

THE EXILE HERALD

MARCH, 1941



*Published by the
Society of the Descendants of the Schwenkfeldian Exiles*

THE EXILE HERALD

VOL. 17, No. 1

MARCH, 1941

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

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THE CENTRAL IDEA OF THE SPIRITUAL REFORMERS

By RUFUS M. JONES, D.D.

Meeting of the Exile Society—Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Friday, November 15, 1940

Thank you very much for all these explanations.* I suppose some of you are old enough to have read "Josiah Allen's Wife." If you did, you will remember that Josiah got a letter from the president of the railroad that went by his house asking him to remove his pig-pen. He never read the letter because it was so poorly written, but he knew it was the president of the railroad so he used it for a whole year as a pass on the road. It may be that this letter of mine was something like that. It was typewritten so I cannot explain it. Anyhow it doesn't matter. I am going to talk about "The Central Idea of the Spiritual Reformers."

A great many years ago when I was younger, I wrote a book on the "Spiritual Reformers" and in the center of the book there was a chapter on Caspar Schwenckfeld as one of the outstanding spiritual reformers, and I am going to tell briefly what the central idea of this group was and I think it might be interesting to know that George Fox is not really the founder of our Society of Friends. We sprang from those spiritual reformers and they constituted the movement that finally emerged in the middle of the 17th century in England into what we call Quakers. But we should not be here tonight, and there would not be any Quakers if it had not been for that little group in Germany, and in France, and in Holland, and in Spain that did not become an ecclesiastical body, did not build institutions, but put the emphasis on *the way of life*.

Now what I am going to do very briefly first is to point out that there are two fundamental ideas in St. Paul, and Luther and Calvin got hold of one of them and Caspar Schwenckfeld and the spiritual reformers of his time got hold of the other one, and I am going to start by telling you what St. Paul's idea was, and then how Schwenckfeld and these other reformers put it into a most beautiful expression of life.

St. Paul's idea is this, that salvation is a personal attainment for each individual. It consists of an inner, inward transformation of life, not conformed to some external, legal system; for instance, the Mosaic, ceremonial system which St. Paul was always attacking. Now St. Paul's central message can very well be called the "Aegean Gospel". Every one of St. Paul's epistles was written either from or to a city on the Aegean Sea, so I am going to call his message the Aegean Gospel. Luther was mainly influenced by St. Paul's doctrine of salvation by

*The announcement of the meeting had carried the title of Dr. Jones' address as "The Central Idea of Spiritual Reference." Mrs. Huber in introducing the speaker, and thanking him for his effort to come to the meeting, referred to the mistake in the announced title.

grace apart from works of a legal type. Now the spiritual reformers, on the other hand, were mainly influenced by the vital transformation of life which is wrought directly on the soul by the spirit of Christ, and this is the heart of the Aegean Gospel.

St. Paul uses the word faith to express the human part of this process, and he uses the word grace for the divine part. Man through faith, by grace, becomes a new creation. St. Paul uses the word faith one hundred times in his volume of letters, and he uses it, of course, with a variation of meaning; but for the most part faith to St. Paul means a vital process, a dynamic life-response to a mighty reality in the universe that was the Spirit. Sometimes he calls it The Spirit, sometimes he calls it The Holy Spirit, sometimes he just calls it Christ. This is the Spirit used in St. Paul's sense that takes over and appropriates the character and spiritual qualities of this Christ Spirit, which is "Beholding as in a mirror the character of the Lord, we are transformed into the same Image", and that is the heart of all St. Paul's teachings, for by living in the presence of this living Christ, we become like him, changed into the same image. "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." In short, St. Paul is always talking about the identification of your life with Him and His life with you.

Religion then ceases to be tribal or national, and it becomes a personal experience of the individual. The old legal system was external, was outside the individual. It was imposed from outside, whether you liked it or not, very much the way in the 18th century the Quakers imposed a certain dress which you had to wear. You had to say Thee and Thou. You had to have your gravestones only so many inches high. If you married someone who was not a Quaker, you could not remain a Friend. Our elders applied these rules, whether you liked it or not. We have fortunately changed that method and you do not see that kind of garb on me tonight, not even evening dress.

That old system was legal and it was imposed externally. It was a system the motive power of which was fear and terror. The spring and dynamic of the new way of salvation was the forgiving love of God in Christ. For Paul the cross is the measure of the suffering love of God. Sin makes God suffer, and the cross is what sin caused. Paul is always saying that. The Church to St. Paul is the body of the invisible Christ. The Church is the organ or instrument on earth of the living Christ. It is a vital organic conception, and this body grows through the ages into an ever-expanding fellowship of persons who are in love with Christ, and the Church becomes God's temple to St. Paul, the place where he reveals Himself on earth.

St. Paul is intensely ethical. He takes over Christ's way of life as love, and finally, St. Paul has a very unique conception of immortality. He has, as Plato had, two worlds; one is visible in space and time, the other is invisible, super-temporal which means eternal. "We look

not at things which are seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal". (II Corinthians 4:18.) By creative correspondence to the Divine environment, we build up within ourselves an inside self of divine and heavenly material — as St. Paul calls "a building of God, a house not made with hands, indestructible, indissoluble" which becomes the bearer and the carrier of our character, our memories, our personalities when the body dissolves and disappears; and that central idea of St. Paul's about immortality is one of the most remarkable that has ever been taught by any teacher in the history of the world.

And now having put my finger on what seems to me the central theme of St. Paul for the religious life of man, let me turn to the central idea of these spiritual reformers. They all wanted a complete reformation. They were not satisfied with Luther's reformation because they felt that he stopped short and did not go far enough. They wanted a reformation that would bring the religion and the Spirit of Christ into fresh life and into fresh action. They wanted no half-way step. They wanted to get at the heart of the Gospel, and they found it at its best in what I have called St. Paul's Aegean Gospel, the gospel which he interpreted around the shores of the Aegean Sea. And that Gospel was Christ relived in the life of a person. "For me to live is Christ." "Christ in you, the hope of glory." "God who said let light shine out of darkness has shined into my heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And once more, "We all, with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image by the Spirit of the Lord." That is the central idea which these spiritual reformers wanted. For these spiritual reformers, that was Christianity. That was the thing itself. We cannot understand then if we do not go back to these realities of life which they were always thinking about, and always writing about, and always talking about, and those of you who know Caspar Schwenckfeld's work know how many volumes it takes to express these ideas of his.

Well, here they took their stand. They could not do otherwise. They were determined to have a transformed life. They were determined to have a new creation, and not merely an organization. If Caspar Schwenckfeld heard William James, as I did very often, he would have thought his philosophy sound and he would always have lived it: "I am done with great organizations and big successes and I am for those tiny invisible molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual, creeping into the crannies of the world, like so many soft rootlets or like the capillary action of water, but which if you give them time will rend hardest monuments of man's pride." Their belief in these simple forces is what I am talking about. It is the heart of the message of each one of these men that are properly called spiritual reformers. They were against dogma and they were equally opposed to the tyranny of authoritative institutions. They saw no way to solve their spiritual problem

without a complete shift from the outward to the inward. They were determined to have a sphere of free spiritual activity in the soul of man, and incidentally in the soul of woman. Like Copernicus, they proposed to find a new center for religion, and the new center was in man's soul, not in an institution.

"The kingdom of God," Hans Denck says, "is in you and he says who searches for it outside himself will never find it, for apart from God no one can either seek or find God, but he who seeks God already in truth has it or he would not be seeking for it." You would not be seeking God if you had not already found Him. Apart from God, nobody can either seek or find God, for he who seeks God already in truth has Him, just as you do not have an appetite for anything you have not tasted, at least I don't suppose you do. He who does not know God from God Himself will never know Him."

The spiritual reformer, Sebastian Franck, kept insisting that "picked up knowledge" and "book theology" and "talk about God" and arguments about Him are all "dead things". "Nobody", he says, "can know God outside of himself — he must find God in himself and he must find himself in God." They all kept insisting on the reality of first-hand experience. You remember perhaps a man was lecturing on corpuscles and he began his lecture by saying, "I have no doubt you all know about corpuscles", and the chairman of the meeting said "We do know a good deal about corpuscles but go on lecturing about them for those who have never been inside one". What I am saying is that these people kept insisting you have to be inside of the corpuscle, you have to get the thing yourself, and nobody can do it for you. That is the idea that lies behind every single one of the great sayings of these reformers. God through the ages is building His invisible church and it is a church of many members in whom He Himself lives as the light of their lives.

I once asked a Canon of the Roman Catholic Church, who had become a friend of mine, what he would say of a person who obviously had grace in his life but who never used the ecclesiastical means of grace. He said, without a moment's hesitation, "I should say that that person belonged to the invisible church and I would say to you that it is more important to belong to the invisible church than it is to belong to the visible one."

Let us turn now a few minutes to see what was the central idea of Caspar Schwenckfeld and others of the seven or eight great believers that I should put in this list of spiritual reformers. "A true Christian life", he wrote, "in its essential requirements does not consist in external conformity to anything. It does consist in personal trust in God through an experience of Jesus Christ which the Holy Ghost brings forth in the heart so that the whole life is affected by it." Here we are back once more in the Aegean Gospel of St. Paul. Caspar is saying exactly what St. Paul was saying all through Second Corinthians. St.

Paul taught that salvation was not something legal, it was not a forensic transaction, it was a vital recreation inside the person himself who comes into the condition Adam was in before he fell, and Caspar Schwenckfeld felt that same thing. Salvation is a vital process. It produces a new kind of person. You pass from a flesh and blood man to a spiritually-centered person who has inward resources. "He who will see the truth", Schwenckfeld said, "He who will see the truth must have God for his eyes. He must hear it with the inward ears of his heart". It must be a personal experience. That is what he said. He makes as much of the divine inward word revealed to the soul as George Fox makes of the inward light. It is merely a matter of words. They are both saying exactly the same thing. At heart Caspar and George are both calling for a religion of reality. They are both calling for an inward test of the validity of religion. It does something to you. It makes you different. It is about as Franck put it, "The true Christian must go inside and have his experience for himself".

Caspar had the quality of gentleness and he had the quality of tenderness. You can imagine the kind of man you would have to be to retaliate for a bomb that was dropped in Munich by killing one thousand people in Coventry, and destroying a great many of the houses in the city to retaliate. That sort of thing is not tenderness and it is not gentleness, and the most amazing thing about this man I am talking about now was his gentleness, his tenderness. I wish I were descended from him. I wish I was one of the descendants of the Schwenckfelders, particularly of Caspar. Caspar had the mark of all these spiritual reformers; gentleness and tenderness. Like Denck, he was opposed to everything that hindered love. I do not think you can say it much better than that I am opposed to everything that hinders love. He took the Cross as his way of life, and he said that he was never going to take the Cross at its softest spot.

I wonder if any of you have ever seen in the art gallery in Milan a picture of the Crucifixion where a little angel, a little innocent cherub, is pressing his finger against the thorns in Christ's crown because he wants to know what suffering is like, and he wants to feel it, and he is pressing his finger against the thorns. We sing "I want to be an angel" but we do not sing it with any enthusiasm, but here is an angel that wants to be like us, that wants to know how we feel. He is tired of being a good little angel with no experiences. He wants to get into our circle; and Caspar says "I am not going to take the Cross at the softest spot."

Schwenckfeld's influence on Jacob Boehme was very great indeed, and Boehme became one of the greatest transmitters of the ideas and the spirit of these lonely and hunted spiritual reformers and builders of the invisible church. Here in him again we have once more gentleness and tenderness of the highest order, and we have in him a way of salvation which calls for a vital process and for a new man in Christ Jesus. Denck, Franck, Schwenckfeld and Boehme form much of the new leaven which permeated the inner life of England in the Commonwealth era.

A very remarkable man by the name of John Everard, a great Cambridge scholar, got hold of the writings of these men and translated them into English about 1625 and they were circulated under ground, passed from hand to hand, and went all over England, especially in the rural neighborhoods. They produced a great change of mind, and it was out of these booklets that the Quaker movement was born. I have hunted these little tracts up as they are scattered in the libraries of Europe. I have been all over Europe hunting these out and getting to understand the lives of these hunted men whose little books were burned by the hangman as they were pursued and tracked about from one place to another. They are the background and the real founders of our Quaker movement.

George Fox never knew Caspar Schwenckfeld and I greatly doubt whether he ever heard his name, but somehow and somewhere he inherited and he absorbed a great many of his ideas and a great many of his truths, and he became the bearer and the transmitter of the precious message for which these brave souls in the sixteenth century suffered and agonized. We are enriched today because these men, these lonely men suffered, endured, and faithfully passed on their conception of what I have called the Aegean Gospel of St. Paul to the world; The religion of life, the religion that comes into your spirit and makes a new start and eventually produces a new kind of action.

There is a text in the Bible that tells about a man who talked with his feet. There isn't any other way of talking that amounts to very much. But until you put it into action, and translate it into movement and life, it doesn't count for very much, and one thing that has come out of the work of these lonely, spiritual strugglers, is that they have made us realize that when you talk about religion, you talk about reality, and we do something with what we discover.

CONRAD BEISSEL AND HIS COMMUNITY OF MYSTICS AT EPHRATA

By THE REV. WALTER C. KLEIN

Address before the Exile Society at Salford Church, May 25, 1940.

The Cloister at Ephrata, after remaining for many years in the hands of a dwindling congregation, seems about to pass into the possession of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and, presumably, as soon as certain legal difficulties have been overcome, the old Sisters' House and the Saal, the only relics of a formerly extensive settlement, will be protected from further ravages of time and neglect and opened to the public as a state monument. Dr. John F. Mentzer of Ephrata has been designated liquidating trustee, and under the capable administration of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission this venerable stronghold of a piety now little cultivated will recover, in part, the spirit that animated it when German Baptist monks and nuns bent double to pass through its low, narrow doorways and worked with almost incredible patience and industry in its mills, shops, and fields. The restoration will be accomplished with skill, and the visitor will catch a glimpse of the community in its prime; yet to all but the most sympathetic observers the interior world of the Cloister's vanished inhabitants will seem elusive and alien. Many writers, some of them meagerly equipped for the task, have told the story of the amazing things that happened at Ephrata. The sensational accidents of its history have been emphasized to the neglect of its vital substance, which is the key to all its riddles. We cannot understand Beissel and his motley band of enthusiasts until we are familiar with the ideal to which they dedicated themselves with such courageous fidelity. In this address, therefore, I intend to devote more attention to the conception of the good life that prevailed in the Cloister than to the concrete manifestations of that conception. The social groundwork of Ephrata contains a wealth of suggestions for the improvement of life in our own generation.

The extent of the community's obligation to Beissel is incalculable. He founded it, inspired it, and, except when unscrupulous self-seekers arrogated authority to themselves, directed it. When he died, the life departed from it and it flickered out. In view of these facts, an account of his life is indispensable; without it we cannot understand the genius of the society he created. It is to be regretted that our most important source is the *Ephrata Chronicle*, which idealizes him, and, though copious, is not sufficiently objective.

Johann Conrad Beissel was born in the Palatinate, at Eberbach, a small town on the Neckar River, in the year 1690. His early life is obscure in a double sense: little is known concerning it except that he was of somewhat lowly birth and grew up in a rather straitened economy. His father, addicted to drink and careless with money, died not long before his birth, and his mother, with the aid of his brothers, made heroic

efforts to rear him decently. She died when he was still young, leaving him to play the pitiable role of a superfluous younger brother. He became a baker, and indulged, during his apprenticeship, in some of the harmless amusements that were customary at the time among the unconverted. Wholly self-taught, he acquired considerable knowledge for a boy of his station. However, he did not allow himself to be seduced by these engrossing pursuits, but devoted himself, from early manhood, to religion. He had been brought up, it would seem, in the Reformed faith, which was the established religion of the Palatinate, but so slight was his attachment to it that, even before he left his birthplace, he was known as a dissenter. This preference for the outlawed forms of Christianity may have been due to the influence of the Anabaptists, who were tolerated in the Palatinate and permitted to establish settlements, one of which was at Mannheim, only twenty-three miles from Eberbach. Whether he associated with these people or not, he was converted, if we may believe his biographers, by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. At the completion of his apprenticeship, he set out to lead the roving life of a journeyman and, after seeking practice in his trade at Strasburg and Mannheim, found a good job at Heidelberg, the political and intellectual centre of the Palatinate.

Striking up a friendship with an educated young man named Haller, he obtained access to the secret meetings of the pietists, who were very cautious, as they had reasons to be in a country where discovery meant expulsion. Beissel, because of his puritanical strictness, was soon embroiled with the bakers' guild. In order to understand the tribulations into which he now fell, it is necessary to review, very hastily, about two centuries of religious history. In Beissel's day, there were not fewer than five distinct Christian groups in the Palatinate. In this portion of Germany the progress of the Reformation had been tardy. It began as Lutheran.

Under Frederic III it turned Calvinistic. Next came a reversion to Lutheranism, followed by a return to Calvinism. Not many years before Beissel's birth, a Catholic had succeeded to the Electorship, and, despite the legal protection Calvinism enjoyed as the established faith, it soon discovered that Catholic influence was working against its interests. At the settlement that concluded the ruinous Thirty Years' War, in which the Palatinate had been sorely involved, provision had been made for the toleration of Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists. All three were represented in the Palatinate, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century the Catholics were improving their fortunes at the expense of the two Protestant churches. For all three of these illicit cults Beissel had a sincere and abiding contempt.

The Anabaptists and the Pietists were in a less secure position. The former had certain rights, which, lacking a firm legal basis, depended largely upon the caprice of the Elector. The Anabaptists stood for the limitation of baptism to adults, the separation of church and state, the supremacy of the Bible, the use of the ban for purposes of discipline

within the church, and for a strict evangelical life that precluded intimate association with people outside their group. Some of these principles were taken over subsequently by the Pietists, and one very competent historian regards Pietism as a mild and late form of Anabaptism. This view, though suggestive, is not entirely accurate. Pietism, its affinities with Anabaptism notwithstanding, was a complicated movement and may be explained, at least in certain of its aspects, as a protest against the spiritual inadequacy of Lutheranism and Calvinism. It assumed, like Anabaptism before it, a bewildering variety of forms. Fundamentally, the Pietists fall into two classes. Some were separatists. They left the Protestant churches and tried to dispense with church life entirely or joined small aggregations of people who shared their views. The rest of the Pietists remained in the churches or were forced back into them by the extravagant conduct of the separatists.

Beissel's enemies, finding that their real grievance against him formed no basis for legal action, denounced him as a Pietist. He generously protected his co-religionists and, declining to save himself by joining one of the recognized churches, was banished from the Palatinate. He hurried home, took leave of his family, and departed in hot haste for a land that would endure his presence.

There were certain states in which Pietists were welcome, and in one of these — no doubt Wittgenstein or Berleburg — Beissel found employment and, after his disenchantment in Heidelberg, where his fellow Pietists had deserted him in concern for their own safety, composed himself for a period of observation. He encountered, in addition to a large number of unattached and unclassified Pietists, two sects, the Schwarzenau Baptists and the Inspirationists. The former, to which he was not attracted, had been founded in 1708 by a separatist named Alexander Mack, who had been an ardent follower of the renowned Hochmann, but had disagreed with his master on the question of baptism. Mack had taken the rigid view that the converted must be immersed in running water, even if they had already been baptized as infants. In this matter he was an Anabaptist. The Inspirationists were a younger sect. They claimed to possess prophetic gifts. Beissel attended their meetings with interest and profit until his physical charm proved too strong for two young women in the congregation and the authorities gave evidence of intending to tame him by relegating him to the children's class. Not long after this, after abortive efforts to make a living, he set sail for Pennsylvania, determined to become a hermit in the wilderness.

Beissel had reached the age of thirty. He was mature and, so far as his temperament permitted, settled. It is important to observe that virtually every element in his later teaching and life may be referred to some model with which he became acquainted before leaving Germany. He may have imbibed his mysticism from Hochmann or any other of a host of separatists whom he knew personally or by reputation. His sabbatarianism, though he adopted it and probably considered it seri-

ously for the first time in Pennsylvania, may have had its beginnings in the old country. His views regarding celibacy were determined by his intercourse with the Pietists in Wittgenstein and Berleburg, where many of them lived unmarried or entered into dubious spiritual unions. His contacts in the new world were for the most part renewals of contacts in the old.

Beissel's ship docked at Boston, and he made his way to Germantown, which at that period was inhabited by Mennonites; a few German Baptists, followers of Alexander Mack, under Peter Becker; and the remains of a monastic colony founded a quarter of a century before by Kelpius. Beissel was penniless. More fortunate than many other immigrants, who were purchased for long terms upon arrival, he made an agreement with Peter Becker, a weaver by trade, and became his apprentice for a year. When the year expired he set out for Conestoga with Stuntz, who had paid his passage. They established themselves at Mill Creek.

A reasonably tranquil period of three years ensued. Others shared the hermitage, but difficulties soon arose and no common life grew out of this haphazard association. Stuntz, after waiting in vain for Beissel to return his money, sold the house to reimburse himself, and Beissel had to build a new one at Swedes' Spring, about a mile away. Beissel found a more stable companion in Michael Wohlfahrt, who later became Brother Agonius. Beissel's pilgrimage to the Labadist settlement at Bohemia Manor, in Maryland, revealed to him the sobering spectacle of a community that had lost its primitive zeal in the distractions of wealth and trade. Towards the close of this interval of relative seclusion the problem of his baptism became acute. He tried to baptize himself, but was not content with the result. Then, in the fall of 1724, Peter Becker and a band of missionaries made a tour of the outlying parts of the colony and gained a number of converts in the Conestoga district. At the baptism of this little group Beissel stood by, yearning for the seal of regeneration but unable to shake off the disturbing thought that nobody was fit to baptize him. In the nick of time he recalled that Christ had submitted to John's baptism. He went down into the water after the rest and was immersed by Becker, his spiritual inferior.

For the next seven years Beissel exercised the teaching office in this minute congregation. With premature generosity, the mother church in Germantown had given it autonomy, and relations between the two were quickly strained to the breaking point. Even the arrival of Alexander Mack in 1729 failed to heal the breach, but, for all the unseemly bickerings and recriminations, not a few members of the Germantown congregation, at various times, transferred their allegiance to the community at Ephrata. Beissel was too uncompromising and tactless to succeed as a pastor. The *Ephrata Chronicle* puts it naively: "He began his discourse with closed eyes, before a large crowd of hearers; and when he opened his eyes again the most of them were gone, not being able to endure the Spirit's keenness." Nevertheless, he was not wanting in mis-

sionary zeal and his ready tongue and compelling sincerity won him new followers in a number of places. At last he severed all ties with the Germantown brethren by undergoing rebaptism. Christopher Sauer, whose wife deserted him to enter Beissel's convent, derided him for his frequent baptisms. His practice reduced the Anabaptist conception of this sacrament to absurdity. Later, baptism for the dead was introduced into the community, and it was seriously proposed that all its members be baptized every year. Clearly Beissel did not share the orthodox view that baptism confers indelible character.

Beissel moved into a house built for him on a farm belonging to one of his adherents, and there two young women, who had resolved to embrace the solitary life, attached themselves to him in 1726. Before many years had passed, he found himself directing a considerable group of such enthusiasts, both male and female. At length, feeling that he had sacrificed enough time to uncongenial pursuits, he gave up his teachership and founded the settlement at Ephrata.

In discussing, within such narrow bounds as these, the curious doctrines that prevailed at Ephrata and the equally curious life in which they found expression the best method to employ is to select a few salient features and confine one's attention to them. Without question, the most striking of these is the monastic life. At first, the eremitic ideal held sway and those who were bent upon a life of unwedded felicity lived by themselves or in small groups. In 1735 this mode of life was abandoned and thereafter the community may be divided into four parts: the seculars, the monks, the nuns, and Beissel, whose title was "Superintendent." The monks and nuns wore white habits. The question of vows was eagerly debated and no inflexible rule was ever established, but the obligation to observe poverty, chastity, and obedience was generally accepted. Midnight meetings were held regularly, and love feasts, to which invitations were issued, contributed as much bad feeling as charity to the common life. It was an unstable, ill-regulated type of monasticism, and anti-Roman prejudice obstructed its development. There was a bitter dispute, for example, when it was suggested that Beissel be called "Father." Monasticism in the Roman Catholic Church rests upon centuries of reflection and experience. The Ephrata religious had no such past to support and guide them, and it is not surprising that they were betrayed into extravagances. The Superintendent found himself unfitted to cope with the rivalries and self-seeking intrigues of groups and individuals, and for a time he was eclipsed by the Prior, Israel Eckerlin, who, because of his overbearing behavior, was at last obliged to quit the community. To this dynamic but dictatorial person Ephrata owed its imposing material development. Beissel could convert people but he lacked the capacity to govern them. The life of the community was in perpetual turmoil. Buildings were erected and torn down, customs adopted and discarded. This clash of personalities really defeated the purpose of the institution.

The only possible reason for leading so rigorous a life was a conviction that it was the sole sure way to salvation. What, then, did these people believe? To reduce Beissel's incoherent effusions to order would be a laborious undertaking. Fortunately, the controversy between the Moravians and the Beisselians inspired a fairly compact and readable statement of the doctrines of the latter. I hope I may be pardoned for presenting here an abstract of this twenty-four page pamphlet, which is entitled *A Mystical and Ecclesiastical Testimony of the Brotherhood in Zion* and was published by Christopher Sauer in 1743.

"God is a single One, an inconceivable Nothing." His purposes, concealed from all eternity, were at last revealed through His Son. There were two falls. As he was constituted in the beginning, Adam, with his consort, Wisdom (The Holy Spirit) was destined to be the progenitor of a spiritual line and the builder of a heavenly order, but, prying into the secrets of creation, he was corrupted, and his spouse deserted him. Retaining the virginal seed, she continued in her widowed state throughout the age of the Old Covenant and at length, overshadowing the Virgin Mary, produced the virgin Jesus. Adam entered into a second union, this time with Eve. Thus far the situation was not irreparable. It became so when Adam identified his interests so closely with those of the evil one that the full extent of his ruin had to be disclosed. Eve, deceived by the serpent, involved her partner in a further fall, and God thrust the transgressing couple out of paradise.

Man was now in servitude to corruption. Nevertheless, God softened the rigor of this bondage and kept the deterioration of humanity within limits by establishing a day of repose, the Sabbath, which was a pledge of eventual release from the fatigues of the six days of toil. God also uttered the word of promise, and two rival lines of descent were formed, the one transmitting the word of promise from one generation to another, sometimes in curious ways, the other handing down the heritage of decay and death. The spiritual succession culminated in Christ, and, until His coming, the office of mediation was exercised by the Aaronic priesthood. God's wrath was placated by the sacrifice of animals — an appropriate method, since Adam had contracted a kinship with these innocent sufferers. God's laws were not perfectly observed under the Old Dispensation, nor do Christians fulfil the divine precepts, for, when the first age of sanctity had passed, those who pretended to follow Christ sought to make God subservient to their carnal wishes, and "priests were given them according to their heart's desire. The same clothed themselves in Christ's covenants and spread the covering of the Holy Gospel over the fleshly life of men . . . There is no sect, however small, that has not its priesthood, by which man tries to quiet his conscience by unlawful means."

The writer, after declaring that the ordinary way of bringing the power of the Atonement to bear upon men is useless, reviews the steps by which redemption was accomplished, describing Christ's Person in scriptural terms. Wisdom entered the pierced side of Her Virginal Hus-

band Jesus, and with the effusion of the Holy Spirit God's productive work was resumed, now relieved of the hindrances under which it had formerly labored.

"There is a difference between the Church and a sect. A sect originates in the will of a man, and is commonly maintained by him and ruled by human reason: but the Church may be compared with a woman, for submission is proper to a woman, just as domination is to a man." The Church is a virgin and Christ is her husband. The same functions are ascribed to the Holy Spirit and to the Church, and it seems to follow that the two are one. The proof of the Church's unity and invincibility is not to be found in the imposing fabric of a worldwide institution. The acceptance of her arduous discipline is the only evidence of membership in her. She wins her way by means of individual conversions. All visible congregations degenerate, since it is impossible for churches to retain their pristine holiness. There is a perpetual conflict between the earthly male will and the celestial female will, and the former has prevailed with regrettable frequency among Christians. In a word, the Church is not to be identified with any church. We belong to the Church only when we embrace the ignominy and outward degradation in which our imperious human will is crucified.

Marriage and virginity are the two chief states of life in the Church. The former has a disciplinary value and should not be prohibited; some Christians never advance beyond it, and for such souls it is a safeguard and a means of sanctification. Despite this merit, it is inferior to virginity. There can be only one controlling power in the Church, and virginity possesses that power. Misery awaits the soul that refuses a call to the highest level of the Christian life. The dissolution of marriage in obedience to such a vocation is lawful, because otherwise many would be bound for life to a state they had outgrown. Indeed, spiritual progress, because its goal is the spotless purity that is to be attained only in the life of virginity, inevitably leads to the voluntary abandonment of marriage.

The Aaronic priesthood has been superseded by the priesthood of Melchizedek, which was introduced into the Church by Christ. The duties of the new priesthood are committed to choice souls, appointed and prepared by God for this purpose. Beissel undoubtedly served as the model for the following delineation of the ideal priest's character: "This office may by no means be administered by a man, because the man's rule does not appertain to the Church, but is an official service that has its origin in the world of darkness. Rather does it require a person who has been prepared by very lofty tests of suffering; and because such a person, by the work he does, exposes himself to the devil's assaults, he must in a certain measure be quite other than he outwardly seems to be, so that the devil may not find him. He must not be obliged to procure nourishment and sustenance for his soul when he has begun to perform the duties of this priesthood, but must beforehand in his whole life have become God's to such a degree that he can spend his

time in the Now of eternity in God's presence; yet he must, out of love for God and his neighbor, have descended to the common level of men in order to become a cause of their salvation. The highest necessity must have driven him to it, the work must be his heaviest load, so that, when the time of sifting comes, he may lay it before God's feet, raise his hands in innocence, and say, 'Lord! Thou knowest that I have not run myself.' Furthermore, he must have met the demands of righteousness, in order that it may be his friend, and, in case of need, his defender. In short, he must have lost his soul and found it again, so that he may place it before his brethren as an anathema."

Baptism is compulsory. It is not a mere ceremony, but establishes a new relation between God and the soul. The Lord's Supper and foot-washing are also to be accepted and observed.

"The most important work that pushes us forward in the way to God is this: that we bring our humanity, within and without, along with all that we are and have, back into subjection to God." Only in service to God do we gain true liberty. One must persevere in this struggle in spite of its hardships; defection is spiritual adultery. When he is converted, a man must first satisfy the Law. When he has met its demands, he undergoes a mystical death, in which he is painfully purged of the last lingering remnants of self-will.

The problem of the origin of this mystical theology calls for careful study, and, as soon as I can command the requisite materials, I hope to be able to offer a detailed solution. Here it will be sufficient to observe that these bizarre doctrines are not original with Beissel but were borrowed by him from the Philadelphia mystics, who were steeped in the teachings of Jacob Boehme. The writings of Arnold and Gichtel are probably the channels through which most of these ideas were transmitted to Beissel. His views on the Sabbath, which, perhaps more than anything else, estranged him from the Germantown Baptists, were derived, in all likelihood, from English Baptists.

It was not difficult for an energetic leader, under the sanction of religion, to dragoon his submissive followers into the performance of corporate tasks, and, in this instance, such works, done for the most part without ulterior motive, have an immense cultural significance. The buildings that housed the colony in its most flourishing period must have been impressive, both in their total number and in the size of the largest. Among them were a saw mill, a fulling mill, and mills for the production of flour, oil, and paper. The least gifted members of the community were employed in the scriptorium. Many specimens of their always painstaking and frequently beautiful work are extant. From the community's press came a perennial stream of pious literature, much of which was printed for outsiders. The bindery, combined with the paper mill and the press, enabled the brethren to manufacture books from start to finish. The most remarkable of the Ephrata imprints is the Mennonite Book of Martyrs. As teachers these unworldly

people enjoyed a good reputation, and one writer at least has credited them with the invention of the Sunday School. Beissel contrived a new style of music, of which "the whole art consists of seven notes, which form two thirds and one octave, which are always sung in such a way that you do not hear the tone which stands between two notes, thus occasioning a sweet dissonance, which renders the art a great wonder." This bald enumeration of their accomplishments is sufficient to show how versatile they were and how abundantly they contributed to the dissemination of culture in Pennsylvania.

Beissel died in 1768. In his closing years he became very eccentric and exposed himself to calumny. Various charges of immoral conduct were brought against him in the course of his life. In most of them there was not even a shadow of truth, but his biographers are forced to confess that, towards the end of his life, his peculiarities were difficult to explain. However, there is no reason to doubt that, in the main, he preserved an unyielding devotion to religion as he understood it. His gifts were conspicuous, and his strong native intelligence, if it had been directed towards some specific and concrete end, would have gained him an eminent place. As it was, his hazy mind and nebulous purposes, coupled with his want of shrewdness and lack of administrative capacity, were insuperable obstacles to success. Indeed, he had chosen the kind of life in which success is impossible, a kind of life that would have no point if it could be successful. There are blemishes in his character, if one is unsympathetic enough to call attention to them, but Beissel must be measured by the standard of Pietism, and a searching examination of his life in the light of the influences to which he was subjected and the canons that governed his actions will acquit him of all serious blame.

After Beissel's death the most prominent person in the community was Peter Miller, who had been converted by Beissel many years before and had left his Reformed charge at Tulpehocken to enroll himself among the solitary. In 1771 he wrote to Franklin that the community would "not propagate the monastic life upon the posterity." The great days of the movement has passed. Ephrata would never know again the tempestuous rule of the Eckerlins, but its peace was the peace of failing vitality. As Peter Miller acknowledged, the "genius" of the growing country was opposed to a life of retirement. It was many years before the last vestiges of the monastic life disappeared, and in the movement for freedom to which the energies of colonial life were soon directed Ephrata had a humble but useful part. The tide of expansion that followed left it far behind. Nevertheless the architects of the new democracy were deeply indebted to men who, like Beissel, had stoutly asserted and defended the individual's right to serve God in the way that seemed best to him. Beissel's spiritual heritage was ancient and honorable, and it included the testimony of all those who, in the past, militantly or peaceably, had enunciated democratic principles in the realm of the spirit. These ideals, transferred to the secular order, be-

came the basis of American life. Yet in the transition from religious interests to political there was a loss. When church and state were separated and all compulsion, except that of conscience, was removed from religion, human carelessness was left to its own devices and Christianity was deprived of no small measure of its social influence. The unbridled materialism that characterized American life until a decade ago had begun in Beissel's day. His life bore witness against it, and it is quite possible that, as the field of individual enterprise narrows and we find ourselves increasingly the victims of the forces of this world, we shall find ourselves inclined to accept an interpretation of life closely resembling his. Whatever defects such a view of our destiny may have, it does not err by placing man too low in the scale of life.

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