighteenth-century community, but the practice underwent a significant evolution by the time it was adopted into the new community.

⁵³Ensign, 305.

The practice began in May 1716 at the suggestion of E. L. Gruber. In this original group a member stood before the elders and responded to the following four questions:

1. Do you regard yourself as a true member of the following of Jesus Christ and outwardly as a member of this prayer-assembly and do you intend to uphold its precepts?
2. Are you prepared, therefore, to endure all inward and outward difficulty and, through God's grace, confidently venture all, even if it should be love and life, thereon?
3. Have you acquired belief in the Divine Work and Word of Inspiration and, inasmuch, will you subject and submit yourself to be purified and sanctified thereby?
4. Are you unreconciled or in a state of adversity with any Brother or Sister; and do you have anything to say against anyone; or does anyone have anything to mention about you?⁵⁴

After asking the last question, the elders then noted any observable inconsistencies in the life of the member being examined and made admonitions for improvement. These comments were recorded and bound into volumes. Some of these volumes are currently housed in the Amana Heritage Society museum. Scheuner writes of this practice,

All of the elders present, in addition to older favoured members, both Brothers and Sisters, had the right to freely, and in accordance with their knowledge, question anyone, from the first elder

⁵⁴Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1714-1728, 51-52.

to the last member, about anything which they regarded as being unjust or objectionable.⁵⁵

The practice of examination was first instituted as new members joined the community because "This 'now and then,' or half with the community and half with the world, should now cease . . ."⁵⁶ It soon became an opportunity for the elders to correct members in any way they saw fit. An example of this is noted in the case of E. L. Gruber finding two of the community leaders, J. L. Gleim and J. A. Gruber, guilty of "a subtle state of selfishness and self-exaltation." They did not accept the judgment and eventually both withdrew from the community.⁵⁷

Unterredung was practiced in the new community in a different way. The various spiritual orders were further divided into small groups or Abteilungen for appearance before the elders. In the course of the service, each member confessed to the elders a shortcoming or sin committed in the past year. After each member had confessed, each of the elders present admonished the group to make spiritual improvements in their lives. Thus, the shift was made in the new community from the elders

⁵⁵Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1729-1817, 137.

⁵⁶Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1714-1728, 50.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 95.

pointing out individuals' faults to the members confessing them. At the conclusion of the service, the elder in charge said, "Now all of you can declare yourselves about how you have accepted it [the admonition]," to which the members responded, "I am grateful for the admonition of the elder in charge."⁵⁸

This procedure continued through all of the Abteilungen until each member of the village had been examined. This, of course, took several days. The whole event for that village ended with a General Concluding Service (Allgemeine Schlussversammlung) for all the members. Unterredung then moved on to the next village. It took about eight to ten weeks to complete the rounds of all the Amana villages.

The next special service was Liebesmahl or the Lord's Supper, which was considered to be the most sacred ceremony of the church calendar. It was so sacred, in fact, that the historical records indicate a great deal of concern by the elders over the spiritual fitness of the community before its celebration. Special meetings of the elders were held to make arrangements, and a special service was conducted for members to prepare their hearts for the event. This preparation was often used by the

⁵⁸Andelson, 128.

inspired leader, or the elders, as a means of control for the community. They would declare that unless practices or attitudes changed, no communion celebration would be held that year. This usually brought the desired improvements. After the death of Metz in 1867, Liebesmahl was held on even-numbered years. Prior to this it had been held whenever directed by the Lord through inspiration.

The first communion service was held by the Inspirationists in December 1714 with four more services scheduled over the next two years. The first and the last were in Schwarzenau; the others in Ronneburg and Büdingen. They did not have it again for one hundred and one years, for no apparent reason other than they were not directed by the Lord to do so. Andelson notes that communion was celebrated twice from 1860 until Metz's death in 1867 (December 1860 and April 1865).⁵⁹ It became a regular part of the biennial spring calendar from 1868 until 1930. Details of the 1930 celebration will be presented in chapter III.

A third specially scheduled event was Kinderlehre. This event was observed with a service in each village for the children and members of the third congregation. It

⁵⁹Ibid., 122.

was scheduled in the spring and fall of odd-numbered years and in fall only of even-numbered years, due to Liebesmahl. The purpose of the service was to remind those in attendance of the importance of spiritual considerations and to encourage them to be faithful to the precepts of their faith.

The fourth special service was Bundesschliessung or Covenant Renewal which has been held in the Amana Colonies on Thanksgiving Day since 1866. This service was a time for members to reflect on their personal commitment to the covenant of the community⁶⁰ and to renew their vows with God. Members were urged to hold tightly to their faith and guard against attacks from within and without. All society members over the age of fifteen attended the service which began with a testimony from Christian Metz:

I, the Lord, will accept your pledge and Covenant. I will hear the affirmation of your complete surrender. However, it has to be without prejudice, without any reserve, quite complete, pure, sincere, humble and submissive. . . . Oh, what deep humility is required for the soul-saving goal that lies ahead. . . . Therefore, be mindful today of your solemn Covenant duty which you are about to accept.⁶¹

⁶⁰This covenant was defined as the "Confession of Faith" and "The Twenty-Four Rules for True Godliness" discussed above.

⁶¹Christian Metz, "Testimony 62," Jahrbucher, Vol. 9 (Amana Society Press, 1855), 250.

Readings were then given from Deuteronomy 29 and 30 where Moses addressed the Israelites regarding their covenant with the Lord. This covenant ended with promises of blessing and cursing according to the faithfulness of God's people. These same admonitions and promises were then given to the Amana members. The service closed with the elders shaking hands with each other, followed by a congregational procession shaking hands with each of the elders. This service was also the occasion for confirmation, where children, having reached the age of fifteen, took part in the ceremony for the first time. Confirmation was the time a child accepted personal responsibility for the covenant the community had made with the Lord.

The first Covenant Renewal Service was held in Büdingen on July 5, 1716, the day following the inspired reception of "The Twenty-Four Rules For True Godliness" by J. A. Gruber. This document became the covenant of the community as stated in rule eleven. It was to be renewed annually. Services were held on different dates according to the direction of inspiration for many years. In November 1866, Metz received a testimony from the Lord establishing the date of the celebration on national Thanksgiving Day. That date is still used in Amana today.

The final special activity of the community was the Conference of Elders (Aeltesten Konferenz). This was

held in the fall of odd-numbered years and served the dual purpose of allowing the elders to examine the spiritual progress of one another and to assess the spiritual condition of the whole community as it prepared for the upcoming spiritual examination services. The conference originated with the eighteenth-century community and was adopted by the nineteenth-century group with the same purpose and format.

This concludes the presentation of the doctrines and worship patterns of the Amana Society. A proper understanding of these is absolutely necessary for an analysis of the changes which occurred in the life of the community from 1867 until 1932, the designated period for this study. Many misinterpretations of these changes have been offered due to a lack of understanding Inspirationist doctrines. The analyses in subsequent chapters will be based on this doctrinal foundation.

CHAPTER III

LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE IN THE COMMUNITY

This chapter will examine styles of leadership and changes in communal living in the Amana Society from 1867 to 1932. It will not attempt to present all of the significant events of this period but only those events which had an impact on the community's religion. Some of the material may be found in other studies, but much of it is new. This presentation moves chronologically through the period with an analysis following in chapter IV.

Christian Metz had led the community since the early days of the reawakening. His wise and consistent leadership had given the community stability through its many transitions. The death of Metz brought yet another transition. The elders were greatly concerned about continuation of the community in Metz's absence. However, this transition was made rather smoothly for several reasons.

First, Metz's leadership style had been to equip others to do the work of the community. Therefore, his legacy to it was a host of elders prepared to carry on the grace work of the Lord (Gnadenwerk des Herrn). Second, Metz had led in such a way as to direct the allegiance of

the membership toward the community itself, rather than toward himself. Many sects and communal groups suffer a major crisis or dissolution upon the death of their charismatic leader because allegiance is so strongly directed toward that leader.¹

The third reason for an orderly transition was that the organization of community leadership through the elders was well established and fully prepared to continue in the future without a strong central figure. Metz had already begun the process of standardizing dates of religious services previously scheduled through inspiration. Thus, he left his community in a familiar routine.

The final reason for the smooth transition was that Barbara Heinemann Landmann, the other inspired leader in the community, lived on. While she represented the continued direction of the Lord in the society, she did not step into the position of authority vacated by Metz. No one ever filled that position in the hearts of the members. Nevertheless, until her death in 1883, Landmann was the sole inspired instrument in the Amana Society.

¹This was true of The Woman in the Wilderness when Johannes Kelpius died and the Zoar Community when Joseph Michael Baumler died. Durnbaugh, 73-83.

Leadership Of
Barbara Heinemann Landmann

The week following Metz's death was a period of inactivity in his honor. The Great Council met on August 6, 1867, and gave the first indication that Landmann would not fully replace Metz. The elders decided at that meeting they would meet the first Tuesday of every month, with extra meetings to be called when necessary. Under Metz's leadership, the Great Council had only met when directed by inspiration. Landmann never had the authority to call these meetings. She attended the council meetings, but could not vote, since women were not elected elders in the community.²

Establishing Her Authority

Landmann attempted to establish her niche in the authority structure as soon as Metz died. In the week ending August 10, she gave eight inspired testimonies. This was the highest number of testimonies ever recorded in one week, except during a series of special services. Gottlieb Scheuner interpreted this phenomenon as an indication of a new might and power coming on Landmann for the spiritual leadership of the community. Later in the

²Gottlieb Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1867-1876 (Amana Society Press, 1900), 7-8.

year he commented that God was giving her a "higher grace and godly power" for leadership.³ Whatever the reasons for the increased number of testimonies, members were certainly aware of the fact that Landmann was now the sole inspired leader.

The message of Landmann's testimonies was somewhat characteristic of the emphasis stressed throughout her rule. The message related a "great outbreak of the anger and passion of the Lord in great displeasure" at the spiritual condition of the Amana people.⁴ One reads more about the burning anger of God during Landmann's leadership than at any other time in Amana's history.

Shortly after Metz's death, Landmann moved from Homestead to Main Amana due to its central location on the property. Main Amana was the hub of activity for the colonies, and Metz had lived and ruled from there. The record does not indicate, however, that Landmann's husband, George, did not move with her. It was common knowledge in the society that they did not have a good marital relationship. Her new role as chief spiritual

³Ibid., 9, 22.

⁴Ibid.

leader of the community made the separation convenient with this move.⁵

As 1867 drew to a close, the community attempted to get back on schedule with its annual religious observances. The illness and death of Metz had forced the cancellation of several services. With life returning to normal, Covenant Renewal was held on Thanksgiving Day, as scheduled, and gave the members an opportunity to seek the renewed blessing of the Lord on their lives.⁶

Scheuner labeled 1868 the beginning of a new era as the community entered its first year under the leadership of Landmann and the Great Council. There was obviously some discontent with this new arrangement. Members were urged to seek a revival in their hearts and not doubt or question authority while the community found its way with the new arrangement.⁷ There was a comment later in the year that strife and discord among the members were bringing hard times to the spiritual work. Such members were judged as not being "in the Lord" but rather "in the flesh." They were urged to deny themselves and make a self-sacrifice of heart and will as they

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., 24, 27-28.

⁷Ibid., 34-35.

submitted to the overall leadership direction of the community.⁸

One of the ways Landmann and the elders sought to convince the membership that their direction was truly from God was to get Christian Metz's approval of their decisions. Thus, they told the people how Metz appeared to them in dreams and gave his blessing to the ways they were directing the community in his absence. Numerous examples of this phenomenon may be found in the historical record.⁹

Another way Landmann augmented her leadership in the community was through an increased number of inspired testimonies. Andelson observes that her output of testimonies tripled after the death of Metz. The location and audience of the testimonies also changed after Metz's death. Whereas Metz was likely to give a testimony spontaneously to any size group on any occasion, Landmann usually gave her testimonies in general church services, where most of the members were present, or to the elders in the Great Council meetings. She soon established a pattern for her testimonies which suggested less

⁸Ibid., 88-89.

⁹Ibid., 74; Gottlieb Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1884-1891 (Amana: Amana Society Press, 1918), 9-10, 25, 82, 121.

spontaneity and may have sacrificed some of the awe of inspiration. The people could almost predict when an inspired message would be given by Landmann.¹⁰

In fact, the members of the society came to expect a testimony to be given on the appropriate occasion. This expectation was completely out of touch with the eighteenth-century community which regarded a testimony as an exception rather than the rule of a worship service. Nevertheless, members of the Amana Society became concerned if an expected testimony did not occur and perceived it as the displeasure of the Lord. Such concern was expressed after the Covenant Renewal service in November 1881 when Landmann failed to give an inspired testimony.¹¹

A decision rendered in inspiration always carried more authority than one made by human reason alone. Thus, most of Landmann's decisions regarding community affairs were made in inspiration. The three most common decisions dealt with appointments to office, reprimands of members for misbehavior, and the scheduling of special services.¹²

¹⁰Andelson, 283.

¹¹Gottlieb Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1877-1883 (Amana: Amana Society Press, 1916), 316-17.

¹²Andelson, 283.

Such decisions were to be accepted without question; this was not always the case, however, with Landmann. Metz had led the people in such a way that community members followed him almost without question. This was due not to blind obedience but to his reputation for making decisions that were sensible and fair. The people followed him because they felt he was making the wisest decisions for the greater good of the community. Furthermore, he gave his directives in such a humble and gentle manner that they did not meet combative resistance from the members.

Landmann did not find members as receptive to her leadership. It could be argued that she met more resistance simply because she was a woman. There could be some truth to that since the elders allowed her to rule "with" but not "over" them as Metz had done. It has already been shown how they protected their authority with the scheduling of monthly meetings immediately following the death of Metz. Yet, something more was involved in the resistance to Landmann's leadership. For one thing, she had an abrasive personality which brought her into conflicts with both elders and members. It was not uncommon for her to pass judgment on an individual, call that person crude names, and expel him or her from the worship services for a period of time. Many people felt

Landmann became too personal in her attacks, and consequently they questioned their validity.¹³

Another problem was that Landmann's decisions sometimes seemed unreasonable or unnecessary. For example, at one point she ordered that no flowers or non-fruit-bearing trees could be grown on the property. They served only the purpose of vanity and offered nothing productive for the community. The members objected to the ruling, and the flowers and trees remained. All in all, there was far more dissatisfaction with the leadership of Landmann than had been the case with Metz.

God's Displeasure With Amana

One of the results of the resistance of the members to Landmann's leadership was that the Lord was often displeased with the community, according to messages sent through divine inspiration. It has already been noted that Landmann's first testimonies after Metz's death expressed the great anger of the Lord against Amana. This became a common theme. The historical records for the decade of 1870 indicate that God threatened the community frequently with grave consequences if it did not show improvements. Andelson observes that Landmann spoke often

¹³Andelson, 289-92.

of God's goodness,¹⁴ which is true, but such statements were usually made in contrast to the lowliness of the members and how far short they were falling of God's expected standard for their lives.

The displeasure of the Lord at an individual in particular or the community in general was often evidenced by calamities such as a fire or even the death of one of the members. Landmann often gave inspired messages with warnings like the following: "When the Lord withdraws His grace, you must suffer the loss of His blessing spiritually and physically" (*italics mine*).¹⁵ Another message of this type states, "And if you shall fail me, then like a true parent, reprimands will follow and punishments, too."¹⁶

The Lord's displeasure with a guilty person was often shown through an illness or accident, but sometimes an innocent person had to suffer for the laxness of the community. For example, in 1868 a thirteen-year-old girl died of an illness just before the annual Spiritual Examination service. Landmann reported in inspiration

¹⁴Andelson, 282.

¹⁵Barbara Landmann, "Testimony 42," Jahrbucher, Vol. 55 (Amana: Amana Society Press, 1882), 133.

¹⁶Barbara Landmann, "Testimony 17," Jahrbucher, Vol. 58 (Amana: Amana Society Press, 1884), 55.

that God had allowed this death to get the attention of the community and to show them their need for "serious repentance." God was tired of speaking to them about their need to repent and had made this death an example for the community and an indication that things had better improve quickly or death would strike again with full power.¹⁷ Scheuner reported that the whole community was greatly shaken by the sudden death of this child and was ready to take the Unterredungen services seriously.

Another incident a few weeks after this girl's death further proved the determination of the Lord to bring the community to spiritual renewal. This time an eighteen-year-old girl died of pneumonia. She was not as innocent as the former but was said to be full of pride and rebellion toward the Amana way of life. The elders judged her to be "yet so young and already so great a sinner!" They reported that God had let her die as a serious warning to the other young people to get their spiritual lives in order and not reject the plan God had for their lives. Scheuner said this death brought the community to renewal and spiritual watchfulness.¹⁸

¹⁷Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1867-1876, 42-43.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 50-52.

The occasion of a death was always a good opportunity for the elders or Landmann to remind the people of the importance of spiritual concerns and to try to frighten the young people into conformity. The leaders often interpreted the frequency of deaths in the community as a method God used to express divine displeasure. Death was not too common in the earlier days of Amana. In 1867 only Metz and two others died. However, in 1869 nine people died in two and one-half months. The elders deduced from this phenomenon that God was trying to frighten and awaken the community to its need for spiritual readiness.¹⁹

A Predictable Schedule

Not only was the occurrence of inspired testimonies and the messages of those testimonies more anticipated under Landmann than Metz, but the special services themselves occurred on a predictable schedule. Metz had called these services at various times whenever directed by inspiration. The only standardized date for a special service was the one set at the end of Metz's life for Covenant Renewal. Communion had been celebrated only five times by the old Community Of True Inspiration and

¹⁹Ibid., 135.

only twice in Amana before Metz died (1860 and 1865). After his death the elders established the celebration for the spring of even-numbered years beginning with 1868. This practice was followed until the 1930 suspension.

Annual Spiritual Examination had been held at various times throughout the year under Metz. However, in 1869 the event was standardized to begin in January of each year. This proved to be the most convenient time since it took eight to ten weeks to visit all the villages, and the winter months afforded a break from farming activities. Kinderlehre had also been held irregularly by Metz but was placed on a regular schedule after his death. All of these changes signaled to the members of the society a greater degree of predictability and regularity and less dependence on inspiration for the daily operation of the community.

Offenses In The Community

A look at the forbidden practices and forbidden possessions in the community during the rule of Landmann indicates that, at worst, offenses were rather minor compared to the standards of society in general. The first overt disobedience of members, mentioned in the historical account after Metz's death, dealt with voting in national elections. The community had always had a policy against getting involved in politics, but evidence

indicates that some members were voting even before Metz died. The elders felt politics created a party spirit and tended to divide the communal group.²⁰ However, even with the admonitions opposing it, several members continued to vote each year.

In 1869 the elders warned members against pleasure riding in boats on the river. Opposition was based more on unwarranted pleasure than on perceived danger. Two young men, ages nineteen and twenty-two, disobeyed the command and went anyway. They both drowned in a boating accident, which greatly upset the community and reminded members of the wisdom of the elders.²¹

In 1872 Landmann gave a testimony against the evil practice of drinking alcohol between meals. (Beer and wine were a regular part of meals in Amana.) The elders considered drinking between meals a great evil but could do little to control such a personal matter. This problem continued to be addressed throughout the recorded history of the group, without much improvement.²²

A strong warning was issued by inspiration the following year, especially to young people, against

²⁰Ibid., 96-97.

²¹Ibid., 148-51.

²²Ibid., 385.

reading any worldly poems or singing any worldly songs. There was fear that such practices might lead members from the purposes of the Lord and allow them to become "servants of the devil."²³ As with the alcohol problem, elders were unable to control such a personal activity. Part of the problem with forbidding the reading of outside literature was that some elders subscribed to outside newspapers and magazines themselves. They reasoned that they needed to be informed on current events. Such information control served two purposes. First, members would not be covetous of possessions they did not know about or envious of the life style of outsiders. Second, news of trouble and disaster could be used to show members how good life was in the society when compared with the rest of the world. The latter was used frequently in an effort to keep members content with the communal system.

Another warning was given later in 1873 against owning pictures and putting them on the walls of homes. Pictures were considered to be a form of idolatry. This warning, like many others, was impossible to enforce, since people simply hid their cherished pictures in boxes or chests.²⁴ The sentiment against pictures continued in

²³Ibid., 447.

²⁴Ibid., 481.

the minds of many members for several years. There were those at the time of the change in 1932 who still refused to have their photograph taken for this reason.

A new problem came to light in 1876 which eventually became a major cause of the breakdown of the communal system. At this time elders discovered that a member was selling his own wine, tobacco, and garden produce for personal profit. They strongly warned against this offense toward communalism; Landmann gave an inspired testimony on the subject. The practice became more widespread, however.²⁵

Parents were urged not to allow their teenagers to use guns. This practice was becoming common by 1877, and the elders feared it posed a danger to the safety of the community. While the problem did not have religious or moral overtones, it indicates how carefully the elders monitored the life of the community and even tried, though usually unsuccessfully, to control it.²⁶

This concludes the list of overt offenses against the rules of the society during the rule of Landmann. Although nothing very serious was taking place in the

²⁵Ibid., 650; Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1877-1883, 19.

²⁶Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1877-1883, 61.

community, when judged by the world's standards, the leaders saw every offense as a disobedience against God and a threat to the communal system. One other charge brought against members, repeated in almost every meeting of the Great Council but impossible to quantify, was the accusation was that many of the members were not taking their faith seriously enough.

Numerous references were made to colonists who were not humble and contrite enough before God or were not seeking enough after spiritual concerns. In 1868 the charge was made that some were faking their worship and simply going through the motions, without true repentance and humility. Pietist concerns for "a humble self-examination and bending low before God" were reiterated after such charges were brought against members.²⁷ In 1869 the accusation was made that members were becoming indifferent, lukewarm, unthankful, and untrue to their faith. While they were still following the Lord outwardly, they did so out of compulsion rather than love.²⁸

The list of related accusations from this period, regarding the faith, could be multiplied a dozen times,

²⁷Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1867-1876, 98.

²⁸Ibid., 136.

but the result would be the same. The elders and Landmann were trying to grasp something beyond their reach, i.e., the personal relationship of members with their God. In the earlier years of the community, elders judged personal piety by their perception of Pietist virtues being evidenced in the lives of members. Later they made judgments on personal appearance or ownership of material possessions. All such measures of piety failed.

One perceivable danger Landmann and the elders constantly feared and tried to guard against was false doctrine creeping into their community. Toward the end of Landmann's life, she had an unusual dream in which Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf appeared to her. It will be remembered that Zinzendorf represented false doctrine to the Inspirationists. Christian Metz also appeared in her dream and told her that the Community Of True Inspiration had been victorious against false doctrine and was still on the right way. Members should continue to contend for the faith and hold the banner of Inspirationism high. This dream was an important confirmation to the community that most were remaining faithful in doctrine even if there was a problem with the spiritual fervor of some of the members.²⁹

²⁹Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1877-1883,

Sickness plagued the last two years of Landmann's life. The elders realized she might soon be gone and so made preparations to carry on the work of the community after her death. She became seriously ill on April 12, 1883. In her last testimony, given April 23, she urged the members to "forsake your own selfish attitude, and you shall find grace and mercy if you can create within you a desire for a new existence." She reminded them of punishment if they did not seek the Lord and urged them "to strive and struggle faithfully, till the Savior, in due time, shall welcome you as His own."³⁰ Landmann died on May 21, 1883, at the age of eighty-eight. With her death came the end of inspired leadership in the Community Of True Inspiration.

Leadership Of The Great Council

If there were indications during the life of Barbara Landmann that she never assumed the place of authority vacated by Christian Metz, there were even more in her death. The most obvious is the brief way her life was reviewed in the historical account. It was the practice of the community historian to summarize the last

309-10.

³⁰Landmann, "Testimony 17," 56.

days and manner of death of the member, then give a brief overview of his/her spiritual pilgrimage from the time s/he joined the community until death. This summary ranged from one to several pages, depending on the level of importance of the individual in the community. When elder Carl Winzenried died in May 1886, the historical record devoted nearly twelve pages to his memory.³¹ Landmann's account was six pages, with only the briefest details of her life. Perhaps the author felt her life story had been sufficiently discussed in the separate biography he wrote a few years earlier.³²

A second indication of Landmann's subordinate role in leadership is drawn from a statement made in the historical record. It reads, "The last sixteen years, from 1867 until 1883, she [Landmann] conducted the work of the Lord with Brother C. Winzenried and the other first elders of the congregation" (italics mine).³³ The implication is that she ruled "with" not "over" the elders, as discussed earlier. The place of the elders in the hierarchy of authority during the leadership of

³¹Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1884-1891, 215-27.

³²Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1877-1883, 429-36.

³³Ibid., 433.

Landmann had been greatly increased. At the time of her death, the elders continued to rule just as they had done while she lived. There is no implication in the record that her absence created any kind of leadership void or posed a problem for the continued operation of the society.

A third indication is the way Landmann was interred. Members of the Amana Society, to this day, are buried in rows in the chronological order of their death. A simple grave marker gives the name, date of death, and age. All grave plots are the same size, except Christian Metz's. He was given an additional two feet on either side, as an indication of special honor. His grave is easily spotted in the Main Amana cemetery, since his tombstone does not line up with the others. Landmann was not afforded any extra space in the cemetery. She was buried as any other sister in the community.

A rather subtle indication of Landmann's position is the manner in which the historical record proceeds after her death. It will be remembered that Metz's death was followed by a week of inactivity, with great apprehension expressed by the elders about how the community would survive without him. No such apprehension followed the death of Landmann. It was reasoned in the historical record that the work was the Lord's, and it would continue without an inspired leader, just as it had

upon the death of Rock a century before. The historian related their current situation to another incident in the eighteenth century. When E. L. Gruber was lying on his death bed, he was asked if the work would go on when he died. He replied, "God will do it."³⁴ The Great Council of the Amana Society had been empowered by the constitution to carry on the work, and they would undoubtedly give good direction. The era of Landmann had passed.

It might also be noted that Landmann did not receive as much attention in the historical record on the anniversary date of her death as Metz did on his. Every year following his death, attention was drawn to how long it had been since he died, how much he had done for the community, and how things had changed since he passed. To this day the date of his death is commemorated in the Amana colonies. No such annual remembrance is made for Landmann.

Elders' Conferences

With the death of Landmann, central authority in the Amana Society resided in the Great Council alone. It has already been shown that the council assumed a significant place of leadership at the time of Metz's

³⁴Ibid., 476.

death, but Landmann continued to share in the rule of the community. The council may have anticipated Landmann's death as early as 1881, due to her frequent illnesses. In November of that year they held an Elders' Conference. The two-day meeting brought all of the elders of the community together for the purposes of spiritual inspiration and refreshment, examining the spiritual condition of the elders and the entire community, giving the older elders an opportunity to instruct the younger, and planning future religious observances for the community. This was the first Elders' Conference since 1864 (two and one-half years before the death of Metz). The very timing of the event, during the illness and decreased activity of Landmann, suggests the elders were making preparation to carry on the spiritual work of the community in her absence.³⁵

The Elders' Conferences were held semi-annually after Landmann's death. The first one following her death was held on December 17-18, 1883. Not only was leadership without an inspired instrument brought to the attention of this conference, but also the concern that first elder Carl Winzenried, who had given significant leadership since the death of Metz, was getting too old and weak to

³⁵Ibid., 306-9.

lead any longer. Concern was further expressed in this conference that unbelieving members in the society were speaking against the Inspirationist faith. It was feared that such conversation would create doubt and strife within the community. The elders realized there was nothing they could do about the private conversation of members and acknowledged that only God could preserve the community.³⁶

"The Work Is The Lord's"

In the Elders' Conference of 1883 the elders expressed faith that, if the work was truly the Lord's, it would survive all attacks made against it. This was a significant realization. Since the reawakening in 1817, the inspired leader had always been able to speak with the recognized authority of the Old Testament prophets and their "Thus saith the Lord." Any member who dared contradict or disobey the leader was not contradicting or disobeying another human being but the very God of heaven. Such offenses were almost non-existent under Metz and uncommon under Landmann. However, with the passing of inspiration, the elders no longer had the added authority of direct inspiration, and they knew the implications of

³⁶Ibid., 475-81.

that. They often appealed to inspired messages given in the past on a given topic, but that was not as effective as a fresh word from God. They conceded that they could not perpetuate the work under their own strength and ability. Thus, they acknowledged that only God could protect the community from the criticism of unbelieving members and preserve the faith.

The issue of unbelieving members points to a development which began during the leadership of Landmann. About five hundred people had joined the society from 1867 to 1883. This was part of a great influx of immigrants to America from Europe about that time. In fact, the decade of 1880 brought one of the greatest increases of immigrants to America in its history. Many Germans heard of the prosperity of the Amana Society and wanted to join. A comment was made in the May 20, 1880 meeting of the Great Council that they were getting so many letters of request to join the community they could not complete their other work.³⁷ A large group of thirty families, mostly from Saxony, joined the society in 1880-1881, but, for some reason, it was not mentioned either in the council meeting minutes or the historical record.³⁸

³⁷Ibid., 215.

³⁸Andelson, 327.

Many of those taken into the fellowship of the community gave lip service to the Inspirationist faith without actually making it their own. The elders made a serious attempt to indoctrinate new members into the faith. Not only did they instruct them thoroughly when new members joined the society, but they also held special services and classes to further establish them in the faith. A note from October 9, 1881 mentions one of these services held for the youth and "the new members of the way."³⁹ Greater concern for the faithfulness of members was shown in the years that followed the assimilation of the immigrants into the community than had formerly been the case. Even today, reference is occasionally made to an immigrant family which joined the community but never accepted Amana's faith.

As has already been noted, the Great Council ruled the society by tradition. The constitution provided the foundation of government and established the orderly operation of the community. The special services received a standardized place on the annual church calendar. The recorded testimonies of all the inspired leaders gave members an indication of God's will and purpose for their lives. Thus, leadership under the elders always appealed

³⁹Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1877-1883, 300.

to the authority of the Bible, the inspired testimonies, or the constitution of the society, in that order. There was no reason to question any of these, since they expressed God's plan for the community. The elders felt all would be well if they could keep everything just as it had been under inspired leadership. They had no desire to change anything, since to do so might contradict God's inspired directives. They could not, however, stop progress and development, as will be shown later, and this led the elders to untold anxiety with regard to their lack of control in the community.

One phenomenon which continued to occur after the death of Landmann may have been an unconscious attempt to augment the elders' authority. Christian Metz continued to appear to the elders in dreams and give them direction for the operation of the community or show approval of decisions that had been reached. Scheuner referred to this as God's hidden assistance for the elders.⁴⁰ In one such dream, Metz appeared to the first elder during the annual Spiritual Examination and gave his blessing on the proceedings, with the admonition that the members should have a godly fire of love for one another. Scheuner noted how exciting it was that even the blessed ones in eternity

⁴⁰ Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1884-1891, 25.

can participate in the Inspirationists' work.⁴¹ This became an indication of God's approval on their efforts. It is interesting that no record tells of Barbara Landmann appearing to the elders in their dreams! The elders' authority was also augmented when they were informed of future events through dreams. The ability to predict the future had been an important verification in earlier years of inspired leader's contact with God. Now that the community no longer had an inspired leader, God worked through elders and forewarned them of future events. An example of this was a store fire predicted by two elders, which occurred January 25, 1885.⁴²

Another indication of divine approval of the affairs of the community, in the absence of inspired leadership, was the increased emphasis on the felt presence of God in the services. Scheuner observed that the first Lord's Supper celebration after the death of Landmann, held in May and June 1884, was so blessed by God's presence that everyone knew God would be as close to them without an inspired leader as with one. Sensing

⁴¹Ibid., 9-10.

⁴²Ibid., 106-7.

God's presence became an important sign of divine approval during the remaining years of the communal system.⁴³

Confronted With Change And Outside Influences

The first important change in procedure after the death of Landmann was the appointment of new elders in the community. This had always been the responsibility of the inspired leader, which the people interpreted as the direct will of God. Without an inspired leader, the Great Council assumed this responsibility. The people interpreted the voting process of the elders as the indirect word of the Lord. This was a significant adjustment in the thought of the community. Without inspired direction, the community was one step farther removed from God's direction, which in effect compromised their authority as perceived by the members.

The first appointment of seven new elders came on March 24, 1884. Scheuner noted a transition was beginning to take place in the community as the older elders died and younger ones replaced them.⁴⁴ It was mentioned in chapter I that Scheuner noted this transition from old leadership to young, and the changes it was bringing to

⁴³Ibid., 42.

⁴⁴Ibid., 25, 27, 29.

the community, at the same time he was researching and writing his historical account of the eighteenth century, when the same transition took place in the old community. That material, found in Inspirations-Historie, 1729-1817, sounds very similar to the material in the 1884 account.

On the first anniversary of the death of Barbara Landmann, a review was made of the past twelve months. Concern had been shown at her death by some members that the community could not make the shift from rule by inspiration to rule by tradition. However, the past year had brought the successful observance of Kinderlehre, Covenant Renewal, Elders' Conference, Spiritual Examination, and Lord's Supper, with a sense of God's direction and approval on all the services. Thus, the elders felt there was no need to fear the future or to doubt that things would continue in the community as they had in the past.⁴⁵

The elders could not prevent change from occurring within the community, however. The location of the Amana Colonies had originally been selected for the isolation it afforded. This isolation helped create a barrier to the outside world and its influences toward change. Yet, walls were never built around the property to keep members

⁴⁵Ibid., 48-49.

in or outsiders out. The elders always felt more comfortable if the members refrained from contact with outsiders and outside influences. Concern had been expressed in 1869 that the village of Homestead was in spiritual danger because of bad influences brought by the railroad station.⁴⁶ With the exception of an occasional visitor, like journalist Charles Nordhoff and a group of Rappites who both visited in 1875, the Amana people were mostly left to themselves until after Landmann died.⁴⁷

This began to change, however, as influences from the outside world were felt within the community. A significant event took place in 1884 which signaled the entrance of outside influence. Members had lived by their own rules for many years when suddenly, on July 4, a law went into effect in the state of Iowa which disturbed them greatly. The law forbade the production and consumption of all alcoholic beverages. The Great Council had made a rule in 1878 against the private manufacture of wine, when Landmann received an inspired testimony against it. However, the new state law went further in forbidding even the society from making it. Everyone in the society

⁴⁶Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1867-1876, 129.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 605-6.

considered the law to be unnatural and unfair. Beer and wine were an established part of their German heritage.

Even though the elders disagreed with the government's right to such control over their lives, and complained in great detail about it, they complied with the new law as obedient citizens of the state. They urged the people to replace their beer with coffee, though they felt it was a poor substitute! The policy of the community had always been to remain subject to the government, except when it conflicted with their faith. The elders tried to enforce this prohibition law strictly within the community but did not succeed. The historical record related several future admonitions against breaking this law.⁴⁸

At some unspecified time, the state law was relaxed, but the whole problem returned when the federal prohibition law went into effect in 1915. The elders again agreed to comply, but found it difficult to encourage all members to follow suit. Offenses were frequently recorded in the historical account.⁴⁹ One such

⁴⁸Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1884-1891, 55-63. Note the lengthy discussion of the matter.

⁴⁹Georg Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1915-1923, (Amana: Amana Society Press, 1926), 57-58, 117-18; "Bruderraths Beschluesse," June 6, 1915, Great Council Meeting Minutes, Amana Heritage Society Museum,

account related the story of E. S. who was arrested the third time in July 1926 for bootlegging homemade liquor. The elders had warned him several times against this practice, but their efforts were in vain. He was fined \$750 and placed in the county jail for six months. The elders felt he brought shame both on them and his family.⁵⁰

An occurrence in November 1884 made the elders realize further change was coming to the community. In the Great Council meeting of that month, it came to their attention that several members had voted in the November 4 political election, even though the community had an established rule against it. The elders admitted that, while it was a legal right for members to vote, the community, as a whole, had decided against it. Since the elders had no higher authority of appeal, they approached the matter by saying a violation broke the solidarity of the group and weakened the whole communal system. They urged members who voted to search their own consciences and see if they wanted to be responsible for such grave consequences. The elders felt a good revival in the

Amana, Iowa.

⁵⁰Peter Stuck and August Koch, "Inspirations-Historie," 1926, (Amana: Amana Heritage Society), 22-23, Typewritten.

community would solve the problem. (They felt a good revival would solve just about every problem the community faced!) The elders made a major issue over the voting matter because it was one of the first offenses against their authority since the death of Landmann and signaled a shift in the attitude of some of the members toward community leadership.⁵¹ The elders noted in the Covenant Renewal service at the end of the month that one of the members who had voted was having difficulty humbling himself properly. They felt it was a direct result of his disobeying the voting ban.⁵²

An interesting exception was made to this ban in 1926. While the elders continued, as long as the commune existed, to discourage voting in political elections, they encouraged both male and female members to cast a ballot that year in favor of a road improvement bill that was before the public. They reasoned that since the bill was not political, and since good roads were an absolute necessity, a visit to the polls was advisable.⁵³

⁵¹Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1884-1891, 79-80.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 82.

⁵³Stuck and Koch, "Inspirations-Historie," 1926, 24.

Messages To The Community

The themes of the messages given by the elders to the community in the years that followed Landmann's death were much the same as they had been while she lived. The elders alleged that members were not taking spiritual matters seriously enough; worship was becoming too much of a routine; people were hungering too much for the material possessions of the world; there was too much absenteeism in church; the youth were not following in the traditions of the community as they should. The problem remained that, though the elders did not approve of the route they felt the society was taking, there was very little they could do about it. And yet, if one steps back and considers the evidence from 1883 to the end of the nineteenth century, it is easy to see that the community was not changing very much, especially when compared to the world around Amana. This will be discussed further in chapter IV.

Along with the general messages cited above, the elders gave specific directives across the years concerning activities or personal possessions that were forbidden in the community. Andelson's study of the minutes of the Great Council meetings from 1883 to 1899 yielded the following list.

Greeting cards	March, 1883
Outside newspapers	March, 1888
Birthday celebrations	April, 1889

Music in church	August, 1889	
Wedding celebrations	July, 1891	
Christmas celebrations	December, 1893	
Card playing	January, 1894	
Noisy celebrations on New Year's Day and Fourth of July	January, 1894	
Tricycles	August, 1894	
Expensive baby carriages	August, 1894	54
New clothing fashions	November, 1894	
Bicycles	July, 1896	
Frivolous clothing	July, 1897	
Drinking parties	November, 1897	
Wearing hair down and not in a cap . . .	July, 1898	
Open vests	December, 1899	56
"Schlitzhosen" ⁵⁵	December, 1899	

In September 1891, the elders spoke against members making unnecessary trips off of the property or sight-seeing around the state. Such activities brought too much contact with the world.⁵⁷ Travel outside the community was discouraged for many years. In September 1902, five young men secretly left the property for a two-week trip to Chicago. This action brought "sadness to God and all honest brothers and sisters" (*italics mine*).⁵⁸

⁵⁴The historical record mentions that the Great Council had actually taken a stand against vanity and worldliness in clothing in its December 1886 meeting. Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1884-1891, 282.

⁵⁵A type of pant with a slit and buttons in the front rather than the customary flap which colony pants had.

⁵⁶Andelson, 323.

⁵⁷Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1884-1891, 764.

⁵⁸Georg Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1898-1905, (Amana: Amana Society Press, 1923), 465.

Keeping members on the property became a greater problem when the automobile came to Amana. One member related how her family would secretly go to Cedar Rapids but were always back on Sunday, so as not to be missed in the services.⁵⁹ The Great Council decided in June 1913, that members could not own automobiles privately. The commune purchased them for use in business, but they were not to be used for personal pleasure.⁶⁰ In the years that followed, Amana-owned vehicles were used more and more for private travel. Elders were further concerned about members going for pleasure rides on Sunday, regardless of who owned the vehicles. Sunday was to be a day of prayer, meditation, and fellowship with God.⁶¹ The rule on ownership of automobiles was amended in 1917 to read that members could not buy them without the permission of the Great Council. In time, the elders even lost this control.⁶² One member related that the only rule he ever broke during the communal era was ownership of a Model-T

⁵⁹E. B., Oral History interview 33, 13.

⁶⁰Georg Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1906-1914, (Amana: Amana Society Press, 1925), 644.

⁶¹"Bruderraths Beschluesse," June 8, 1915.

⁶²Ibid., September 4, 1917.

without permission from the elders. He kept it hidden to avoid detection.⁶³

Rules which were being broken during the leadership of the elders were reiterated and explained again from time to time. This was true with private winemaking, voting in political elections, simple dress and hairstyle, and possession of photographs, "which is an abomination to God."⁶⁴ An especially severe warning was given in January 1896 against visiting saloons in the area or bringing the liquor home for consumption.⁶⁵

Enterprising members were always thinking of ways to earn extra money, which endangered the communal system. Each practice had to be forbidden as it came to the attention of the elders. Such was the case with condemning the private ownership of bees and the sale of their honey in June 1900. This decision also afforded the elders the opportunity to remind members not to sell

⁶³H. H., Oral History interview 64, Interview by J. S., May 3, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 10.

⁶⁴Gottlieb Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1892-1897, (Amana: Amana Society Press, 1920), 180-181, 670; Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1906-1914, 85; Stuck and Koch, "Inspirations-Historie," 1926, 24; "Bruderraths Beschluesse," April 21, 1914.

⁶⁵Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1892-1897, 669.

garden produce, which many were doing.⁶⁶ The elders later instructed the people that those who bought the produce were as guilty as those who sold it. The practice continued, nevertheless.⁶⁷

Modifying The Rules

It was not common for the elders to change their minds once they had taken an official position on a matter. Occasionally, however, they would modify their rules. One example of this dealt with bicycles. In 1896, the elders forbade members from riding them, because they cost money and other members would want one. This rule was reiterated in 1914.⁶⁸ Two years later, they changed the rule to say bicycles could be ridden any day except Sunday, but motorcycles were now strictly forbidden!⁶⁹ Another modification came with the celebration of July 4. This was prohibited until 1896 when the elders allowed the youth to have their first celebration, as long as it was not too noisy. Even though the elders permitted it, they

⁶⁶Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1898-1905, 268.

⁶⁷"Bruderraths Beschluesse," August 2, 1927.

⁶⁸Ibid., August 4, 1914; M. F., "Oral History interview 42, Interview by G. N., March 23, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 20.

⁶⁹"Bruderraths Beschluesse," April 11, 1916.

made it well-understood they still saw it as a compromise with the world. Fireworks were forbidden for many years.⁷⁰

Another subtle change in the rules dealt with engagement periods set by the elders. Couples wishing to marry made their appeal to the Great Council and were assigned a waiting period for the ceremony. The standard period was two years, until 1893 when it was reduced to one year. This length remained the norm for the remainder of the communal period. As the society moved into the twentieth century, exceptions to the rule were granted for couples where at least one member was over thirty years of age. For example, in 1924 G. A., age thirty-three, and M. M., age twenty-seven, were granted a three-month waiting period as were T. B., age thirty-eight, and S. W., age forty.⁷¹

A fourth instance of rule modification, probably representing the greatest compromise, dealt with playing baseball. The young men had been slipping into the woods for many years to play clandestine games, and the young women followed to watch! As one member put it, "What the

⁷⁰Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1892-1897, 752; "Bruderraths Beschluesse," June 8, 1926, June 12, 1928.

⁷¹"Bruderraths Beschluesse," September 2, 1924.

elders did not know, did not bother them!"⁷² The elders finally addressed the offense in 1914 with the recommendation that guilty parties should voluntarily refrain from taking communion in the upcoming biennial service. They did not feel the athletes were worthy of participation.⁷³ The baseball problem became the topic of frequent discussions in the Great Council meetings of the next several years. Every time the elders condemned the worldly game, they reminded the youth that they meant business this time.⁷⁴ Finally in the closing years of the communal system, the elders reasoned that, since the game kept the youth on the property and out of trouble, it would be an acceptable practice, as long as it was not played on Sunday.⁷⁵

The Elders' Response To Offenses

The elders basically chose one of four methods of response when rules were broken by the members. First, they appealed to the consciences of the people, as with

⁷²C. M., Oral History interview 39, Interview by J. S., March 25, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 5.

⁷³"Bruderraths Beschluesse," April 21, 1914.

⁷⁴Ibid., June 8, 1915.

⁷⁵M. F., Oral History interview 42, 20.

the voting ban. They reminded members that breaking the rules of the community was disobedience to God, since the rules came through divine inspiration. Placing guilt on members seemed to work at first, but eventually lost its effectiveness.

Second, they could suspend the guilty person from a communion service or several worship services or ask him/her to leave the community for a specified period of time.⁷⁶ Elders frequently asked members not to attend communion or worship services but seldom went so far as to ask them to leave the community. The latter was almost completely discontinued with the death of the inspired leaders. The former was used frequently by the elders, but lost its effectiveness with many members by 1920. Many young people did not mind being expelled from services. They no longer viewed the practice as an embarrassing punishment; temporary expulsion afforded them the opportunity to do as they pleased during services.⁷⁷ Some young people still felt the gravity of the punishment, however. One member related how he was caught playing baseball on Sunday and was expelled from church

⁷⁶Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1884-1891, 57.

⁷⁷M. F., Oral History interview 42, 20; L. S., Oral History interview 63, Interview by K. S., May 6, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 16.

services for two weeks. He remembered the experience as a worse punishment than being put in jail because the extended family of the society knew the wrong he had done, and he felt condemned by them.⁷⁸

Third, the elders could allow the guilty party to leave the community by his/her own choice. In one of the council meetings, a decision was reached regarding a married couple, which the council anticipated would not be well-received. The council added, after the decision, that if the couple did not want to comply with the decision, they could leave. The elders preferred that discontented members leave the community, rather than stay and cause dissension in the ranks. Several began leaving in 1881. Mention is made in the historical record of a few members leaving in 1882.⁷⁹ The record shows that twenty left in 1885.⁸⁰ It is difficult to determine exactly how many left during the first few years of the rule of the elders since births and new admissions kept the population growing until 1890. Andelson's research indicates that an average of fourteen people left every

⁷⁸C. M., Oral History interview 39, 5.

⁷⁹Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1877-1883, 337.

⁸⁰Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1884-1891, 179.

year from 1898 until 1931. Most left before 1922, with an average of four each year from 1922 until 1931.⁸¹

The final method of response by the elders was to do nothing. While they continued to refer in official publications to rules being frequently transgressed, they found no effective way to enforce the directives. Being placed in this dilemma left them no alternative but to acquiesce to the social trends of the community. Rule breaking of this sort never involved a major defection within the society, but always dealt with personal matters such as dress, hairstyle, or ownership of certain possessions.

Serious Threats To The Community

Two events pointed to the fallibility of the elders as the community moved into the twentieth century. The first was a direct legal attack from without, the second a subtle religious one from within. Both threatened the very existence of the society for several years.

The first came to the attention of the elders in August 1903, when they learned the county attorney was taking the Amana Society to court. Two elders went to

⁸¹Andelson, 328.

Iowa City with their attorney on August 18 to hear the charges brought against them. The plaintiff alleged that, because the society was involved in large-scale business dealings, farming, and manufacturing of goods, it did not deserve its tax-free status as a religious organization. The elders judged these plaintiffs to be "evil men and instruments of Satan" who were trying to destroy the grace work of the Lord. Official charges were brought against the Society in October.⁸²

Uncertainty hung over the community for several years as one delay followed another. Finally the case was heard in court in June and July 1905. It created quite a spiritual battle for the members, since they feared the loss of their religious status. The elders reported a sense of divine strength and direction for testifying in court, but it did not look good for their side when serious charges of their profit-making endeavors were brought against them. All the facts and figures of the society's operation were examined in court. It was frustrating for the community to have its private affairs

⁸²Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1898-1905, 528-29.

laid open for public scrutiny, and the elders could do nothing to prevent it.⁸³

A decision was finally reached on November 20, 1906, in favor of the society; they would be allowed to retain their status as a religious organization.⁸⁴ One of the positive results of this trying situation was that it caused the society to stop and examine its religious purpose of existence. With this examination came a renewed determination to continue the religious heritage passed down by their ancestors. This was undoubtedly the most serious self-reflection the society had conducted in decades. The elders reported a genuine revival among the entire population of the society.⁸⁵ One of the negative results of the court case was that it represented another infringement upon the privacy and isolation of the community, since the case had received statewide attention. These infringements became more common through the years.

The second event which pointed to the fallibility of the elders, was far more indirect in its attack on the

⁸³Ibid., 709-19.

⁸⁴Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1906-1914, 43-44, 80-81.

⁸⁵Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1898-1905, 720-22.

faith of the community. It involved the introduction of Christian Science teachings into the community by some of the members. This problem held the attention of the elders for over two decades. The first mention of the teachings in the historical record occurred in December 1906.

A warning was issued against a false teaching which tried to establish itself in the community. . . . A so-called healing practitioner of Christian Science, who was at one time a member of our Society and sought to insinuate himself for the purpose of practicing his method of healing, was excluded. This sect professes to cure illnesses and infirmities through prayer and apparently bases its healing methods on Scripture and the power to heal the sick which Jesus gave his followers, the apostles. However, life and conduct show it is principally a moneymaking operation and that these teachings do not harmonize with the teaching of the cross and the suffering of Jesus, but it is a pharisaical and misleading conception.⁸⁶

Though it became a growing problem, nothing more was said of Christian Science teachings in the community until August 1914. At this time the elders again declared the teachings to be ungodly and unscriptural errors. They said everything the Scientists taught is countered in the Bible. They went on to say this teaching is like the deception of the serpent to Eve when she was told she would not die. The elders did not feel they could compromise with this teaching. There was no way a person

⁸⁶Barthel, 76.

could hold the Inspirationist faith and be a Christian Scientist. Some members had tried to unite the two in 1907 and left because they could not do it. If members in 1914 wanted to hold to Scientist teachings, they could leave, too!⁸⁷

A great deal of attention focused on the issue in 1916 as the matter surfaced again.⁸⁸ The society received bad publicity in March when the Marengo Republican charged that Amana members who held Scientist teachings were being treated differently and being forced to deny their beliefs. The article also left the impression that the matter represented a major rift in the community. Two elders and their lawyer went to Marengo and demanded a retraction, which was printed immediately.⁸⁹

Both the Andelson and Barthel accounts of the Christian Scientist problem contain errors with regard to dates the elders dealt decisively with the issue. Both say Christian Scientist members were forbidden to attend the annual Spiritual Examination service around 1924, which they say is also the approximate year the elders

⁸⁷"Bruderraths Beschluesse," August, 25, 1914; Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1906-1914, 754-55.

⁸⁸Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1915-1923, 103-4, 110-11, 130.

⁸⁹Ibid., 119-22.

suspended celebration of the Lord's Supper, due to the conflict.⁹⁰ The correct date for the ban on Spiritual Examination was February 5, 1916, and the Lord's Supper was suspended in May 1930.⁹¹

A planning meeting on May 6, 1930 set the date of the celebration for May 13. Without giving any details, the council minutes simply read that the devil set in between Christian Scientists and Inspirationists, mainly in South Amana. It was reported to Andelson that matters reached a climax when a lady stood in a worship service in South Amana and declared that Christian Scientists should be allowed to attend the Lord's Supper celebration.⁹² There is no way to verify this report since no specific reason was ever recorded for the cancellation. The elders simply declared in a statement made on May 20, 1930 that the community could no longer continue with two beliefs being taught. They then gave the names of the families involved. They were from West Amana, South Amana, and Homestead. The statement continued that if these families

⁹⁰Andelson, 347-48; Barthel, 80.

⁹¹"Bruderraths Beschluesse," February 5, 1916, May 20, 1930. The Inspirations-Historie for both 1926 and 1928 gives a detailed account of celebration of the Lord's Supper in those years.

⁹²Andelson, 347.

would retract their beliefs and return to the congregation, all could return to normal. However, it was no longer possible to keep this problem a secret. The elders had to deal with it immediately. They acted by cancelling the service for that year. There was no observance of the Lord's Supper in the Amana Colonies for the next twenty-six years.

While this whole incident, spanning twenty-four years, was a serious problem for the elders, it must be kept in perspective. Barthel sees the problem as evidence of a "religious revolt" and an indication of "collapsing Inspirationist dogma."⁹³ It was neither. The population of the Amana Colonies between 1906 and 1930 ranged from just over 1700 to just under 1400. Barthel states that the total number of families involved in the problem over more than two decades was probably never more than ten. Older members of the society today concur with this estimate. A comparison of the number of Christian Scientists with the total population hardly suggests anything near a revolt! Furthermore, the fact that the elders finally acted decisively in the matter is to their credit, since this action gave strength to Inspirationist

⁹³Barthel, 79.

dogma in the community. A look beyond 1930 shows that the problem slowly faded from the scene.

The Amana Society Bulletin, which began publication at the time of the change in 1932, carried infrequent comments for several years about Christian Science lectures being held in South Amana. One of the meetings was noted in the March 4, 1943 issue of the Bulletin. Apparently, interest in Scientism had passed by 1956, for it was in that year that celebration of the Lord's Supper resumed in the society.

The Impact of World War I

The most significant event to impact the Amana Society at the beginning of the twentieth century was World War I. The first recorded effect of the war was economic. The war brought rationing which caused the prices of goods purchased outside the community to skyrocket. It also hindered the sale of some of their exports.⁹⁴ Members prayed about the war and showed a general concern until the United States broke friendly relations with Germany, at which point their concern became much more specific.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1906-1914, 755, 767.

⁹⁵Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1915-1923, 86.

The second impact of the war on Amana was direct military service. They had pledged total allegiance to the United States as their adopted homeland for the past seventy-four years and were very thankful for the personal and religious freedoms they enjoyed. However, they could not get involved in the military, since this was against their religious principles. The avoidance of military service was one of the reasons they came to the United States.⁹⁶ Two elders appealed to the legislature in Des Moines for a bill that would grant their young men a religious exemption from the draft.⁹⁷ All efforts failed to keep the colonists out of service. The elders decided that, though the young men would have to serve in the military, they would never carry weapons.⁹⁸ Twenty-eight were called to serve, but were granted non-combatant status and did not go overseas.⁹⁹

Colonists were hurt by damaging articles circulated in area papers which spoke unfavorably of Germans living in Iowa and questioned their loyalty to

⁹⁶Ibid., 188-89, 252-53; "Bruderraths Beschluesse," February 13, 1917.

⁹⁷Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1915-1923, 202-4.

⁹⁸"Bruderraths Beschluesse," April 17, 1917.

⁹⁹Andelson, 321-22.

America. They felt their religious principles in no way impinged on their loyalty to America. They responded to these charges by distributing a little pamphlet entitled "A Statement of Facts." In it they stated they had purchased \$133,000 of Liberty Bonds, \$22,000 of War Savings Stamps, and had given to the Red Cross, Army Y.M.C.A., and other relief funds. They went on to tell of those who served in the Army and of the manufacturing the society did for the government. They ended the pamphlet by asking, "Do these facts indicate disloyalty, or a sincere effort to assist our Government?"¹⁰⁰

A third impact of the war involved a restriction on the personal lives of the colonists. The governor of Iowa made a proclamation in May 1918 that English had to be spoken in all public buildings, on trains, on the telephone, and in worship services. The colonists felt the proclamation was aimed chiefly at German-speaking residents of the state.¹⁰¹ They agreed to comply with the ruling but found a way to circumvent it in ways which illustrate their stubbornness to maintain their unique identity.

¹⁰⁰Heinemann, Inspirations-Historie, 1915-1923, 202-3.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 301.

The state law required that public school be in session until three o'clock in the afternoon on weekdays. Amana schools, however, remained in session until five o'clock on weekdays with an additional Saturday session. While the language law was in effect, Amana schools were conducted in English most of the day. However, at three o'clock sharp, instruction reverted to German, and the Saturday session was held entirely in German! The language law applied to speech but not to the oral reading of printed materials. Therefore, in the Inspirationist services, the members sang their songs from the German hymnal, read the Scripture from their German Bible, and read inspired testimonies from the printed record. The elders did not make comments on any of these since such comments would have to be in English. No English was spoken in the services. Thus, the colonists obeyed the letter of the law without sacrificing their identity.¹⁰²

Loss Of Isolation

The previously discussed events in the early years of the twentieth century signaled to the elders of the Amana Society that they had lost their most precious possession, their isolation. The lawsuits, the newspaper

¹⁰²Ibid.

articles, and the events of World War I had drawn them into the public eye and silently stolen their private existence. Added to this was the fact that since there were no walls around the Amana property, visitors were coming with increasing frequency.

The first exhaustive work on the Amana Colonies came in 1908 with Bertha Shambaugh's Amana: The Community Of True Inspiration. Published by the State Historical Society, it became an instant success with excerpts reprinted in various publications for several years. The publicity fostered an interest by the general public to learn more about this community. People began visiting the colonies in increasing numbers. One visitor said he came to find out "What there is so durned private goin' on here!"¹⁰³

A concern was expressed in a Great Council meeting in 1917 that many visitors were passing through on Sunday. They feared the negative impact of members socializing with "outsiders." They especially showed concern and fear that the youth would be influenced to want to be like the rest of the world.¹⁰⁴ The matter of Sunday visitors was discussed in another Great Council meeting later in the

¹⁰³Shambaugh, Amana That Was, 91.

¹⁰⁴"Bruderraths Beschluesse," January 9, 1917.

year; this time they highlighted the fact that the visitors were breaking the law of God in not keeping Sunday holy and were providing a bad example for colony residents.¹⁰⁵ Shambaugh noted that about 1200 visitors were reported annually in 1900 with tens of thousands coming by 1930. She said traffic was so bad when the lotus bloomed on the lake a deputy sheriff was needed to direct traffic.¹⁰⁶

The community historian recorded in 1926 that the elders had come to the realization that their community could no longer remain isolated from the world. Despite all their best efforts, they were being pulled into the mainstream of American culture.¹⁰⁷ Shambaugh made an insightful observation on the process in an article she wrote for the Iowa State Historical Society journal in 1936.

The Forefathers had drawn a circle around the Community designed to keep the world out; but the world made a larger circle and drew the Community within its orb. No institutional circle (spiritual, political, or social) could bar the influences of an age that had opened up avenues of communication. The railroad, the automobile, the airplane, the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, the daily newspaper and

¹⁰⁵Ibid., July 3, 1917, April 9, 1929. Notice the same concern expressed at the end of the communal era.

¹⁰⁶Shambaugh, Amana That Was, 345.

¹⁰⁷Stuck and Koch, "Inspirations-Historie," 1926, 46.

magazines, and the insistent gossip and 'prattle' of hordes of 'worldly-minded' visitors were the forces that broke the circle of seclusion. A machine civilization drew Amana into its inextricable circle.¹⁰⁸

A number of factors brought the demise of the communal system in the Amana Colonies. This topic has been covered widely in other sources and is not a central concern of this project. Thus, only a brief description of the events at the close of the communal era will be given. While other factors were involved, and will be considered further in chapter IV, a financial crisis created the greatest impetus for change. Consequently, this is the only factor that will be considered at this point in the account.

The first official indication from the elders that the communal system was in serious crisis came in a Great Council discussion in 1927 when they noted that both the manufacturing and farming ventures were losing money. Every member was going to have to cut back on expenses.¹⁰⁹ Again in 1929 the elders considered the evidence and came to the conclusion that the system was in great financial

¹⁰⁸ Bertha Shambaugh, "Amana--In Transition," The Palimpsest 17 (May 1936): 176.

¹⁰⁹ "Bruderraths Beschluesse," March 14, 1927.

trouble. It looked as though the system might fold soon.¹¹⁰

Tom and Mary Phillips note several reasons for financial crisis in the community. The various business, manufacturing, and farming enterprises did not have adequate leadership and thus were not making the most of their potential. The community had to hire about two hundred outside workers and pay their wages because some members refused to do their share of the work. The calico factory had to close in 1910 because of a cotton shortage. The flour and grist mills burned in 1923. The depression hurt sales of community goods and exports and hindered the tourist business on which the colonies were becoming dependent. Communal housing grew more and more expensive, especially for heat. The general stores were extending credit to members and losing money. Members were overspending their annual allowances. Members who refused to work continued to receive their allowances. Finally, the deficit of one-half million dollars was leading the community toward bankruptcy.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰Peter Stuck and August Koch, "Inspirations-Historie," 1929, (Amana: Amana Society) 6-10, Typewritten.

¹¹¹Tom and Mary Phillips, Amana: Metamorphosis of a Culture (Cedar Rapids: Kirkwood Community College, 1973), 37-38.

The Great Change

The time for decisive action had arrived. In March 1931, the Great Council decided to explain the crisis situation to members in evening meetings held in all the villages. Each village elected representatives, according to its size, to a central committee, which became known as the Committee of Forty-Seven. This committee called its first meeting on May 2 to organize for action. It distributed a questionnaire to all community members to assess the feeling of the society toward reorganization. The response was seventy-five percent in favor, twelve percent opposed, and thirteen percent undecided.

A subcommittee of ten members met from July 20 to August 19 to prepare a plan for reorganization. When their document was approved by the Committee of Forty-Seven, it was submitted to the state Attorney General's office. Revisions and additions to the plan were made from October 1 until November 2, when the Committee of Forty-Seven approved it by a vote of seventeen to six. The entire community voted on the plan of reorganization on February 1, 1932. Every member of the society voted, with ninety percent approving it. June 1, 1932 was set for the "Great Change."

At the time of the change, Amana divided into two organizations with separate constitutions, officers, and

responsibilities in the community. The first, known as the Amana Society, was a joint-stock corporation organized for profit. Each current member over the age of twenty-one received one share of non-transferable Class A Common Stock in the corporation. Class B shares of stock were issued to each member according to his/her years in the society. The second organization was the Amana Church Society, which was created to direct the spiritual and educational affairs and the social services of the community. Its constitution read much like the religious components of the old constitution.

The communal system of Amana was dissolved with the Great Change. It had been the longest lasting and most successful communal organization in American history. Most of the young people were excited about the possibilities of the future under the new organization. Many of the old members felt something very sacred had died. As one looks back on the Great Change, several questions come to mind regarding it. How had the faith changed since the death of inspired leadership? What role had the faith of the society played in fostering the change? How did members at the time of the change view their faith as compared with their ancestors who first moved to Amana? These and other questions will be the topic of the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE FAITH OF AMANA AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE

The Great Change brought a whole new organizational structure to the Amana Society. Some of the changes, like separate constitutions for business and religious interests of the community, were new. Other changes, like earning personal income, only legitimized that which was already taking place. A good deal of attention has been given to the reasons for and results of the Great Change. Sociologists have studied in great detail the transition of this community from a communal society to a joint-stock corporation or from a closed commune to an open community.¹ Very little attention has been given, however, to what was happening to the religious faith of the society in the years preceding the Great Change.

It has been a common assumption that the loss of the authority of the elders in controlling the personal

¹Andelson, "Communalism and Change in the Amana Society: 1855-1932"; Barthel, Amana: From Pietist Sect to American Community; Lawrence L. Rettig, Amana Today: A History of the Amana Colonies from 1932 to the Present (Amana: n.p., 1975).

lives of the members and the decision to disband the communal organization signaled the demise of the religious faith of the Amana Society. Barnett Richling, among many others, expresses this view by saying,

In the years following Barbara Heinemann's death, the idealism of that religion began to lose its importance for the members of the community. As a result, the organization of Inspirationist society was held together by coercion rather than by the commitment of its members.²

A look at the historical records of the period and first-hand accounts of present members who lived through the Change suggests an alternative view. While it is true that the faith of the society did not remain static through the sweeping social changes at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is incorrect to assume that these changes brought an end to faith.

A Favorable Environment For Developing Faith

The sole purpose of gathering on estates in Germany, moving to Ebenezer, and later moving to Amana was to create a favorable environment for the Community of True Inspiration to practice its faith. The communalism, living and working arrangements, and rules of the community all had the purpose of promoting the religious

²Richling, 113. See also 86-87, 112, 114.

interests of the group. The very nature of German Pietism emphasizes that religion is not simply corporate worship or personal knowledge that one's sins are forgiven, but that it is a deep hunger to be in daily communion with God and receive spiritual instruction from the Holy Spirit. This is the concept of inner light presented in E. L. Gruber's "Teachings About God's Inner Word."³ One is to advance one's consciousness to become singularly aware of God. Nothing else in life matters. Growth in Christian perfection is an all-consuming process. Everything in life becomes ordered around this one goal. Thus, the rules and practices of the Community of True Inspiration were adopted as a means to create a conducive setting in which individuals could collectively draw closer to God. The communal work schedule was even arranged so members would have to work less than would normally be the case for a family farm in order that they might have more time to pray and meditate.⁴

The elders jealously watched over influences on the community. To interpret their admonitions against influences they considered detrimental as simply a desire

³Gruber, 51-58.

⁴Barbara S. Yambura, A Change and A Parting (Ames, Iowa: State University Press, 1960), 29.

to have authority over the people is to miss the purpose of the organization. Whether the problem was the danger of gold coins in the eighteenth century, pride and self-seeking in the nineteenth century, or material possessions in the twentieth century, the concern of the elders was always the same. It was not the possessions themselves that frightened the elders, but the possibility that these items might take the keen edge off of the spiritual sensitivity of the community, or that the possessions would take a superior place in the people's hearts, thus replacing spiritual interests with material.

The elders did not want anything to hinder the environment for developing faith which they worked so hard to maintain. Their rejection of the life style of the popular culture was an effective mechanism of isolation from the corrupting influence of that culture. Speaking to a newspaper reporter in the last year of the commune's existence, Georg Heinemann, first elder of the society, said the elders' opposition to cars, games, and other possessions was not because of their expense or waste, but because the use of these things represented a conforming to the ways of the world and took members' minds off of religion.⁵

⁵Kansas City Star, June, 28, 1931.

One element of this favorable environment was the many regular and special services held in the community. The purpose was to make it as easy as possible for members to draw close to God and to increase commitment to the group. Consequently, eleven opportunities for corporate worship were scheduled into the regular operation of the community, with special services planned several times a year. The heavy schedule of participation in religious services is one of the characteristics observed in most sect-like groups. Bryan Wilson says of this practice,

Fellowship is an important value for all members: fellow members are "brethren"; relationships as far as possible are primary; the local meeting is a face-to-face group. The individual is a sect-member before he is anything else. . . . The membership is a membership of families rather than of individuals and sect values are mediated by the kin-group.⁶

A secondary function of the services was to provide a social outlet for members. Much of the social life of the community revolved around church activities. One member said, "When we were young, we always went to the Nachtgebet [evening prayer service]. You just thought that was it. We sat under the old street lanterns after church and talked. It was just like recreation for us."⁷

⁶Bryan R. Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," American Sociological Review 24 (February 1959): 14.

⁷M. G., Oral History interview 70, Interview by

One question frequently asked in the oral history interviews of members who lived before the Change was how they liked going to church so often. Some did not enjoy it, but most did. One said she never really thought about it being a burden. She just took it for granted that members went to church often.⁸ Another said, "It was just the way it was."⁹ A third said she missed the evening services, which were discontinued after the Great Change, most of all, concluding, "It was a good way to end the day."¹⁰

Another method of creating a favorable environment for developing faith was in controlling information received into the community from the outside world. Earlier, in chapter III, it was suggested that this information control served two purposes. First, it was intended to prevent members from becoming covetous of

C. Z., May 5, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 11.

⁸M. B., Oral History interview 55, 8; Cf., A. H., Oral History interview 40, Interview by D. R., March 28, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 3-4.

⁹E. B., Oral History interview 33, 14.

¹⁰H. M., Oral History interview 68, Interview by J. S., March 16, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 11; Cf., B. C., Oral History interview 30, Interview by K. S., February 25, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 20.

possessions they did not know about. Second, it compared life within the society to the rest of the world to illustrate the favored life style of the colonists. This method of social control is described by Alan Winter as a mechanism of isolation which is designed to reduce the influence of the external world by reducing the level of social contact between members and nonmembers.¹¹

One member said she did not criticize the religion or way of life of the colonies because she had no radio, newspaper, or contact with the outside world. She did not know any differently and had no point of reference for comparison.¹² Several members said they were always curious about the world beyond Amana's borders but knew little about it and were afraid to find out for themselves.¹³

When the radio and newspaper reached the colonies, they brought information about a whole new world. This information also brought a new perspective on life which was much broader than before. The elders were justified

¹¹J. Alan Winter, Continuities in the Sociology of Religion: Creed, Congregation, and Community (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977), 159-60.

¹²M. D., Oral History interview 14, Interview by G. N., February 2, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 16.

¹³M. F., Oral History interview 42, 20.

in their fear that a fuller knowledge of the world would cause members to question their previously closed environment. Wilson suggests that religion is always affected when mass media pervades society. Speaking of religious instruction in a community like Amana, he says, "Communications were communal and personal, and knowledge came in the context of unchallenged religious apprehensions of the world from known and trusted counselors."¹⁴

In the closed communal system, the style, substance, and circumstance of information came through sources which represented "interpersonal trust, moral responsibility, and communal concern."¹⁵ None of this was found in the mass media which invaded the Amana Colonies. Consequently, the favorable environment for developing faith faced a whole new set of challenges as it was forced to deal with this new source of information and the different world view that it fostered.

¹⁴Bryan R. Wilson, Religion in Sociological Perspective (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 129.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 130.

A Voluntary Organization

Religious life in America in the nineteenth century was characterized, in part, by the popularity of the voluntary organization. Christians organized themselves into all types of reform movements. There were the temperance and peace movements, efforts for penal reform and womens' rights, as well as the abolition of slavery. A host of voluntary organizations was formed, like the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), American Bible Society, American Tract Society, Christian Commission, and several missionary societies.

Pioneers of America's west are often perceived as rugged individualists who struck out on their own to tame the wilderness. The Amana colonists did not fit this characterization, however. They better fit the category of the voluntary organization which banded together in the interest of the common good. Membership in the society was always voluntary; the Amana property had no walls. Metz often said, "If members do not conform [to the rules of the commune], they can leave. The door to the world stands open."¹⁶ Leaving was never as easy as it might

¹⁶Christian Metz, Altes und Neues, Vol. 2 (Amana: n.p., n.d.), 140, quoted in DuVal, 207.

sound, however. Physical walls were not the only way members could be held on the property. Members of the commune found themselves bound by a strong social isolation, since their only significant social relationships were within the group. A decision to leave was extremely difficult to make.

Inspired leadership also had its own natural attraction for keeping members committed to the cause. Thus, after the death of the last inspired leader in 1883, it took an even greater commitment for members to remain faithful to the organization. Most did remain faithful, however. It might be worth noting that this communal system existed longer without inspired leadership than it did with it. The commitment to the cause of the voluntary organization was strengthened by the relative isolation of the group from the larger society, by the unique social customs and dress, and by the distinctive language.

Another series of mechanisms of isolation and commitment, suggested by Rosabeth Kanter, offers insight into the internal bonds of this community. Sacrifice "involves the giving up of something valuable or pleasurable in order to belong to the organization."¹⁷

¹⁷Rosabeth M. Kanter, Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 504.

Amana exhibited this characteristic in its many personal prohibitions against pleasures and possessions. Investment of time, energy, and financial profits into the communal group also encouraged commitment. Renunciation and communion involve cutting emotional ties to nonmembers and attaching oneself completely to the communal fellowship. This was always a strong feature of the Amana community. Contact with outsiders was to be avoided as much as possible and emotional ties maintained only with fellow members.

Mortification means that one "can have no self-esteem unless he commits himself to the norms of the group, evaluating its demands as just and morally necessary."¹⁸ Along with this goes the concept of surrender, by which one leaves most decisions to the group leader(s). Amana certainly manifested these traits, as will be discussed in the section on "Free Will and Social Control." First with the inspired leaders, then later with the elders, surrender was encouraged through what Kanter calls "institutionalized awe" or a sense of "rightness, certainty, and conviction" attached to their organizational arrangements.¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid., 512.

¹⁹Ibid., 514.

The closed Amana Society had at least one problem which the immigrant denominations in America did not have. Without any political coercion to belong to a certain church, as had been the case in Germany, people were free in America to worship in any church they wished. Most immigrant churches used various revival and evangelistic techniques in an active effort to win new converts. Amana had common roots with the German Pietists who started the whole revival movement that swept the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since they lived from 1843 until 1865 in the "burned-over district" of New York, as it was known for its many revival campaigns, Amana elders were well-aquainted with the revival movement in America. However, the Community of True Inspiration was not in sympathy with what they saw and did not want to be identified with it. They never made any evangelistic outreach efforts and never sought to win converts to their faith, as the eighteenth-century Inspirationists had done. They did not sense any "Great Commission" to share their beliefs with surrounding residents in an attempt to convert them to the Inspirationist faith. Rather, they were satisfied to practice their beliefs as they saw them and let the outside world go its own way.

This is in keeping with Wilson's findings. Introversionist sects, like Amana, do not generally evangelize because "evangelism involves exposure to the

world and the risk of being influenced by the social pressure it exerts." By avoiding this practice, they "minimize the opportunity for nonsect members to exert pressures on the evangelizing sect members toward conformity to the general standards."²⁰

Not only did the Inspirationists not practice revival techniques; they were not always in sympathy with those who did. Metz did not like the Methodist Church because of what he perceived to be a shallow view of conversion. He said Methodists made a great boast of the number of souls who got saved and "glory in how many believe because of this magical spirit of preaching and enthusiastic singing which leads the senses and subtly feeds and excites the flesh." He saw hypocrisy in all of this and did not believe in the revival services commonly employed by Protestant Churches. For the Inspirationists, conversion was a life-long process that was more rational than emotional.²¹

Since Amana did not employ any of these evangelistic methods, they had to work harder at retaining the members who were admitted to their ranks. Retention

²⁰Winter, 160; Wilson, "Sect Development," 6.

²¹Christian Metz, "Letter to Mr. Pipus," Altes und Neues, 165, quoted in DuVal, 208. Translation mine.

of these members did not place as much emphasis on correct doctrine, though doctrinal instruction was given to new converts in the Kinderlehre services. Rather, an appeal was made to mysticism and rationalism, to use the words of Niebuhr. He characterizes this emphasis as a stress on personal immediacy in religion, a thrust toward the individual appropriation of the gospel, and a strong emphasis on personal conviction.²² This is why Amana elders made such an appeal to personal piety and obedience to one's conscience, which they were sure would instruct everyone to remain true to their commitment to the group. Without this strong commitment, the society would surely disintegrate. This is all in keeping with Wilson's characterization of an Introversionist sect which directs members to be possessed by the Holy Spirit and rely on inner illumination, whether it be by the voice of conscience or of God. "Doctrine is of lesser importance in that the letter has surrendered to the spirit."²³

It must be remembered that this society was not simply a social experiment. Franklin Littell points out that Amana, like the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century,

²²Richard Niebuhr, Social Sources of Denominationalism, (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1957), 206.

²³Wilson, "Sect Development," 6.

the radical Puritans of the seventeenth century, and the Evangelicals of the eighteenth century, had the conviction that religious and social salvation are to be found through the restoration of the Christian community as it existed before the fall of the church under Constantine. (This did not include the idea of communalism for Amana.) All of these groups wanted to live by the model of a true Christian community. Amana was not like many of the communal groups in America in the nineteenth century who attempted to restore the church to the Jerusalem model, however, in that they were not restitutionist in their purpose and program. Neither did they have any visions of becoming a Utopia for others to join or follow their pattern. Their intentions were simply to live to themselves and exemplify a life style of repentance and piety that would bring them to eternal salvation.²⁴

It is important to remember that the Inspirationists did not see their faith as the only way to salvation. They felt all denominations of Christianity are striving for the same goal of the salvation of humanity. In this effort there is no place for a

²⁴Franklin H. Littell, Prefatory Essay in The Communistic Societies of the United States, by Charles Nordhoff (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), xvii-xix.

"sectarian spirit," as they referred to it.²⁵ Yet, for them, Inspirationism was the best way to God. If individuals wanted to be members of the Amana Colonies, they had to adhere to the Inspirationist faith. Otherwise, as Metz said, they were free to leave. Thus, the concept of the voluntary nature of the community was always emphasized. People were members of this faith because they wanted to be.

By the end of the communal era, some outsiders were beginning to view the Inspirationist faith as just another Protestant denomination in America. Barthel represents this notion when she says Amana was "blending in with the mainstream of American religious thought and practice."²⁶ The colonists saw the matter in a different light, however. They agreed that the society may have lost many of its cultural distinctions, but they emphasized that the Inspirationist doctrine was unique in its emphasis on the inspired messages of modern prophets which is a theological distinction from other Protestant churches.²⁷

²⁵Many sects are not intolerant of other religious groups, but Amana's perception was that most sects see their way as the only way to God.

²⁶Barthel, 135; Cf., Richling, 114.

²⁷Peter Stuck and August Koch, "Inspirations-

This understanding of themselves at this time of their existence is a predictable one, according to Niebuhr. In its early stages, a sect will tend to differentiate itself on cultural, rather than doctrinal, bases. After accommodations have been made to the new culture, especially in the area of language, ecclesiastical and doctrinal differences replace cultural distinctions as the reason for a separate identity. "The need for continued differentiation and for the self-justification of an organism which is strongly desirous of continuing its existence, are [sic] responsible now for a new emphasis."²⁸ Thus, even after many changes in the Amana Society, the elders felt there was still reason for members to pledge their allegiance to this unique voluntary organization.

An Attitude Of Asceticism

When contemporary people study the simple life style of the Amana Colonies, many characterize it as being drab and boring. It does appear to be that way when viewed from the outside. They dressed, worked, and lived their lives with utmost seriousness. One author entitled

Historie," 1928, (Amana: Amana Society), 11, Typewritten.

²⁸Niebuhr, Social Sources, 229.

his chapter on the colonies, "Amana: Where the Lord usually said, NO." In it he emphasized all the restrictions placed on members and characterized the environment of the colonies as very negative.²⁹ However, a better understanding of the religious background for this life style places it in a whole new light. Here again, to dwell on all the things the colonists could not do, wear, or buy is to misunderstand the religious motivation of the organization.

This was a group of people who had gathered together for the purpose of drawing closer to God, encouraging and edifying one another in the faith, living a life of self-denial, and working out personal salvation in the process of justification/sanctification. They left the world behind in pursuit of a higher goal in life than just meeting their material needs. Every activity in life was measured according to the way it affected their religious purposes.

Amana was often criticized in this regard for its disapproval of baseball and other sports. Their view of these activities was much the same as that of the Puritans

²⁹ Everett Webber, Escape to Utopia (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1959), 280-97.

of colonial America, characterized in this way by Max Weber:

As a means for the spontaneous expression of undisciplined impulses, it [sports] was under suspicion; and in so far as it became purely a means of enjoyment, or awakened pride, raw instincts or the irrational gambling instinct, it was of course strictly condemned. Impulsive enjoyment of life, which leads both away from work in a calling and from religion, was as such the enemy of rational asceticism, whether in the form of seigneurial sports, or the enjoyment of the dance-hall.³⁰

The Amana dress and hair code reflected a desire to remain simple, economical, and modest, so as not to draw attention to oneself. Fads of personal appearance were never to have a place in the colonies. Tradition ruled appearance as it ruled most other areas of life. Deviations from the norm reflected, not the glory of God, but the glory of the individual. As Weber put it, "That powerful tendency toward uniformity of life . . . had its ideal foundations in the repudiation of all idolatry of the flesh."³¹

The same stance applied to ownership of unnecessary possessions. People should not want things found in the world which they did not need. The elders

³⁰Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958) 167-68.

³¹*Ibid.*, 169.

enforced such a simple life style not only to promote the solidarity of the community and individual commitment to it, but also, more practically, to preserve the solvency of the communal system. If members bought unnecessary possessions or tried to outdo their neighbors in fashion, the community treasury would not be able to bear the added financial stress. Consequently, in every area of their existence, the colonists were to promote a life style of self-denial.

Industry and Prosperity

In his book The Protestant Ethic And The Spirit Of Capitalism, Max Weber presented the theory that there is a direct relationship between various Protestant theologies and the spirit of capitalism found in society. As he saw it, the relationship is found in a combination of the ideas of spiritual anxiety (seeking assurance of being in the elect), calling (in which every Christian is called to some vocation), and worldly asceticism (living in the world but not of it, so that financial success should not be selfishly used for personal pleasure, comfort, or benefit).

Protestants anxious about their salvation tended to interpret material success in their calling as a sign of God's approval and, therefore, as a sign of their election. Since their spiritual discipline prevented

selfish indulgence, they tended to reinvest the increased income in their calling. This reinvestment provided the capital for capitalism. Weber recognized that capitalism existed in non-Protestant settings, but he argued that the obsessive spirit of capitalism was directly related to the obsessive need to be assured of salvation. Many of Weber's conclusions do not relate specifically to the Amana Society. However, in his discussion of Puritanism in colonial America, he made several observations which have a striking resemblance to attitudes and conditions in Amana.

For Amana, as for the Puritans, there was great danger associated with personal wealth. It leads people into temptation and is morally questionable. The enjoyment of its fruits can lead one to security in possessions, idleness, and, most of all, "distraction from the pursuit of a righteous life." Everlasting rest is for heaven. While on earth, people must work in order to increase the glory of God. One of the deadliest sins is wasting time. As Weber characterized the Puritans through the writings of Richard Baxter, "The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one's own election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk,

luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health . . . is worthy of absolute moral condemnation."³²

The Amana work ethic, as with the Puritans, strongly emphasized continuous physical or mental labor as a worthy means of self-denial. It helped one guard against all temptations of the body and mind. Labor is also recognized as a very important purpose of life itself, for it gives a systematic, methodical character to life, which is necessary for self-denial. Work must be done to the best of one's ability for the glory of God.³³

This is the reason a premium was placed on the high quality of workmanship in all Amana endeavors. The Amana Colonies had a reputation in the state for being the best at whatever they did. They produced high-quality products, not to beat the competition or outsell competitors, but because they had a calling from God to do their best. Every effort reflected their stewardship to God. This whole concept of the work ethic is prominent in the Pietist tradition through the writings of Philip Spener. He said loyalty to one's calling helps annihilate one's selfish will and is a service to one's neighbor, as

³²Ibid., 157-58.

³³Ibid., 158-59, 161.

well as a duty of gratitude for God's grace. Thus, one's labor should not be performed unwillingly or half-heartedly, but joyfully as unto the Lord.³⁴

Members of Amana put this work ethic into practice and prospered materially. It should not be assumed that this prosperity was a natural result of Amana's work ethic, as might be implied from Niebuhr's concept of submission to the "discipline of asceticism" or Wesley's assumption that "religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches."³⁵ Liston Pope points out that there is no evidence of a direct correlation between the two. He says, "Sectarian ascetism [sic] and moral discipline have not caused a majority of the members of any religious sect . . . to ascend appreciably in the economic scale."³⁶

Nevertheless, members did enjoy a comfortable life style, and their products were in constant demand by the outside world. This led to the problem of dealing with the prosperity that followed their efforts. As with the

³⁴Philip Spener, Theologische Bedenken, Vol. 3, 272, in Weber, The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism, 263.

³⁵John Wesley, The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 260-61.

³⁶Liston Pope, Millhands and Preachers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 119.

Puritans, it was not the wealth itself that was to be feared, but the temptation to idleness and desire for unnecessary material possessions. Or, to put it another way, it was not the acquisition but the improper use of wealth that was bad. As long as profits were put back into the communal treasury for the benefit of all, there was no problem. It was only when individuals made and enjoyed private profit that a problem arose.

Rather than being embarrassed by their prosperity, Amana leaders viewed it as an indication of God's approval of their efforts, just as Weber explained.

When a man who is happy compares his position with that of one who is unhappy, he is not content with the fact of his happiness, but desires something more, namely the right to this happiness, the consciousness that he has earned his good fortune, in contrast to the unfortunate one who must equally have earned his misfortune.³⁷

Thus, when Christians talk of their comparative wealth in terms of God's blessing, they imply that their good fortune is evidence of God's favor, as a result of their righteousness. In the years following the death of inspired leadership, this prosperity became an important indicator to the elders of God's continued blessing on the community.

³⁷Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 107.

Where Is The Enemy?

The desire to have a favorable environment for developing faith meant that members had constantly to be on their guard against the enemy. If the battle of good and evil is taking place in daily life, and if the enemy is always seeking to lead believers astray, then it is the duty of believers to find the source of these temptations and not surrender to the enemy.³⁸ This had been easy to do in Germany. The adversary was perceived to be at work through the civil and ecclesiastical authorities who persecuted and made life so miserable for the Inspirationists. When the colonists settled in Ebenezer, the enemy could be spotted working through the Indians who tried to drive them from their property and the worldly influences of the city of Buffalo which drew ever closer to their settlement.

Once all the colonists were settled in Iowa, however, and life fell into a predictable routine, it became more difficult to locate the enemy. Material prosperity followed the efforts of their labors, and outsiders did not penetrate their borders for many years. They enjoyed all the freedom and benefits of frontier

³⁸Katechetischer Unterricht, 37-40, 53-54.

living, which created an almost ideal setting for them to practice their faith. If the enemy was at work, and there was never a doubt that he was, where was he attempting to lead the members astray?

Faced with such a dilemma, the leaders of the community concluded that the enemy must be working through the comforts that came through prosperity, or with the lukewarmness of some of the members, or with the worldly-mindedness that was seemingly so prevalent in every decade of Amana's existence. This worldly-mindedness manifested itself in different ways in each age, but the charge was always present. The elders feared many dangers that threatened the spiritual progress of the community, but nothing frightened them more than the ease that came with prosperity. This was one of the chief reasons for the move from Ebenezer to Amana. For the most part, prosperity followed the efforts of the Amana Colonies well into the twentieth century, and this was no small concern to the elders.

If Gottlieb Scheuner had a hidden agenda in writing the Inspirations-Historie for the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it may have been intended as a corrective measure for the negative side effects of prosperity which the elders perceived in the community. This historical presentation recounted in great detail the many hardships, disabilities, and persecutions the early

Inspirationists suffered as a result of their faith. It proceeded through the lean years of the late eighteenth century and applauded the efforts of those who kept the coals of faith glowing until revival came in the nineteenth century. Again, difficulties and persecutions haunted the revived Community of True Inspiration, but members held true through extreme circumstances. When it became necessary for them to immigrate to a new continent, they brought their spiritual fervor and determination with them as they pioneered not one but two new pieces of frontier land.

Many of the members at the end of the nineteenth century who read of these ventures had no first-hand experience with such hardship. They only knew prosperity in a well-organized communal setting. Scheuner wanted this new generation to appreciate its heritage and material advantage enough to live the hopes and dreams of its predecessors without taking everything for granted. He also wanted members to use their many privileges to improve their spiritual lives, which was the chief reason for the community's existence. Members should continue to be on their guard against the enemy who was working just as hard in Scheuner's time as he had been in former days. Constant vigilance was required to reach final salvation.

Calamity and God's Displeasure

The Community of True Inspiration operated as a theocracy where God ruled, first directly through inspired leaders, then indirectly through the elders. Since everything that happened to this chosen community had to pass through the providential hand of God, the leaders felt it was possible to interpret the pleasure or displeasure of the Lord according to these events. Thus, the destruction of a building by fire, or the death of a child, or the loss of crops through unfavorable weather conditions were always occasions for Amana leaders to highlight problems with the spiritual life of the community and predict more of the same if improvements were not made immediately.

Just such a world view was presented by the Puritans in the early days of America. Perry Miller recounts how they interpreted unfavorable external events as "the wrath of Jehovah" in much the same way as the Amana leaders would do more than two hundred years later. Beginning in July 1622, the Puritans began holding special days of humiliation to fall helplessly before God and ask for the particular problem to be taken away. In this first case, the issue was drought. Hereafter, days of humiliation were held for every crisis that occurred in the colonies. These continued until 1676 when a day of thanksgiving was held instead of a day of humiliation,

since the Indians were being checked. The leaders decided to look on the positive side of matters, rather than constantly emphasizing the negative.³⁹

An important shift was made in the concept of the wrath of Jehovah in 1652 when the leaders began to see it not only in outward circumstances like storms and droughts, but also in internal matters like worldliness and "lack of zeal among the children." As Perry Miller put it, "Corruption itself now appeared not as a cause but a visitation of wrath. . . . The subjective preempted the objective."⁴⁰ Sermons preached on these fast days became an important literature of the age with a new literary type known as the jeremiad. The preacher noted the provocations of God to vengeance, proposed a reformation, and described the terrible judgments if people did not change. One problem with the jeremiad was that it could make sense of situations as long as adversity was to be overcome, but it had difficulty when all went well in the community. Another problem with it

³⁹Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 19-26.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 28.

was that it lost its effectiveness in time. By 1680 people were no longer responding to the threats.⁴¹

Though probably not conscious of the connection, Amana leaders incorporated this same technique in their discipline of the community. They, too, interpreted every adverse circumstance as the wrath of God and proposed a humiliation of the entire community before the Lord. The concept also developed to include internal, as well as external, problems. Worldliness, lack of discipline among the children, and lukewarmness were plaguing the community because God's efforts were being hindered by a lack of spirituality among the members. God's wrath would soon visit them in full fury if the community did not come before God in humiliation.⁴²

Amana did not have a problem with the theory when things went well, however. Following the thought of their covenantal theology,⁴³ they interpreted their good fortune as the pleasure of the Lord. Thus, with this deuteronomic concept of righteousness,⁴⁴ God blessed the Amana Society

⁴¹Ibid., 27-39.

⁴²Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1876-1887, 197; Scheuner, Inspirations-Historie, 1884-1891, 517.

⁴³The idea of covenant is established in rule eleven of "The Twenty-Four Rules For True Godliness."

⁴⁴This idea is taken from Deuteronomy where Moses

when it did well and punished it when improvements needed to be made. The key to their thought was proper adherence to the terms of the covenant. This was the reason for the Covenant Renewal service held each year on Thanksgiving Day. Members needed to be reminded of the community's special relationship with God.

The Amana Society did have a problem with the theory, however, once it internalized the evidences of God's wrath. Since the charges of worldliness and undisciplined children were made consistently throughout Amana's communal existence, one wonders whether God was always angry with the community. This seems not to have been the case, since the blessing and presence of the Lord were reportedly felt in the special services, an important indication of God's pleasure. The best interpretation that can be offered for the situation is that the Lord seemed to be displeased with the community before special services and pleased with the spiritual advancements made as a result of these services. This alternating message

said, "If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God. . . . However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you. . . ." Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15 (NIV)

was given several times a year for many years. Like the Puritans before them, Amana residents grew tired of the almost constant spiritual reprimands and tended to disregard them. While most members did not want to displease God, in later years many ceased to believe the reprimands of the elders were necessarily the voice of God. These reprimands lost much of their effectiveness in motivating the people by the end of the communal period.

Members Not Spiritual Enough

One of the arguments used to suggest that the Inspirationist faith had deteriorated by the dawn of the twentieth century comes from the frequent reprimands discussed above. Not all reprimands related to outward circumstances, such as calamities, or inward problems, such as worldliness. Many were simply admonitions for members to be at their best spiritually.

Rather than being an indication that members were losing interest in the religious purposes of the community, these admonitions were actually a healthy sign for the faith. This is why it is incorrect to interpret references to these admonitions as indications of "cracks in the religious wall."⁴⁵ In fact, lack of such

⁴⁵Barthel, 76.

admonitions would more nearly indicate a problem. The key to this interpretation lies in an understanding of the Inspirationist doctrine of the lifelong process of salvation. Believers must work at their salvation as long as they live. No matter how well one is doing spiritually, improvements can always be made. The Inspirationist faith is fueled by a constant striving to do better and a continual watchfulness for temptations which can lead one astray.⁴⁶

The "old man" in the true believer must be daily and hourly brought into judgment and surrendered to death by that righteousness which counts with God, that is, that the "new man" in spirit and faith may be resurrected. Only as far as the soul passes through this purification process in this life or the one to come does it have a part in the service of Christ and is it a member of His body, i.e., intrinsically united with him.⁴⁷

The frequently delivered admonitions by Amana elders are better compared to a pep talk from a coach than charges of offense by a law enforcement officer. This is not to say real offenses within the community were not being reflected. However, these offenses were never as widespread or as serious as one might think after reading the historian's impression of matters. It must be remembered that such charges were usually made just prior

⁴⁶Katechetischer Unterricht, 37.

⁴⁷Ibid., 51-52.

to annual Spiritual Examination, biennial Communion, Covenant Renewal or some other special service for which the community needed to make spiritual preparation. Matters always looked darker just prior to one of these services. After the event or series of services, it was exciting to report a great revival or a new determination by the whole community to do better. It is not likely the community would have survived as long as it did if matters were as serious as the record sometimes implied. The elders may have used the strategy of overstating the seriousness of conditions in an effort to prevent any further deterioration.

Consequently, references to these admonitions in the twentieth century as an indication of the loss of faith in the community present an unrealistic image of the era. One presentation which considers problems of the Amana Church in the twentieth century quotes an elder who was disturbed by "a lukewarm attitude and half-hearted cooperation" in the community.⁴⁸ Such quotations may be found to characterize every decade of the group's existence in Iowa, not just the years prior to and following the Great Change. These admonitions kept the colonists on their guard against the spiritual enemy of

⁴⁸Barthel, 132.

their souls and encouraged them to make progress in their lifelong quest of salvation (Reinigungsprozess).

Another method of encouraging this quest for salvation was the obituaries in the Inspirations-Historie. At the time of death, every member received consideration in the historical record. Barthel notes that this was an opportunity for elders to pass judgment on the life of the individual and, by implication, on the lives of present members.⁴⁹ While this is certainly true, there is a far deeper reason for such meticulous consideration of every member. After a summary of the events surrounding the individual's death, attention always turned to his/her spiritual pilgrimage, with highlights of the successes and failures of the deceased.

This practice finds its justification, again, in the Inspirationist doctrine of the process of salvation. Since salvation is not complete until death, it was not until that time that elders could determine whether a member had persevered until the end or not. If s/he finished the course in victory, it became an opportunity for rejoicing and an encouragement for the whole community to follow the example of this courageous soul. These biographical accounts pronounced the final benediction on

⁴⁹Ibid., 60.

the process of salvation for the individual. Regardless of how long a person lived, the historian used each death to remind members of how short life is, how important it is to work out one's salvation while there is still time, and how improvements can always be made in one's spiritual life.

Free Will And Social Control

Communalism was not without its problems. One of these problems was the direct conflict generated between communal control and the doctrine of free will. In worship services members were told they had a free will with which they could choose good and direct their lives in a manner pleasing to the Lord. If they were not pleasing to God, it was their own fault for not making the right choices.

However, when members stepped from the worship service back into the social setting of the society, they were denied the opportunity to make most personal choices. They did not choose the home in which they lived or the job at which they made their livelihood. Consumer goods were procured at the community store, which provided only those products which were approved by the elders. Members also had very little choice as to the entertainments they could enjoy or the ways they could spend their pastime. Thus, most decisions were made for the colonists.

One member, whose story could be repeated by many others, tells of her brother leaving the society because he did not like the job assigned to him, and the leaders refused to let him change. He decided to go out into the world, so he could exercise his freedom. This member relates that she, too, would have liked more freedom but was afraid to venture into the unknown world beyond the Amana property. She says several of her friends left in order to experience this personal freedom for themselves.⁵⁰

As time passed, members of the Amana Society started expressing more of a desire to make choices for themselves. The only areas open for any degree of personal expression were in matters of clothing, hair style, and personal possessions. The elders acted quickly to restrict many of these choices in the name of uniformity. They feared such self-expression would weaken the solidarity and threaten the solvency of the communal structure. Thus, members were to dress, cut their hair, and spend their money within the narrow perimeters of the elders' control. Such restrictions became more than many

⁵⁰M. F., Oral History interview 42, 20; Cf., L. C., Oral History interview 25, Interview by G. N., January 26, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 13.

members were willing to tolerate, and violations in matters of personal choice became more frequent each year. The elders made this a spiritual issue, which added authority to their position at first. In time, however, members refused to accept that argument, as will be shown later.

This whole matter of personal choice has received a good measure of attention in Amana studies and is often cited as an evidence of a rebellion of many members against the religion of the society. This was a significant issue and was one of the reasons offered for dissolving the communal bond. And yet, refusal to obey the elders in matters of personal choice did not constitute a rejection of the religious heritage of the community.

This leads to one of the most important observations of this study, which is that members, by the end of the communal era, were making a distinction in their thinking between the social control of the elders and the faith of the society. This distinction is the key to a proper understanding of what was being rejected by many of the younger residents. The thought of Amana had gone full-circle in the years the group had been in America. In the beginning, communalism, with its social control, was an expedient measure for the community without any religious justification. When opposition to

the system grew, Metz sanctified it with an inspired message which gave it religious significance. By the end of the communal era, the people were beginning to see the communal control and their faith as two separate concepts.

In reading the transcripts of the oral histories of the residents, this separation in their thinking is evident. For example, one man said the Great Change did not come because people were disinterested in religion. It came, rather, because the communal system was no longer working. "I think the belief in church was the same yet. Everyone went to church, but [the society] didn't go exactly the communistic way. . . . It wouldn't work anymore."⁵¹

A particular individual in the oral histories appears to have been one of the most rebellious of all. From her own account, she seems to have broken as many community rules as anyone during her time. She was one of the first to secretly get her hair cut. She led the way for women to wear short-sleeved or brightly colored dresses in public. She protested against the traditional black garb women wore to church. She opposed her father, who was an elder, on almost every rule that infringed on

⁵¹C. R., Oral History interview 15, Interview by K. S., February 5, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 23.

her personal freedom.⁵² This researcher visited with this lady in her home to get a perspective on her own feeling and the feelings of her friends toward the faith of the community before the Change. She related that never did she or any of her friends perceive their rebelliousness as aimed at the church or the Inspirationist faith. They held deep respect for both. Their efforts were against the communal system which was not working and its many restrictions against their personal freedom. They saw the social structure as one thing and religion as another. Her position is representative of the way most members perceived the problem with the communal structure.⁵³

Institutionalization

One of the significant developments in the Amana faith noted in the previous chapter was the institutionalization which took place after Metz's death. Leadership became routinized under Landmann and tradition-centered with the elders. Landmann's testimonies came with a high degree of predictability. Special services, once

⁵²H. R., Oral History interview 8, Interview by E. H., January 19, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 18-20.

⁵³H. R. of Middle Amana interview by author, June 5, 1987, Middle Amana.

scheduled by inspiration, found a regular place on the church calendar. Amana, then, had reached a point of being highly institutionalized by the time of the death of the last inspired leader. The forms of individual and corporate worship were inherited from the past and offered a workable arrangement for many years.

Adopting an organization and routine, in and of itself, is not bad. It is only when such methods fail to meet the needs of people, but are preserved only on the basis of tradition, that it can be detrimental to the group. Institutionalization is not unusual as a religious group develops. Bryan Wilson says,

There is a tendency for all established and traditional religions to institutionalize their arrangements, and for their activities and relationships to become ossified. This process appears to arise because of an evident tendency of men in all settled cultures to legitimize their procedures by reference to the past. Tradition becomes the touchstone, insuring the wisdom and safety of particular arrangements.⁵⁴

Richard Niebuhr in The Kingdom of God in America writes that the institutionalization of the church begins as an effort to preserve the gains, or conserve the fruit, of a spontaneous or inspirational advancement in the church. Yet, what usually results from this effort is

⁵⁴Wilson, Religion in Sociological Perspective, 121.

hardened forms and sterile institutions which deny the freedom and spontaneity originally won. Institutionalization, then, freezes life into forms which, in time, no longer meet the needs of the religious body. What started as an aid to faith, later becomes a hindrance.⁵⁵ Since this is a natural tendency of religious organizations, they must be aware that these forms or procedures will not always meet their needs, and that the time will come when change will be necessary.

The fact that religion in Amana became more structured is more a matter of maturing than an indication that the faith was becoming weak or powerless. The real danger of institutionalization for them would be to preserve the traditional forms long after the meaning had been lost. The crucial test for the Community of True Inspiration would be for them to adapt their faith to their rapidly changing environment and drop the meaningless forms without allowing this faith to lose its importance in their lives.

Much of what Niebuhr says about the immigrant church in The Social Sources of Denominationalism applies to the religious development in the Amana Colonies.

⁵⁵Richard Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1937), 164-69.

However, the Inspirationists never became a denomination, as so many other sects have done.⁵⁶ Winter states that "Sects need not always become churches. Even if, as Niebuhr claimed, they almost always do, there are exceptions to the general movement from sect to church."⁵⁷ Wilson adds to this notion:

The tendency for sects to become denominations has frequently been noted and on the basis of this tendency the generalization has sometimes been made that a sect-type organization can exist for only one generation, that in the second generation the sect becomes a church or a denomination. Yet, if one surveys existing religious organizations, it is evident that, in both the sociological and the everyday use of the term,⁵⁸ some sects persist as such over several generations.

A denomination, which develops from a sect, may be defined as "a tolerant, world-accommodating religious movement that has abandoned most, if not all, of the distinguishing features of sectarianism."⁵⁹ Or, to put it another way, "A church is a religious group that accepts the social environment in which it exists. A sect is a

⁵⁶Niebuhr, Social Sources, 19.

⁵⁷Winter, 159.

⁵⁸Wilson, "Sect Development," 3.

⁵⁹Wilson, Religion in Sociological Perspective, 98.

religious group that rejects the social environment in which it exists."⁶⁰

In accounting for the reasons Amana did not become a denomination, even at the end of its communal existence, it is helpful to note the insights of Yinger on the development of sects. He illustrates two possible options with Methodism and Quakerism. Both began as sectarian protests. The first evolved into a denomination, the latter into an established sect. More than economic or status improvements must be considered as reasons for the difference, since both groups experienced these improvements in much the same way. Yinger suggests that sects which emphasize individual sin and work at reducing burdens of personal confession and guilt will develop rather quickly into denominations. However, those sects which are concerned with the evils of society and express this concern by calling for social reform, or by withdrawing from society and establishing isolated communities, tend to develop into established sects.⁶¹

Amana clearly fits into the latter characteri-

⁶⁰Benton Johnson, "On Church and Sect," American Sociological Review 28 (August 1963): 542.

⁶¹J. Milton Yinger, Religion, Society and the Individual (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 150-51; Winter, 159-60.

zation. While there is consideration of personal salvation, the dichotomy in their thinking between their society and the world was too great for them to blend as a denomination into the generally accepted religions of the land. Winter would agree with this analysis and add that Amana was assisted in maintaining its separation from the world by its mechanisms of isolation discussed earlier, i.e., commitment to the group, information control, distinctive dress code, and unique culture, customs, and language.⁶²

A key issue in preventing a sect from becoming a denomination is the ability for that group to transfer its distinctives to the second generation. It is an oversimplification to say that the sect-to-denomination movement is automatic. Amana was constantly aware of the tendency of groups to lose their distinctives in the generation transfer. Thus, they worked to counteract it through numerous activities. These activities included parental training in the home, special instruction for children at annual Spiritual Examination, Covenant Renewal, and Kinderlehre services held each year. Wilson says that sects which have doctrinal distinctives, the

⁶²Winter, 159-60; Cf., Wilson, "Sect Development," 10-11.

allegiance of whole families, and exacting standards for would-be joiners are apt to hold the second generation to the sect identity.⁶³ Consequently, Amana did not become another American denomination, but maintained a radical differentiation from the larger society throughout the communal era.

The whole issue of setting up ideal-type constructions and distinguishing between church and sect began with Ernst Troeltsch's presentation in The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches. In this volume he presented characteristics of each by which various groups could be compared. While his observations have been criticized as not particularly helpful for the American church, use of the church-sect distinctions are still commonly made in sociological studies of religious groups.⁶⁴

Using Wilson's characteristics of a sect, one can test whether the faith of Amana should still be described as a sect by the end of the communal period. The first characteristic is that sects are committed to only one

⁶³Wilson, "Sect Development," 12.

⁶⁴Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, trans. Olive Wyon, Vol. 1 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), 328-49; Johnson, "Church and Sect," 539-41.

body of religious teaching. This was certainly true of Amana, as illustrated by the Christian Science debate. Many sects also believe they have a monopoly on religious truth. This was never the case with these Inspirationists at any point in their history. They felt theirs was the best, though not the only, way to God. Sects generally tend to be lay organizations. Amana Church Society remains a lay organization to this day and has effectively resisted the tendency to establish a professional clergy, as is usually the case with denominations.

Sects further tend to reject the religious division of labor and hold all members to the same religious obligations. Amana maintained this position throughout its history, except for the specialized function of the lay elders. Next, sects require members to show some mark of merit to join. To the end of the communal era, prospective members had to adhere to the Inspirationist doctrines and exhibit a high moral quality of life to join the community. Sects also require high standards for members to remain in good-standing. Though not effective in controlling behavior toward the end of the communal era, Amana elders continued to impose sanctions against members who displayed inappropriate behavior. Furthermore, sects tend to demand total allegiance. This was true of Amana, which maintained some lines of demarcation from the world to the end of

communalism. Finally, the sect is a protest group. Though Amana did not overtly protest situations in government or society, their entire life style was a social and cultural statement against the way most of the country lived.⁶⁵

As a protest group, Amana realized there was an optimal tension which had to be maintained with the world. If they kept the tension too tight, they would be in open conflict with the civil government. If the tension was too slack, they would be accommodating to worldly values. Thus, they would not swear oaths, vote in political elections, or volunteer for military service. They would, however, appear in court when summoned, pay taxes, obey laws regarding the operation of their schools, and serve as noncombatants when drafted into military service.⁶⁶

Winter offers a different type of presentation of the church-sect distinctives. Instead of setting up ideal-types and comparing particular groups to them, he chooses, rather, to note differences according to what he calls choice-points in religious congregations. He

⁶⁵Wilson, Religion in Sociological Perspective, 91-92.

⁶⁶William Sims Brainbridge and Rodney Stark, "Sectarian Tension," Review of Religious Research 22 (December 1980): 105-23; Wilson, "Sect Development," 12.

selects choice-points along the lines of internal characterizations and external relations for his comparisons. His internal characteristics deal with what the criteria for membership are to be, what the extent and character of the member's involvement with the organization is to be, and what the composition of leadership is to be. Amana had a voluntary membership with tests of doctrine and ethical practices for admittance into that membership; involvement by the members in the daily services and total life of the religious community was deep; leadership was informally trained and non-hierarchical.⁶⁷

Winter's external relations involve the sect's attitude toward the secular status quo and the audience to which it addresses its message and from which it draws adherents. Amana maintained either a hostile or indifferent attitude toward the world and encouraged members well into the twentieth century to remain withdrawn from it. Even after American influences penetrated the community, emphasis was still placed on its opposition to the ways of the world. The audience from which it drew its adherents was always of German descent

⁶⁷Winter, 111-14.

and expressed an opposition to the ways of society.⁶⁸ Use of Winter's choice-point approach yields the same results as Wilson's church-sect characterizations. Both the internal characteristics and the external relations suggest that, to the end of its communal existence and beyond, Amana remained a sect and did not become a denomination or church-like organization.

Secularization

Analysis of the Great Change of the Amana Society is often made on the presupposition that the various changes made up to that point were evidences of a secularization of the group, which led to the final defeat of Amana's faith. Diane Barthel begins her chapter on "Religious Revolt" by saying,

Although the debate over secularization is complex, it is generally agreed that toward the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century churches appeared to be losing both traditional moral authority and church members. The processes of urbanization and industrialization were indeed bringing new values and new leaders to the fore, and churches, while still playing an important symbolic role, had less power as moral arbiters.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Ibid., 114-16.

⁶⁹Barthel, 75. Her observations about churches in America do not apply to Amana, since Amana remained a sect through its many changes as illustrated in the previous discussion.

Without stating clearly that this is what happened to the faith of Amana, Barthel leaves the implication that this is the model by which she interprets the religious changes in Amana. Such an analysis is not an accurate picture of what actually happened as Amana moved into the twentieth century.

Sociologists of religion do not agree entirely on a definition of secularization. Some make it synonymous with religious change. Will Herberg offers two definitions for the concept: "the separation of religious motives, feelings, and decisions from other aspects of life," or "persons acting religiously in a way that does not express directly the faith they profess."⁷⁰

Yinger points out that these two processes are not the same and tend to confuse a proper understanding of the term. Making decisions in life, without reference to religion, and redefining one's religion while disguising or obscuring the process by holding to symbols of an earlier religious system, are two different matters. Yinger says that what Herberg and others actually mean by secularization is that there is too little tension between the religious institution and the secular order; the

⁷⁰J. Milton Yinger, Sociology Looks At Religion (London: The Macmillan Company, 1961), 69.

former has been conquered by the latter and acquiesces to its standards.⁷¹

Unless religion is defined statically as a system of beliefs and practices that emerge at a given time and are subject to no essential revision, religious change, in and of itself, cannot be classified as secularization. Neither is it secularization for a religious body to accommodate itself to its current setting in order to remain relevant. It must update its methods and structures to survive. Yinger notes, "What is often called secularization today is the inevitable adjustment of the church to dramatic changes in the world within which it works."⁷²

This understanding offers helpful insight into the religious changes of the Amana Society in the twentieth century. The technological advances of this new age forced the society into a situation where it could no longer cope without making changes. Isolation was no longer a possibility when advances in transportation and communication brought the modern world to Amana. Rather than being a weakness of secularization, it is actually a sign of strength for a religious group to change its forms

⁷¹Ibid., 69-71.

⁷²Ibid., 71-72.

and drop some of its traditions to meet the needs of its members and remain current with the times.⁷³ Shambaugh characterizes those leaders in Amana who had this insight as "believing that in a new adjustment to the modern industrial world, the best of the ideals of the old Community could be preserved and perhaps strengthened by freedom from the old encumbrances."⁷⁴

While Amana accommodated where it felt necessary, it still sought to maintain some distance from the world through social and cultural distinctions. One method employed to maintain this distinctive difference from American society was the retention of their German language, not just in worship services, but also in the daily life of the community. Niebuhr points out:

The language question has been one of the most difficult problems with which the immigrant churches have had to deal, for it involved the problem of rebirth in a new civilization. Conservatives in these churches have always maintained that the abandonment of the old, European tongue and the adoption of English as the language of worship and instruction involved the abandonment of all the ways of the fathers and the introduction of a new "English or American religion."⁷⁵

⁷³Ibid., 73.

⁷⁴Shambaugh, Amana That Was, 377.

⁷⁵Niebuhr, Social Sources, 211-12.

The adoption of English as the language of worship would have signaled the ultimate assimilation of Amana into its new setting. However, this was not the case. The language of the Amana Colonies carried memories of the treasures of their heritage and culture in it, and the people were not ready to surrender that. The use of German in worship services easily survived the Great Change. In fact, it was not until 1960 that the first Inspirationist services were held in English. Even then, elders saw it as another compromise with the world, though it was more a matter of members taking on the ways of America than the ways of the devil. To this day, all religious services are held in German except for the one conducted in English at Middle Amana. Thus, the Amana Colonies still retain a linguistic bond with the past and maintain some distance from the world.

A Shift Of Emphasis

Religious change, then, is an inevitable consequence of any religious group which stays in step with the times. Social changes within the Amana community have been frequently highlighted in the popular press as evidences of religious change, which is not necessarily true. However, at another level, something very basic was actually changing in the faith of these people. The Community of True Inspiration began as a sect which Bryan

Wilson would describe as "world-denying."⁷⁶ Their teachings emphasized the evil of the world, so they withdrew from it into a separate commune where a purer life could be pursued. They saw nothing in the world that would further their religious purposes. They felt they could best serve God and prepare themselves for heaven by having as little contact with the world as possible.

By the end of the communal era, a shift in perspective had taken place within the community. Wilson would describe this shift as creating a "world-indifferent sect."⁷⁷ They were ready to tolerate the secular world but encouraged members to seek a better and purer life than others in the world have. They were in the world, but not of the world. They continued to practice their beliefs predominantly with each other but no longer in a closed commune. In economic affairs, they carried on normal business practices with the world, but with a distinctive sectarian flavor. This adjustment to their environment is not unusual, for as Kanter says,

Whatever relationship a group establishes with its environment, with the world outside its borders; however well it patrols its boundaries; and no matter what it decides to accept or reject of the life of the outside--this relationship is subject to continual

⁷⁶Wilson, Religion in Sociological Perspective, 111.

⁷⁷Ibid.

revision in the face of changes in that external environment.⁷⁸

A young lady interviewed a year before the Great Change illustrates this shift of emphasis.

We are sick and tired of this old-fogyism that masquerades as religion. It isn't religion, it's darned foolishness. When bobbed hair and short skirts came in, many of us girls in Amana wanted to follow the fashions and dress like all the other young women of the towns around us. But no. We were told that short skirts and short hair were sinful. The women of our society had never changed their style of dress for two hundred years. . . . [The elders] can't tell us younger women that a woman's morality and Christianity depend on the way she wears her hair. We can go barelegged and wear bathing suits and still be Christians. It's not in the way you dress, it's what's in your heart that decides whether you are a Christian or not.⁷⁹

In a personal interview conducted by this researcher with one of the older members, this shift of emphasis became evident. She said her father, who was an elder, told his family, "Don't mingle with the people of the world. They will just make you dissatisfied." Her own perspective on the matter was quite different, however. She said, "Didn't Jesus teach that we are to be in the world but not of the world? We are to take the gospel to the world. The biggest trick of the Christian

⁷⁸Kanter, 144.

⁷⁹Kansas City Star, June 28, 1931.

life is to live in the world, with all the bad people, but maintain your integrity!"⁸⁰

While this shift is significant, it is not as dramatic as some would like to characterize it at the time of the Change. Some picture the society being drawn headlong into the swiftly moving current of American consumerism and surrendering the importance of religious faith. In her chapter on "The Rise of Consumerism" Barthel says the growing force of consumerism, which symbolized the new industrializing and urbanizing society, came to small towns, "destroying whatever community integrity they may have once had and forcing them to negotiate a new relationship with the increasingly powerful urban centers. Nowhere was this process so clearly seen as in Amana."⁸¹

Although Barthel does not directly relate the effects of consumerism to Amana's religion at this point, she later characterizes the period as a rebellion against Inspirationism, and concludes that in the Great Change the church was ultimately "freed to play a highly symbolic role."⁸² This is clearly not the case. The faith of the

⁸⁰H. R. interview by author.

⁸¹Barthel, 83.

⁸²Barthel, 174, 129. Shambaugh would disagree

Amana people played a vital role in the decisions made prior to and following the Great Change. Even a cursory reading of the minutes of the Great Council and committee meetings which led to the Change indicate that more than lip service was being paid to the religious principles of the community as leaders sought to address the problems at hand, but at the same time remain faithful to their spiritual heritage. The Committee of Forty-Seven, which directed the Change, was greatly concerned that their decisions were in harmony with the precepts of their faith. Evidence of this will be presented in the next section. In chapter V the ways leaders sought to remain true to the faith in the years following the Change will be traced. Amana did change, but it did not surrender its religious faith in the process, and the church was not relegated to only a symbolic status.

Disbanding The Communal Organization

The most common misperception of the Amana Society, as this chapter has attempted to show, is that it cast its faith aside with the communal system, or at least that it disregarded the precepts of its faith in order to

with this assessment; she says, "Most emphatically it [the Change] did not mean the abandonment of spiritual ideals and the triumph of modern materialism." Shambaugh, Amana That Was, 339.

be able to move to the joint-stock organization. Neither assumption is correct. The Community of True Inspiration existed in Germany for over a century without a communal structure. When the group moved to America, it adopted the communal system for economic rather than religious reasons. Thus, communalism was added to the community for the sake of expediency, rather than being the manifestation of a religious desire to establish a community after the communal tendencies of the early church. Many sects chose a communal structure for religious reasons, but this was never the case with Amana. Consequently, it was conceivable for the Amana Society to have reached a place in its existence where a communal organization no longer met its needs and replaced this structure without violating its religious principles.

Wilson indicates that the ability of a sect to do this is a mark of success. He says once a sect adopts its procedures of operation, it quickly stabilizes its life-practices in conformity with prevailing techniques, and then sanctifies them "to the point of refusing to permit any further change even in styles and arrangements that clearly have no specific religious significance."⁸³

⁸³Wilson, Religion In Sociological Perspective, 106.

Because of the strong tendency of religious movements toward institutionalism and conservatism, "patterns of organization, once adopted, tend to persist, as if they were in some sense legitimized and sanctified by ancient precepts, even though they were initially adopted purely as a matter of expediency."⁸⁴ These expedient patterns become sanctified and legitimized in religious terms which attempt to attach themselves to the purpose of the organization itself. The secular becomes sacred, so to speak, and perpetuates its raison d'etre.

Clear thinking and mature reasoning are required for a sect to reexamine its purpose and make changes in its structure. It requires a remarkable adaptability to incorporate contemporary methods into an established religious structure. The capacity of a sect "to bring together ancient teaching and modern techniques is part of a formula of success for modern sects."⁸⁵ Such is the case with the Amana Society. Their ability to make the transition from a commune to an open community and survive as a religious community is the mark of a strong faith and a determined commitment to the heritage of the community, not a symptom of the decay of that faith. The

⁸⁴Ibid., 107.

⁸⁵Ibid., 106.

community leaders illustrated this desire to remain contemporary when they said,

In past times, that which is antiquated was essential to a better understanding of God but has now fulfilled its purpose. One must lay it aside and not close one's mind to the clarity of the higher and higher rising sun of a purer religion and to take no more part in the dusk of orthodox dogma and rules drawn up by mankind, as if religion for all times stands still and no further enlightenment upon it would be possible or needed.⁸⁶

The best way to illustrate this point is to look at the way the elders disbanded the communal organization. The communal structure became a sacred matter early in its history. After ten years of operation, with dissatisfaction by some members, Christian Metz gave an inspired testimony in Ebenezer in 1854 which was interpreted to indicate that God's will was for communalism to continue and that a curse would fall on anyone who tried to abolish it.

As truly as I live, says the Lord, it is at no time my will to dissolve the ties of the Community in such manner or to suffer its dissolution, neither through artful devices or skill and diplomacy nor cunning or power of men; nay, the faith which has love and the bond of peace for its essence and foundation shall continue to exist. And there shall come eternal disgrace, shame and disfavor upon those who cause it, their children shall suffer want and be without blessing in time and eternity. Their material possessions shall melt away and the divine treasure

11. ⁸⁶Stuck and Koch, "Inspirations-Historie," 1928,

they have disavowed; therefore the Lord is against them.⁸⁷

If the elders were to consider making a change in the social organization of the society, they first had to deal with this inspired testimony. As early as 1928, the Inspirations-Historie indicates that the elders were beginning to realize that dramatic change was upon the horizon, and they were going to have to deal with it in light of the sacred status which had attached itself to the communal structure. They had studied the histories of other communal groups and learned from their experiences that the demise of the social structure usually meant the dissolution of the group. The elders definitely did not want this to happen to their group. They had a deep respect for their heritage and believed the community had fought too many battles and had paid too high a price to allow it to come to "such a shameful end." Furthermore, the strong faith and deep belief of the living members had to be taken into account before any decision was reached. Something had to be done to make necessary changes but at the same time preserve the community.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Shambaugh, Amana That Was, 61.

⁸⁸ Stuck and Koch, "Inspirations-Historie," 1928, 8-9.

At first the elders tried to incorporate changes regarding personal appearance and possessions into the community and allow for more personal freedom. They were also willing to admit that change could take place in religious practices, such as no longer demoting members in the worship groups when they married or had children.⁸⁹ In fact, they were willing to do just about anything but admit that communalism had served its purpose and would no longer work for the community. They finally realized, however, that even this sacred institution had reached its demise, and the community would have to try and survive without it.

What the elders needed was the insight to separate the communal system from the religious purpose of the society. In this way, communalism could be dropped and the community continue its existence. The key to the matter lay in a reinterpretation of Metz's testimony. The curse, it was decided by the forward-thinking elders, was upon anyone who dissolved the community, not changed its social structure. As Shambaugh puts it, "The dominant purpose was to preserve, if possible, the soul of the

⁸⁹By this time it was becoming common practice for worship services to be general gatherings with everyone invited rather than small group sessions.

Community and at the same time to adjust its economic life to the realities of the modern world."⁹⁰

Conflict was to be expected. Yinger states that "Controversies are likely to arise between those who claim that anyone who accepts the new doctrines or practices has deserted the faith and those who contend that the new formulations are necessary and logical developments."⁹¹ Consequently, when those resistant to breaking the communal bonds garnered Metz's testimony to make their case, their charges met with this new interpretation. Stories circulate today of an older elder who appeared before the younger elders with an armload of testimonials, saying, "Look here, it says a curse shall be placed on those who try to abolish the communal system." The younger men replied, "If there is a curse, it rests on those who make it impossible for the Amana Society to continue, not on us who want to change it."⁹² Thus, the new interpretation, which was eventually accepted by the majority of Amana residents, made it possible for change to occur without a sense of disregard for religious

⁹⁰Shambaugh, Amana That Was, 365.

⁹¹Yinger, Religion, Society and the Individual, 272.

⁹²Andelson, 367.

heritage. What was regarded as sacred was not the communal structure, but the welfare of the community.⁹³

Interestingly enough, rather than religious faith being disregarded in order to bring about change within the community, as some allege, two theological propositions in particular were used to justify the allowance for it. The first states that God is unmoved and remains eternally unchanged. Humanity, on the other hand, grows and develops. The Inspirations-Historie states,

As we all know, all knowledge of mankind is subject to progress and change as is found in our inspired testimonies. God revealed himself in all times to mankind only to the extent that they were capable of grasping and understanding such revelations according to their state of development and spiritual character. . . . Our knowledge and understanding of God and religion . . . should grow and develop.⁹⁴

The second theological proposition is that God continues to reveal new messages to believers, a central belief of Inspirationism. No one would suppose that "religion stands still for all time and no further inspiration might be possible." As long as human beings live on this earth, change will be part of their existence. This fact is certainly born out in the

⁹³Stuck and Koch, "Inspirations-Historie," 1928, 9.

⁹⁴Ibid., 11.

inspired testimonies and acts of God recorded in the Inspirations-Historie, where God continued to direct the community in new ways across the years.⁹⁵

Our testimonies, read with forethought, . . . warn of stagnancy. If one would not hold so fast to antiquated, narrow-minded views, empty forms and ceremonies out of which the essence and true life have long-since vanished, which in their proper time have fulfilled their good purpose, one could often with few words which have come out of and are born of the Spirit, make a much more virtuous and moving prayer gathering.⁹⁶

Both propositions indicate that change is inevitable and can be welcomed as a development rather than a demise of faith in the community. In 1928 the elders hoped they could make the necessary changes and keep communalism. They soon realized this was not to be.

Once the testimony of Metz was reinterpreted and a theological basis for change established, the way was set for Amana to divest itself of the communal structure. It took a while to bring the older members around to this new way of thinking, but by 1932 it was seen as the only way to preserve the community. The leaders felt they had found a way to make necessary changes and, at the same time, remain true to their faith. At no point in this process had they made decisions without consideration of

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

their religious beliefs. Their chief concern in disbanding the communal organization was to do whatever necessary to preserve the community and its religious heritage. In making the Great Change, they felt they were doing both.

Bertha Shambaugh wrote a letter to the elders of the Amana Society three months after the Great Change and noted the wisdom of their move in an effort to preserve the community. While admitting that change had to take place, she reaffirmed that the faith of Amana was still a vital part of their existence.

One of the pleasures of my recent contact with the community is the discovery that while the Amana That Is is unmistakably different from the Amana That Was, the Great Change is merely a recognition that the world of to-day [sic] is not the world of yesterday and that a better adjustment to the age in which we find ourselves is inevitable. . . . Without following a pattern or a precedent, the new "one man, one vote" democracy, ownership of the corporation by the workers in it, representation of the major industries on the Board of Directors, an individual freedom that will not smother the welfare of the group, and the safeguarding of not only the economic life but its spiritual and cultural values as well--all incorporated in the Amana That Is--are elements suggested by our modern economists for the regeneration of the outside world which has admittedly made no great success of its capitalism, its exploitation, and⁹⁷ its disregard for the integrity of the human spirit.

⁹⁷ Amana Society Bulletin, September 22, 1932.

CHAPTER V

THE OLD AND THE NEW

A New Look at the Faith

This study has looked at the Community of True Inspiration from its inception in eighteenth-century Germany through the many stages of its development in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Attention was devoted both to the system of thought and the way that thought manifested itself in the life of the community. Particular attention was given to the period of time from the death of Christian Metz in 1867 to the Great Change in 1932. During this time many adjustments were necessary as the society came to terms with the rapidly changing world in which it found itself. The purpose of this study has been not only to examine some of the events which transpired in the Amana Colonies through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also to look at the faith of the community through this period to determine the role it played in these adjustments.

This is the first study of Amana to take the faith of the community into account in presenting a perspective of the colonies in the years prior to the Change. All previous studies have been from a sociological point of

view with only cursory attention being given to the religion of the colonies. This is the first time the doctrines of Inspirationism have been systematically presented and examined to show the ways these doctrines were manifested in the lives of colonists. The ascetic life style, social customs, and manner in which colonists responded to various social influences from without cannot be understood without a proper understanding of the religious beliefs of the community. This study has attempted to add this new perspective.

Former studies have viewed the religion of the colonies according to a spiritual declension theory which teaches that the religion started losing its hold on the hearts of colonists after the death of Christian Metz. Consequently, by the turn of the century, members of the community were living their lives without consideration of the Inspirationist faith. According to this theory, doctrines were little more than dead letters and the church was relegated to a symbolic status. As Barnett Richling characterized the state of affairs following the death of Barbara Landmann,

The Inspirationists still lived in a social system which facilitated submission to God, but their traditional goal of service to God and of spirituality

had been replaced by other things as the central core of their lives.¹

Barthel adds to this notion, "The loss of the Werkzeuge [inspired leader] a century ago signaled a critical decline for the church."² Studies by Bach and Webber concur with this analysis.³ This view further holds that changes in the religious structure of the community fit the description of Niebuhr in his presentation of the move from sect to denomination.

One reason for this faulty interpretation is that many previous studies have tended to rely too heavily on secondary sources, which has only perpetuated the error. This is true of Barthel's work and most magazine articles. Janet Zuber's translation work has been an effort to return attention to the rich primary sources of religious material. This study is a further attempt to return to these sources and take recently discovered material into account.

Before the discovery of this material, scholars could only offer conjectures as to what had happened to Amana's faith, in the years prior to the Change, based on

¹Richling, 112.

²Barthel, 135.

³Bach, "Amana: The Glory Has Departed"; Webber, Escape to Utopia.

what had happened to other groups when they dissolved their communal structure. Thus, lack of information is a second reason for this faulty interpretation. However, as was shown in the new material found in the 1928 edition of Inspirations-Historie, Amana leaders had carefully studied the demise of other communal groups and were determined not to allow the same fate to happen to them. This new information puts Amana's religion in a whole new light.

It has been one of the purposes of the study to challenge this faulty interpretation and offer evidence from primary sources which indicates that faith played a vital role in the life of the community from the death of Christian Metz through the events of the Great Change. Rather than this radical change being made because faith was no longer important, as some have claimed, it was actually made because faith was still strong. It has been suggested that it is a sign of a group's strength when it is willing to make changes to accommodate its environment. Members of Amana were dealing with a social system that was not working and wanted to do whatever necessary to preserve their community with its faith.

New material in the Inspirations-Historie, Bruderraths Beschluesse, and Oral History interviews tells the story from the varied perspectives of the official historical record, the private meetings of the elected leaders, and the personal perceptions of the colonists.

An effort has been made in this study to research the community both from the official perspective of the elders (Inspirations-Historie and Bruderraths Beschluesse) and from the lay perspective of the colonists (Oral History and personal interviews) to give a balanced view of the situation. Each perspective lends insight to the view that faith was actively involved in helping the community come to terms with its changing world.

The study might also be described as an examination of what happened to this old-world faith as it moved to a new-world frontier setting. It did not remain unchanged through this period. The intention of the elders in the Community of True Inspiration in Germany was to find a place in the world where they could be free from governmental and ecclesiastical restrictions to practice their faith as they saw fit. They found this opportunity in the United States with its many freedoms, which allowed its citizens to live as they pleased. After they moved to America, they consciously adopted few of the characteristics of the American life style for many years. They laid out their colonies, both in Ebenezer and in Amana, according to the German estate plan. (This was the main reason the Ebenezer property was so hard to sell.) They practiced their German skills and crafts just as they had done in the old world. They maintained their distinctive dress, customs, and language well into the

twentieth century. Most of all, they brought their old-world faith with them, and made it a central feature in the operation of their community in the new world.

Subtle American Influences

The new-world setting, with all its freedom and opportunity, was not a completely neutral environment for this old-world faith, however. Subtle influences began to impact the religion of the community almost from the day the colonists set foot in America. Yinger attempts to show that, in fact, the frontier setting actually created a distinctive American pattern of religious organization. The ease with which groups could form, and the freedom they enjoyed through the American policy of the separation of church and state, created a type of free enterprise in religion similar to that which was found in the business community at that time in American history. This fostered a particular type of church polity, as well as encouraged emphasis on particular doctrines.⁴

The first influence was the American notion of taming the wilderness and making a prosperous and successful settlement. Yinger says this was one of the

⁴Yinger, Religion, Society and the Individual, 274.

most significant trends in the Americanization of Christianity.

Perhaps most important was the fact that in a land where status assignments were not rigid, where new land and new economic opportunities were extensive, where population was sparse, it was easy to develop a theory--nourished by many facts--that men could shape their own destiny.⁵

Richard Niebuhr points out that one of the requirements for making pioneer life successful was a self-assertive attitude. Although Amana colonists were encouraged to spend time in worship and contemplation, the rigors of frontier life brought a pragmatic element to their faith which Niebuhr would characterize as an American influence on the old-world faith.⁶ Amana elders always maintained the theological position of salvation by faith alone. However, they never ventured far from the idea that the life-long process of salvation is furthered by hard work. A member who did not do his/her share of the communal work showed evidence of a spiritual problem since the whole structure of communalism for Amana had been ordained by God. The concept of hard work originated in the old world, as shown in chapter IV, but it was fostered and encouraged on the American frontier.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Niebuhr, Social Sources, 203-4.

This American setting also had its impact on other doctrines. Yinger notes that doctrines brought from the old world, like otherworldliness, human sinfulness, and dependence on God's grace, continued to be taught in the new world. Nevertheless, this frontier environment added particular emphasis to the doctrines of individual responsibility, equal possibility for salvation (the rejection of predestination), a church polity that emphasized the role of the laity, and freedom of choice in spiritual matters.⁷ All of these concepts found expression in the Inspirationist faith as it was practiced on the American frontier.

This is not to say these doctrines were adopted after the sect came to the new world; the theological positions of the Community of True Inspiration were already accepted by the time they moved to America. It is to say, however, that frontier conditions provided an amiable environment for such doctrines and supported the validity of them. A few examples will illustrate this point. Members were urged to take the responsibility of exercising their free will to work out their salvation and live a life pleasing to God. Salvation was available for

⁷Yinger, Religion, Society and the Individual, 273-74.

all, not just a chosen few. Elders remained a part of the laity, with an attitude of equal status of all members before God. Church business was conducted in a democratic manner. The concept of the separation of church and state meant the operation of the sect proceeded without hindrance from any political or ecclesiastical influences for many years as the faith was practiced in almost total isolation.

The last observation deserves more attention, since it played such a vital role in the course the Amana Society took. Richard Niebuhr comments on this phenomenon:

What democracy and free land have meant for the political and economic development of America, the separation of church and state has meant for its religious development. On the one hand that separation has given to each immigrant group the privilege of maintaining and developing its own religious faith; on the other hand it has placed the immigrant church in an environment of free competition, unprotected and unmolested by state interference, and so it has provided the background for a process of religious⁸ accommodation, of a kind of religious Americanization.

Niebuhr is referring specifically in this passage to immigrant denominations in the United States, for he goes on to describe the state support these denominations enjoyed in Europe. They had been incorporated into the

⁸Niebuhr, Social Sources, 201.

political structure of the state, financial support was received from the government, membership was appointed by the government, and in return the religious bodies supported the political authorities. When these groups came to the new world, they had to accommodate their organization to the American policy of the separation of church and state, which led to common patterns of reorganization.⁹

Amana colonists came from the old world as a non-conformist sect. Thus, they had not enjoyed any of the political advantages of the European state churches. They had, however, suffered from the disabilities imposed on them by the European church-state structure. Consequently, their move to the new world meant a release from these political and ecclesiastical tensions. The American policy on church and state offered them the opportunity to do as they pleased.

As an act of appreciation for their religious freedom, Amana residents were always very loyal to the civil government and expressed support of it, even when it imposed rules with which they disagreed, such as prohibition of the production and consumption of alcoholic beverages or use of the German language during World

⁹Ibid., 205.

War I. Niebuhr states that sects and denominations tend to respond differently in their support of the state in time of war. Denominations give support because they owe obedience to secular authority, while sects tend to declare the war a holy war, then support it. Amana operated more in line with the tendency of denominations at this point. They looked on all war as an unnecessary evil and disagreed with the very idea of it. No war, for them, was a holy war. However, as good citizens of a government which allowed them so much freedom, they offered support when necessary.

Niebuhr closes his discussion of the Americanization of immigrant religious groups by saying, "The accommodation of the immigrant churches to the new political environment has tended in some respects toward the establishment of a new, common American church type."¹⁰ While Amana was not a national church, the American scene had a similar impact on their religion as they brought their old-world faith into the new-world frontier setting. However, even in the new environment, the Amana Colonies consciously resisted assimilation into the American way of life for many years.

¹⁰Ibid., 211.

Resisting Assimilation

Several reasons have been suggested in this study for Amana's effectiveness in resisting assimilation into their new culture. The first was the strong social isolation practiced in the community which effectively separated most members from the outside world. With significant relationships found only within the group, colonists were not as tempted to adopt the social patterns of their outside neighbors. A second reason for the resistance came from the self-contained educational system of the society. Virtually all information about life and the world came from parents and elders. This information was personal and unchallenged and taught a way of life and a view of reality which helped preserve the old-world traditions of the society.

A further reason the colonies resisted assimilation into the American way of life was the success with which they employed the mechanisms of commitment presented by Rosabeth Kanter, which were discussed in chapter IV. To briefly summarize, they were: sacrifice of personal pleasure and possessions; investment of time, energy, and financial profits; renunciation of any ties to non-members; communion only with members; an acceptance of all the norms of the group; and surrender to the leadership of the group.

This resistance to the American way of life was also manifested in Amana's retention of their old-world social customs, manner of dress and hair style, and especially language.¹¹ With regard to faith, they did not adopt the methods or doctrines of other Protestant churches in America. They never took part in the revivalism which swept the country in the nineteenth century, and they tenaciously held to their unique doctrine of inspiration, which was not taught by other religious groups around them. For them, religious freedom in the new world meant the opportunity to maintain a separate identity. This they attempted to do for many years.

A New Relationship With The World

Even with all their measures of resistance, the Amana colonists were not able to prevent social changes from occurring within their community. The elders ruled by tradition and tried to keep everything the same. Especially after the death of the last inspired leader, the elders felt they could keep the community on a steady course for the future if they could maintain the status

¹¹To this day, most older members speak broken English with a strong German accent and conduct normal conversation with other members almost entirely in German.

quo. The inspired leaders had made the will of God known to the community. Now that the elders and members knew this will, there was no reason to change anything.

This ideal would not work, however. Changes began to occur as a result of the barriers to the world being broken down from both sides. The world moved in the direction of the colonies when government intervention (such as the liquor prohibition laws of 1884 or the law suit of 1903-1905) and advancements in communication and transportation reached their property. The effects of World War I also helped bring the world to Amana. The colonists moved in the direction of the world as they began to dress and cut their hair like outsiders, buy personal possessions found on the outside, and speak the English language. In this process the very complexion of the community changed as it moved from a world-denying to a world-indifferent sect. It should be remembered, however, that Amana remained a sect and resisted the move to a denomination as it continued to maintain some degree of distance from the world. With this shift from a world-denying to a world-indifferent sect, total isolation was no longer necessary for the colonists to practice their faith. Members now conceived themselves as being in the world but not of it. This shift might be expected since isolation was no longer possible for them.

Even though many social changes were being made from 1867 to 1932, much of Amana's religious practice remained unchanged. To the end of the communal period, the vast majority of colonists continued to hold the same theological beliefs the Community of True Inspiration had taught since its inception. They still recited Der Glauben weekly in worship services; they continued to read from the youth and adult catechisms for theological direction; passages were still read in worship services from "The Confession of Faith," "The Twenty-Four Rules For True Godliness," and "The Twenty-One Rules For the Examination Of Our Daily Lives;" the covenant continued to be renewed annually.

Throughout the period, special emphasis was given to Pietist concerns for spiritual virtues, such as serenity, honesty, self-abandonment, temperance, reverence, holiness, and watchfulness. The weekly readings from the inspired testimonies kept these concerns fresh on the minds of members. The thousands of pages of the Inspirations-Historie recorded almost a daily account of how the community was doing in its spiritual pilgrimage. An examination of the Inspirations-Historie in the last decades of the communal system shows the elders concerned with the same spiritual virtues for members and giving the same admonitions as they had done at the beginning of the communal period. On the surface,

there is very little perceivable difference in the religious beliefs of members in 1932 when compared with beliefs in 1867 when Metz died.

The changes in the faith of the community came not by changing doctrines but by reinterpreting them. As Yinger explains this tendency, "If they [progressive religious leaders] modify the old faith, rather than accepting a new one, they will do so gradually, through 'reinterpretations'. . ."¹² The major shift in interpreting their doctrines related to the colonists' new relationship to the world. Increased contact and business dealings with the world meant that many colonists were ready to suspend adherence to at least three of "The Twenty-One Rules" which had discouraged such contact.

Have nothing to do with unholy and particularly with needless business affairs. Have no intercourse with worldly-minded men; never seek their society; speak little with them, and never without need; and then not without fear and trembling. Therefore, what you have to do with such men do in haste; do not waste time in public places and worldly society, that you be not tempted and led astray.¹³

These contacts with the outside world had been discouraged, it will be remembered, because elders feared such contacts promoted discontent, encouraged a

¹²Yinger, Religion, Society and the Individual, 272.

¹³Rules 15, 16, and 17.

conformation to the ways of the world, and took members' minds off of religion. By the time of the Change, however, most members no longer feared this contact as had former members.

Change and Continuity In The Faith

This new relationship with the world definitely had its impact on the religion of the community. As progress came to the colonies and as colonists viewed the world differently, they also viewed expressions of their faith differently. There is no question that religious change took place in Amana during the period of this study. The real question, however, concerns the motivation for that change. Did religious change, like social changes, occur because the Inspirationist faith had lost its hold on the hearts of Amana residents, so that they were now going a different direction from their ancestors? Or, is it possible that change occurred because the faith was so important to members that they were willing to adopt new forms in order to preserve their religion in a rapidly changing environment?

It is the conclusion of this study that the latter interpretation is correct. This conclusion comes as a result of studying both the historical material of the period, which has been highlighted in this project, and the course the Amana Church Society took after the Great

Change. The Inspirationist faith played a vital role in the life of the community, both before and after the Change, and continues to have a significant place in the Amana Colonies to this day.

A look at the society in the years that followed the Great Change shows that even though adjustments were made in the community, continuity still existed between the old and new Amana in the economic as well as the religious life. The reorganization of the community into the Amana Society and Amana Church Society signaled the most dramatic change the Community of True Inspiration made. The economic base of the community was shifted, and the economic interests were separated from the religious interests. Yet, in practice, the affairs of the Amana Colonies went on much as they had before the reorganization. Communalism may have passed, but the trustees and elders were determined to preserve the bonds of the community. That had always been the chief goal of the Change. Consequently, much of the old way of life continued in the new organization.

In his discussion entitled "The Old Litany in a New Setting," Jonathan Andelson notes that a study of the Amana Society Bulletin from 1932 to 1938 indicates that admonitions by the community leaders to the members were much the same as they had been prior to 1932. He summarizes the "duty" of the members as having four

components: "members should work for the Corporation, members should spend less, should respect Corporation property, and should buy from Corporation stores."¹⁴ He further shows there was a continuity of personnel in the leadership of the old and new societies, as well as a continuity of the economic situation. In short, this relationship between the old and new indicated, at least to some members, that the Change was "a way of revitalizing what communalism had weakened, namely, devotion to the group and its projects."¹⁵ Further developments occurred as the community moved through the years that followed the Great Change, but even with these, the old continued to be reflected in the new in all areas of Amana's life and faith.

Remaining True To The Faith

Andelson concludes his section entitled "The Meaning of the Change" by saying, "What was sacrificed was a system instituted ninety years earlier to meet the demands of a situation that no longer existed. What was preserved was the belief system and a body of adherents to

¹⁴Andelson, 384-85.

¹⁵Ibid., 387.

it."¹⁶ That belief system not only remained vital through the communal period but also continued to impact the community long after communalism was discontinued. The President of the Amana Society reflected on the Great Change one year after it occurred, and noted how the community was still attempting to live up to its name of "remaining true."

Can we ignore the blessed bonds of a Faith that carried people across the ocean? And will we in spirit and thought "remain true" to the purpose of helping this heritage to survive and succeed? If all these things mean anything to us, is it not worthwhile to keep on "standing by," to keep on watching "the set of the sails," and to keep this little ship on its course, so that as each year slips by, we may, with the blessing from Above, realize an ever increasing measure of success and happiness and the satisfaction of having¹⁷ helped in the accomplishment of something worthwhile?

The leaders of the community had to deal with the inevitability of further change as they moved into the years following reorganization, but sought a conservative approach which would continue to reflect allegiance to the community's faith. Tradition continued to have its place in the thinking and planning of the community, but no longer was it used as an instrument of the elders for control over the personal lives of the members. Members

¹⁶Ibid., 390.

¹⁷Amana Society Bulletin, May 4, 1933.

were allowed a great deal of freedom in personal matters, though certain activities were still frowned upon. An article entitled "Traditions" appeared in the Amana Society Bulletin a year after the Change, and reflected the general attitude of leaders toward the way future changes should occur in the new community.

We should avoid such forms of amusements, as for instance public dancing, which jar too much the old principles and especially the traditions of the Church. Changes cannot be avoided, but they should not come as a shock, but rather as a gradual evolution. By doing this we can much better preserve a harmonious working together of the church and business, and perhaps convince many of our older folks that youth is not bound to destroy old ideals, but rather takes the stand to keep them alive. Furthermore, what would the outside world think of us if we were not willing to uphold now under the new regime that what "Amana" stood for in the past, namely a sane, conservative view in regard to any changes that have to be brought about, without any too radical plunging into new channels.¹⁸

Adjustments After The Great Change

The years following the Great Change brought a few more adjustments to the way Amana expressed its faith. The most obvious dealt with the regular and special services. The number of weekly services decreased, as they were slowly discontinued over a long period of time. The first to be cut from the regular schedule was the Saturday morning service; others followed until the

¹⁸Amana Society Bulletin, June 15, 1933.

regular schedule of corporate worship services had only one service on Sunday morning.¹⁹ Several members suggested in the oral history interviews that attendance had been down in the eleven regular services a long time before the Change.²⁰ One reason suggested for the reduction of services was that members worked longer and harder after they started earning wages and did not want to take off from work to go to church. Evenings were spent with the family, and members did not want to go out every night for prayer services. People continued to attend the Sunday services regularly after the schedule was reduced and seemed to have a better attitude about attendance, since they were no longer expected to attend so many services each week.²¹ The three spiritual divisions of the congregation had been discontinued several years before the Change as part of the up-dating process of religious practices. Thus, all worship

¹⁹E. F., Oral History interview 22, Interview by L. E., February 24, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 12. A service, conducted in English, was added in 1960.

²⁰E. R., Oral History interview 36, Interview by J. S., March 16, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 11; E. F., Oral History interview 22, 12.

²¹E. R., Oral History interview 36, 11; E. and O. Z., Oral History interview 61, Interview by G. N., May 3, 1982, transcript, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa, 19.

services were general gatherings (Allgemeine Versammlungen), with all members invited to attend.

While some services were being discontinued after the Change, another was being added. In the early days of the colonies, regular school curriculum had incorporated religious education into it. However, as the state placed more requirements on the school system, religious instruction did not receive as much attention. Sensing a need to do something about this deficiency, several lay members took it upon themselves to correct the problem by starting a Sunday School for religious instruction. The first session was held May 14, 1933. An article in the Amana Society Bulletin said of this development, "Religion, after all, is the backbone of society. It is most gratifying to be able to say in this connection that the initial step towards starting this Sunday School at Amana came from the people themselves."²²

Special religious services continued after the Change and to this day on the evening of New Year's Day, each evening of Holy Week, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve. Covenant Renewal continued on Thanksgiving Day. The biennial Communion Service was resumed in 1956. The annual Spiritual Examination Service

²²Amana Society Bulletin, May 18, 1933.

was replaced with a Repentance Service (Bussversammlung) which emphasized spiritual examination and repentance, but did not require public confession to be made. Early in Amana's existence, these confessions had developed into reciting a set formula which had little or no spontaneity about it.²³ The only special service which was completely discontinued was the Children's Instruction Service (Kinderlehre), which served the purpose of teaching the doctrines of the faith to the children. This responsibility passed to the Sunday School, which continues this religious instruction to the present.

An important feature of the Great Change was that it brought a liberating influence to the community. This study has attempted to show the intense pressure exerted by the elders toward social control during the days of communalism. Everything from personal appearance to ownership of certain possessions had been regulated. While this may have been a social matter, it had religious overtones, since offenses against the rules were viewed as disobedience against God. The elders had never been very effective in controlling members' personal lives, however. Elders expressed frustration in their frequent written and

²³One woman said the members of her generation used to recite the phrase, "I have been bad; I will do better." B. C., Oral History interview 30, 20.

oral statements about the spiritual laxness of the community. (This was perhaps more their perception of matters than true reality.) Such statements created tension in the community, and eventually led many members to disregard the authority of the elders in personal affairs.

The Great Change brought official recognition of the separation of strict social control of the elders from the religious faith of the community, a separation which had taken place in the minds of members long before the Change. Now members could live their own lives and make their own choices without the frequent judgment calls by the elders. Gone were the attempts to make members feel guilty for not doing what the elders wanted them to do. Gone, too, were the charges that any deviation from the norm was open disobedience to the will of God. Such freedom from constraint brought a liberating influence to the community and resulted in members having a much better attitude about allegiance to the group.

Allegiance to the Amana Society was even more voluntary after the Change than it had been under communalism. As was mentioned in chapter IV, though there were no actual walls around the Amana property, social control during the communal period made it very difficult for members to leave the group. However, under the new organization, members were much freer to leave if they

desired. Most stayed, however, and many former members returned as a result of this new freedom in the community.

One development in the religious structure of the society that is often noted in Amana studies is the decrease in the number of elders across the years. From 1884 to 1907 there were ninety-one active elders in the church. From 1908 to 1931 there were sixty-four. The period from 1932 to 1951 showed thirty-four elders, and 1952 to 1970 had twenty-nine. There are currently sixteen elders in the Amana Church Society.

Two reasons can be offered for the decreasing number of elders. The first is that when the number of services decreased, fewer elders were needed to conduct the ones that remained. The second has to do with the attitude with which elders assume their place of spiritual leadership. Until 1883, elders were appointed by the inspired leader and accepted the position almost without thought. If the inspired leader said an individual had the gifts and graces of eldership, and the selection was made as the will of God, who would deny it? After the death of the last inspired leader, appointments to eldership fell to the Great Council. In those earlier days, it was an honor to be selected by this group of spiritual leaders, and choices were not questioned. Since elders served for life, a change in attitude toward appointments to eldership was not detected for many years.

By-law number nine of the Amana Church Society constitution states that elders are still to be appointed by the Board of Trustees of the church. For the last several years, however, appointments have been made only after members have stepped forward and offered their services for eldership. Members have been more reluctant to serve, feeling they might not be able to live up to the expectations of the office, or being too humble to have their lives used as an example for others, or unable to take on the added responsibility of eldership. Thus, reluctance to serve may be viewed more as a sense of inadequacy or humility to volunteer than an evidence of deterioration of faith in the community. Informants say there has been a recent improvement in this feeling with more members becoming willing to serve. History was made in the Amana Church Society in November 1987 when Kristie Berger was elected as the first female elder.

Faith In Amana Today

The Inspirationist faith still lives in Amana today. Henry Moershel wrote of the church a few years ago,

Truly, the church has been able to retain a position of prominence in Amana's Heritage. The church is still considered "the Soul of Amana," and gratefully may we acknowledge that it has not succumbed in the

hum and whirl of new activities and worldly interests.²⁴

A visit to an Amana church service is like stepping back in time to early eighteenth-century Germany. The buildings are the same simple structures they always were with plain walls, hardwood floors, and simply constructed wooden benches. The services are conducted in much the same way they are described in the historical accounts of the original groups. Men and women still enter the sanctuary through their respective doors, and sit on opposite sides of the building in order of age, with the youngest at the front. Elders continue to lead the service from a table at the front of the church. The same black garb is worn by the women and simple dress by the men. The same songs are sung; the same inspired testimonies are read; the same spiritual admonitions are given in elders' sermons. The order of worship is much the same as it has been for over two hundred and seventy years, right down to the occasions for standing, sitting, and kneeling by the congregation.

The Amana Church Society still takes the responsibility for funeral arrangements of members and pays for all expenses. Deceased members are still buried

²⁴Henry G. Moershel, "Amana's Heritage," September 1969, Amana Heritage Society Museum, Amana, Iowa, 1.

in community cemeteries in the chronological order of their death. The same type of grave marker is still used.

Informants say there is a new interest in the faith by the young people of the community. Two Bible study groups, made up primarily of young adults, have been meeting during the week for the past several years to learn more about their religious beliefs. Many members continue to learn German and read the old documents of the society. Members study their religious heritage carefully and seek to preserve in their own lives the tradition that has been given to them. As a middle-aged colonist said after a recent worship service, "We have a rich religious heritage of which we are proud. We want to continue to live and practice it. It is important to us."²⁵

Everything is obviously not the same in the Community of True Inspiration as it was when Christian Metz brought the first settlers to east-central Iowa in 1854. Their world has changed, and they have been forced to change with it in order to survive. However, the community lives on, and their faith is still strong. Colonists continue trying to live up to the name of their society: "Amana--to believe faithfully."

²⁵L. H. of Main Amana interview by author, August 4, 1985, Middle Amana.

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