

With Malice Toward None: The Inspirationist Response to the Civil War, 1860-1865

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Introduction

The Community of True Inspiration, or Amana Society, like many Pietistic groups, had been associated with pacifistic activity long before settling in Iowa during the late 1850s. From its origins in 1714, the group had held pacifistic views. While still in Germany members refused to serve in the military, and often incurred punishment as a result. After the removal of the Society to America and the establishment of communal living at Ebenezer, New York, a fee was paid in order that members of the Society could avoid the compulsory militia service required of adult males in that state. It was not until the beginning of the Civil War, which came during the midst of the Society's transfer to its new location at Amana, Iowa, however, that its pacifistic tenets were tested in an extreme way. The impact of the Civil War was to affect the Society in a way which was to have a tremendous impact on its later relationships with the outside "world." From 1860 until the end of the war in the spring of 1865, members of the Society sought, first, to influence the leaders of the country towards peace, and, then, later waged an extensive campaign in order to maintain their pacifistic principles and keep their young men from having to perform military service.

Part One: Advancing the Doctrine of Peace

The latter part of 1860 saw the culmination of generations of sectional anxiety as the threat of Civil War became a possibility. The members of the Amana Society, as much as their fellow Americans, sensed the coming storm. Although other religious bodies, particularly the Quakers, were concerned about one of the central issues of the crisis, namely slavery, the Inspirationists were not. They were an

intensely private people who sought isolation from the world. They appeared to feel that slavery, like any other evil in society, would be altered or eliminated by God in due course. They did not believe it their duty, or the duty of any other individual, to eradicate such an institution by any means, certainly not by war. The Inspirationists' reaction to the war, thus, came as an unexpected event.

On December 9, 1860, the Inspirationist leader and *Werkzeug* (instrument), Christian Metz delivered a testimony, under inspiration, at a confessional service in South Amana.¹ This testimony began with a brief address to the members of the community urging them to pray for peace. The testimony was then directed towards "the leaders of this nation."² It urged these leaders to humble themselves and to abandon the spirit of partiality. The testimony went on to suggest that if its words went unheeded and peace was not achieved, then a "disaster" would come upon them "like a terrible storm" and that "voices without number shall, in pain and woe, cry out against [them]."³ The brief testimony ended with the directive that it be sent to Charles Mayer, the elder then directing the sale of community property at Ebenezer, New York, so that he could translate it. Since Metz' testimonies were for, the most part, directed only to members of the Society, this particular example that was directed towards the leaders of the national government was a departure from the routine.⁴

1. Some mention should be made of the manner in which Christian Metz would present a testimony. Typically he would close his eyes and would then begin speaking. He would often wander around the meeting room, stopping in front of particular members who might be addressed by the testimony. In some instances he would walk from one room of the meeting house to another, but always with his eyes closed. The testimonies were usually spoken in a church service, but could occur at any time, the key fact being their spontaneity. The best description of the manner in which Metz' testimonies were delivered, and of his life in general, is to be found in Francis Alan DuVal, "Christian Metz: German-American Religious Leader and Pioneer," (unpublished dissertation, University of Iowa, 1948).

2. Quoted in Gottlieb Scheuner, "The Great Rebellion and the Community of True Inspiration," trans. Paul Zimmerman, 1; an unpublished manuscript in the collection of the Amana Heritage Society, 1994. Scheuner (1836-1897) was the official historian of the Amana community, and his monumental *Inspirations Historie* stands as a testament to his unceasing efforts in collecting and preserving the early history of the community. In the 1870s Scheuner copied approximately 20 testimonies, 44 letters and numerous poems and petitions relative to Amana's role in the Civil War. The resulting 305-page volume is an invaluable collection of material on this subject, particularly as many of the letters recorded might otherwise have been lost.

3. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion" 2.

4. Although the action of the Society in sending the testimony to the government was unusual, it was not without precedent. On July 13, 1848, Metz presented a testimony against the spread of anti-Christian doctrine within the United States which was directed towards "the government of the nation." The testimony urged the government to take measures to control such anti-Christian thought as it was spread by immigrants fleeing

Mayer received the testimony and quickly translated it from German into English. It was set into type and printed by the Society's print shop in Ebenezer. On December 18, Mayer wrote to Metz and the other elders in Amana in order to inform them that he had sent the testimony to various government officials and planned to mail a copy to each of the state governors the next day.⁵ Mayer, evidently carried away with enthusiasm, suggested to his co-religionists that the testimony might gain greater circulation if he were to hand-deliver copies of it in Washington. Mayer was hesitant to pursue this course of action, however, without the approval of Metz and the other Amana elders.

Among the recipients of Mayer's translation was outgoing President James Buchanan, to whom Mayer addressed a cover letter which related the Biblical story of Naaman as an example of the importance of following prophetic words.⁶ Buchanan, however, appears not to have taken notice of the testimony, or at least did not think it worthy to acknowledge receipt of it by letter. On December 22, Mayer sent a copy of the testimony to President David Flavol Jamison of the Charleston convention.⁷ No record of Jamison's response exists. This incident marks the only occasion in which the Inspirationists attempted to convey their pacifistic message to the Confederacy. With the fall of Fort Sumter, in April, 1861, they directed their peace message entirely towards the Northern leaders.

A second testimony of Metz, issued on December 30, again urged the leaders of the nation to make peace. Metz also touched on a central issue of the conflict, slavery. This particular testimony was "directed especially for the President-elect, Abraham Lincoln," who had won the presidency by running on the Republican ticket endorsed by many abolitionists.⁸ The testimony strongly supported the argument, already advanced by several southern clergymen, that the Bible sanctioned slavery.

The testimony urged Lincoln to respect the rights of the Southerners to have slaves, stating "[your] brother's rights must be conceded and validated, according to God's ordinance."⁹ By protecting the rights of Southerners to hold slaves, it argued, "harmony and union shall be

political upheaval in Europe. It was sent, along with a cover letter to the government, but achieved no response. Gottlieb Scheuner, *Inspirations Historic 1817-1850*, trans. Janet W. Zuber (Amana: Amana Church Society, 1987), 256.

5. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 3.

6. The story of Naaman is found in 2 Kings, chapter 5.

7. Charles L. Mayer, "Diary, 1860," December 22, 1860. Mayer's diary is in a private collection in South Carolina.

8. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 7.

9. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 8.

reestablished" and the threat of war would pass away.¹⁰ The testimony urged Lincoln and his advisors to abandon their "unblessed partiality," for the sake of peace.¹¹

In Metz' second testimony might be read the growing anxiety of the Inspirationist community as war clouds loomed closer. The testimony's appeal to refrain from attacking the institution of slavery, while upsetting to modern ears, reflects the overriding desire of Metz and his co-religionists to avert war at all costs. To them no principle was worth shedding blood. Their aversion to fighting took precedence, theologically, over virtually every other principle or policy associated with the war. The Inspirationists felt the need to become involved in maintaining the peace during this trying time in national politics because war presented a potential threat to the Society's well-being. While slavery, and other activities in the world outside the community had little impact or relation to the society, war, and a war-time economy might. Thus, in the Inspirationist's anxiety over the impending war might be read both their pacifistic beliefs and their inherent fear of the effect an armed conflict might have upon their society.

Before the second testimony could reach Mayer in Ebenezer for translation, the determined elder had departed for Washington with a petition, signed by the Ebenezer elders, that the previously sent testimony be read to both houses of Congress. On January 8, Mayer wrote to the elders in Amana again, summarizing his efforts and asking for their sanction of his actions. Mayer noted he had arrived in the capital on January 4, the date which President Buchanan had set aside as a day of national prayer for peace and unity. The holiday afforded by Buchanan's proclamation allowed Mayer to locate and to speak with several officials, among them Senator William H. Seward of New York, and the speaker of the House, William Pennington of New Jersey, as well as the congressman who represented the district in which Ebenezer lay. Mayer extracted a promise from Seward to read the testimony in the Senate and from Representative Elbridge Spaulding of New York to read the same in the House of Representatives.

Seward evidently made a good impression on Mayer, who appears to have been pleased with the senator's assurances to him that he favored the continuance of slavery in the south, although opposing it in new territories.¹² Mayer happily reported that the testimony had been read by Seward to the Senate, but the *Congressional Globe* indicates that, while Seward submitted the wish of the community to have the

10. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 8.

11. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 9.

12. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 11.

testimony read, it was tabled for lack of a motion to do so.¹³ Although Mayer noted that the testimony was read in the House, no official record can be found corroborating his statement.

On January 9, Mayer received Metz' second testimony which the Ebenezer elders had forwarded to him. Before returning to Ebenezer on January 11, he quickly visited Representatives Samuel Curtis and William Vandever from Iowa and extracted promises of help from both to aid the Inspirationists' cause. Mayer noted that he had told both Curtis and Vandever that "the Southern states [were] being unnecessarily aroused and accused."¹⁴ Here he began the process of translating the second testimony, which, he noted, would be sent to Lincoln as well as to Senator Seward and the state governments. In his letter to Lincoln, Mayer continued the argument of the testimony that the Bible condoned slavery. He cited several specific Old Testament passages supporting this contention before ending with the promise that the Inspirationists would continue to pray "and ask God to send the Holy Spirit of Mercy to prevent separation, the tearing apart of this great land."¹⁵

Following Mayer's letter to Lincoln, the community took no action regarding the war until April 7, when Metz delivered his third testimony, addressed "to the President and his advisors," regarding the impending crisis to the union.¹⁶ By this time war appeared to be a certainty, as seven southern states had already seceded. The testimony began by noting that the "calamity," which the earlier testimonies warned would arrive if the Northern leaders did not conciliate the South, had arrived. It chastised Lincoln and his advisors for putting "their own rights before the rights of the Lord" and stated that this was what had prevented peace. The indication was that partisan politics had brought on a war which could well have been avoided had the Northern leaders made conciliatory gestures. The testimony urged the leaders to "[r]ip apart the knot which has been tied and coupled together with the party-spirit," and to humble themselves before God and seek peace.¹⁷

This testimony was by far the longest of the six which Metz would present to the government, and it indicates the heightened anxiety with war so plainly imminent. To the Inspirationists, war for any reason was unjustified, and war that resulted from the disagreements of partisan

13. *Congressional Globe*, 36th Congress, 30 (January 5, 1861), 248-49.

14. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 11.

15. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 12.

16. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 14.

17. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 14.

politics must have appeared particularly abhorrent. Metz particularly blamed the abolitionists for fostering Southern animosity through attacks on slavery. In a letter written in July of 1862, Metz suggested that the war was the result of abolitionist agitation. "The embitterment is so great," Metz wrote, "and unfortunately one has to realize that the abolitionist mob still heightens the hatred in the southern people."¹⁸ He would continue to decry partisan policies and their influence on the war even after it had concluded. As with the previous testimonies, Metz' testimony of April 7 was sent to Mayer in Ebenezer for translation. Like the other testimonies it was printed and distributed, this time to every member of Lincoln's cabinet, as well as to the president. And, like the previous testimonies, there is no record to be found that the new government took any notice of it.

Metz wrote the elders in Ebenezer on April 24, less than two weeks after the firing on Fort Sumter and the onset of military hostilities, that the war was constantly on his mind and was leading him to be sad and depressed. He also expressed fears that volunteers would be unable to fill the necessary numbers, and that the Inspirationists might eventually be subject to a draft.¹⁹ On April 29, Metz again wrote the elders in Ebenezer, once more lamenting the war and urging his co-religionists to support the Union. Metz argued that the Inspirationists ought to support the Northern cause as the Southern states "have begun this war with the North, and the Lord will surely reject the South and give them their due."²⁰

Metz' view of the Southern rebellion is consistent with statements he made in writing the Inspirationist "Profession of Faith" (*Glaubensbekenntniss*) in 1839. In that earlier document Metz wrote that God had ordained existing governments and that they should be allowed to endure. He continued that "he who resists (the established government) will incur judgment." Furthermore, laws were meant to hinder bad activities and promote the good, and should be respected.²¹ Thus, Metz believed, the Northern government, as the established government of the United States, ought to be respected and all rebellions against it viewed as rebellions literally against divine authority. From a practical viewpoint, sympathy for the Confederate cause on the part of

18. Gottlieb Scheuner, ed., "Altes und Neues," trans. Charles Connell, 1:334. Metz' letter was directed to *Rentatnmann* Fabricius, an acquaintance of his in Germany, and written on July 11, 1862. The "Altes und Neues" is a seven-volume collection of transcribed letters compiled by Gottlieb Scheuner c. 1870. It is in a private collection.

19. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 16.

20. Schenuer, "Great Rebellion," 17.

21. "Glaubensbekenntniss" (1839), 12-13.

the Inspirationists would have possibly aroused the wrath of their Iowa neighbors, who, for the most part, were loyal to the Union.

In a letter of May 6, Metz again expressed anxiety over the war, and suggested that the Society should make a donation to the war effort. The unstated object might also have been to cause the authorities to look with a kindly eye and to respect Inspirationists' pacifistic feelings should a draft occur. Metz and his associates frequently referred to the "good impression" that their various donations had made upon the local authorities, and it would be naive to assume that they would not use this favorable attitude to their advantage.²² The donations, however, primarily developed from a strong humanitarian impulse within the Inspirationist doctrine. Although they could not condone the war, neither could they allow the soldiers who fought it suffer unduly because of a lack of proper food and clothing.

On May 23, Metz again wrote the elders at Ebenezer, stating that donations of flour, coffee, and tea had been made to Iowa County for the use of newly inducted soldiers.²³ Mayer soon responded from Ebenezer to note that a cash donation of five hundred dollars had been made by that community in order to relieve the families of newly enrolled soldiers. Mayer noted that a fund had been established to provide payments for the families of poor soldiers until the new troops received their first pay.²⁴ Apparently the elders in Amana had already heard of this donation and were somewhat upset by the large amount entailed. Mayer's letter appears to be a defense of the Ebenezer action for he goes to great lengths to note the use of the money and to say that "the impression made in [Buffalo] was very good."²⁵

The early spring passed without note in the combined Inspirationist communities, although it proved a difficult one for the nation as a whole. On July 21, Union forces were badly defeated at the first battle of Bull Run, and now what many had thought would be a short war took on new dimensions. The added horror of war was expressed in a testimony delivered by Christian Metz on July 28, which noted that "there will be no peace, until a bitter labor and toil has been given for

22. Metz to Ebenezer elders, May 23, 1861, as quoted in Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 18. This view is best expressed in Scheuner, *Inspirations-Historie oder historischer Bericht* (Amana: 1891), 772, cited in translation in Peter Brock, *Pacifism in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 826-27. Here, in his official published account of the war years, Scheuner writes that the generosity of the Inspirationists "awakened a good disposition towards the community both with the authorities and with the immediate neighborhood, which, in view of the disturbed times, also had great value."

23. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 18.

24. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 19.

25. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 19.

the ignoring and the overpowering of the advice of God, by those in power."²⁶ There were many, North and South, who would have concurred with his assessment of the struggle to come.

Following this testimony a period of inaction regarding the war, ensued in the community. During this time Metz and the other elders were busy supervising the removal of the Society from Ebenezer to Amana. At the same time, the Society's other villages were all in varying stages of construction. The elders still in Ebenezer were faced with the problem of liquidating the Society's holdings there in the midst of a war and in an economy already suffering from the after effects of the panic of 1857.²⁷ Charles L. Mayer, in addition to his duties as translator and church elder, also managed these land sales as the Society's real estate agent.

On September 14, Metz delivered a fourth testimony to the leaders of the Union government, which Mayer subsequently translated. At the time of the testimony's presentation, Metz was on his annual visit to Ebenezer. As with the earlier pronouncements the testimony urged the leaders of the government to humble themselves before God, and suggested that there would be no victory until such humility was achieved. The officials were exhorted once again to "let arise again the impartial spirit and extend the hand of peace and brotherhood."²⁸ The testimony concluded with a directive to the elders to send it to the government, and an admonition to the congregation to continue to pray for peace.²⁹ Metz delivered the testimony less than two months after the battle of Bull Run. It represents Metz' continuing sense of urgency to achieve peace, and to do so before more lives were lost.

Shortly after presenting the foregoing testimony, Metz returned to Amana and from there wrote the elders in Ebenezer, on October 25, concerning donations. Rather than making a donation on behalf of the membership from the common fund of the society, the Amana elders, Metz wrote, had decided that a method should be found in order to involve all the members in the donation process. Accordingly, Metz wrote that a circular letter had been sent to all the communities and

26. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 20.

27. Frank J. Lankes, *The Ebenezer Society* (West Seneca, N. Y.: West Seneca Historical Society, 1963), 125.

28. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 21.

29. It is important to note that not all of Metz' testimonies relating to the war were sent to the government. Indeed, of twenty testimonies dealing with the war and war-related problems, only six were translated and sent. The testimonies that were sent typically included a directive that it be done. These testimonies were also generally devoted entirely to the war topic, while those that were not sent typically covered other issues, unrelated to the war.

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read in the church services in each village asking members to donate articles of clothing for the relief of the families of soldiers serving in the war. The responses were substantial. Donations ranged from blankets to socks, from pants to suits of underwear. In addition to this donation, Metz noted that the Amana elders had recently sent a check to Iowa Governor Kirkwood for use in humanitarian purposes. Monetary donations are not always noted in the Society's records, but evidently they amounted to several thousand dollars (many sources suggest at least \$20,000) by the end of the war.³⁰

On March 16, 1862, Metz again delivered a testimony which was directed towards the government, and which represented the culmination of all the war testimonies. Once again the message to the government was that they should become submissive to the will of God. "If only they could recognize the spirit of bitterness, revenge and retaliation within themselves and repent of this spirit, then another spirit, that of reconciliation, might awaken."³¹ The testimony urged the Union leaders to extend peace to the Confederates, declaring that if the Confederates rejected the plea for peace then the Union government would be absolved of continued guilt for the perpetuation of the war. The testimony contained a final admonition directed towards the members of the Society asking them if they could still be so calm and detached from the war if it were taking place around them. Evidently a spirit of complacency had settled over the community with regard to the war, which the testimony sought to correct.

Although an order was made that the testimony be translated, Metz hesitated to send it to Mayer, because of certain "feelings and sensations" which came over him when he considered doing so.³² This was fortunate, as a letter arrived in Amana on March 18, informing the elders that Mayer had died, suddenly, on March 13. Mayer's death sent shock waves throughout the community, as it had been so sudden and unexpected, and his presence so necessary to the financial dealings of the community at Ebenezer. Metz wrote that the news of Mayer's demise was "a terrible shock, which went through my marrow and

30. Brock, *Pacifism in the United States*, 826. The total valuation of these gifts, however, would today be almost a quarter of a million dollars in total value. So unusual and apparently extraordinarily large were the bequests of the Society that the official history of Iowa's involvement in the war makes special note of them. See S. M. H. Byers, *Iowa in War Times* (Des Moines: W. D. Condit, 1888), 44,464.

31. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 25.

32. Metz wrote the Ebenezer elders shortly after Mayer's death explaining his delay in sending the testimony: "I thought of nothing else, other than we must send [the testimony] to our dear brother C. L. Mayer, but I could not, and said to the brothers here, 'we must not let this testimony be read until my sensations are explained' "—Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 27).

bone" and left him "like a beaten man." With his passing, the community also lost its chief translator. When Metz wrote to Ebenezer again, it was to send the new testimony which, he noted, would have to be translated by others. He resolved, however, in the face of the loss of Mayer, to continue to send this and any future testimonies to the government officials, because, Metz noted without any elaboration, "this is so very important."³³

The Inspirationists now largely abandoned their attempt to shape national public policy. Although a sixth and final testimony concerning the war would be delivered by Metz and sent to the government in December, 1862, and Metz would from time to time issue testimonies to the community about the conduct of the war to the congregation, Mayer's death represented the end of the Inspirationists' efforts to influence the government. From this point until the cessation of hostilities in 1865, the Inspirationists would wage an unending battle to maintain their pacifistic principles and keep their young men from conscription. This would force a reevaluation of Inspirationist beliefs and bring the greatest challenge which that faith would face prior to the anti-German feelings the community experienced during the first World War.

Part Two: "We can ... not... do military duty"

On July 13, 1862, Christian Metz delivered a testimony in a church service at Amana which urged the members to reflect on the want and privation suffered by the many people involved in the war, and pondered whether "the Lord our God allows that we too may have men that will be called to bear the yoke of battle."³⁴ The fear voiced in the testimony, that members of the pacifistic Inspirationist sect would be forcibly required to serve in the military forces then waging the Civil War, was not a new one. As noted previously, Metz had worried about the possibility of a draft in a letter of April 24, 1861. Metz' fears, however, increased as the volunteer rate dwindled with the duration of the conflict, and it became apparent that a draft might be necessary in order to maintain the Union ranks.

Pacifism, while not a key element in the Inspirationist doctrine, was, however, an important one. The tenet can be found in the earliest records and writings associated with the sect, and the refusal to serve in

33. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 27. A measure of Metz' reliance on Mayer can be gauged by the statement, made at the end of this letter, in which Metz' says that he is sending the testimony and hopes that the elders in Ebenezer will know whom to send it to because, "I always left it up to Brother Mayer."—Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 27).

34. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 27.

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the military was often cited as a cause for the early persecutions the group experienced while in Germany. In the twenty years they had been in the United States, the Inspirationists had never felt their pacifism threatened. Although required by law to provide men for the New York State militia, the Inspirationists had evaded this slight difficulty by the payment of a fine. The war now in progress, however, represented a problem, and a threat not so easily surmounted.

In early August the Elders in Amana decided to petition the governor of Iowa, Samuel Kirkwood, in order to make known their views regarding the draft and military service, when it became apparent that a draft might be instituted. The petition briefly rehearsed the community's history and beliefs regarding the bearing of arms. It proclaimed the community's loyalty to the Union, while at the same time reiterating Metz' hope that the Union might reconcile with the South in order to end the war quickly. The petition then implored the governor to recognize the pacifistic principles and "grant us that we will not have to go against our religious beliefs and do battle with our fellow man."³⁵ Finally, the donations given by the community to the war effort were cited as further indication of the Society's support of the Union. A similar petition was drafted in Ebenezer, and was delivered, somewhat later than the Iowa petition, to the Governor of New York, Edwin Morgan, but apparently met with no response, as no record of one can be found.³⁶

On August 9, the Amana petition was hand-delivered to Kirkwood at his office in Iowa City. The committee who delivered the testimony found the governor to be very friendly and inclined to help the Inspirationists in their cause. He recommended that the petition be sent on to Washington for approval, saying he lacked the authority to do so himself. He concluded their brief interview by offering to advise the community as needed.³⁷

35. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 29.

36. Scheuner, *Inspirations-Historie*, 759. Morgan's reception of the committee presenting this petition, or his response to the petition itself, is unrecorded. His later attitude towards the Society would appear to suggest that he accepted their views. His later responses, however, did not achieve the cordiality and assistance which Governor Kirkwood directed towards the Society.

37. The account of the committee's meeting with Governor Kirkwood is recorded in a letter by Christian Metz, August 10, quoted in Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 31-32. One of the members of that committee, John Beyer, had already been in contact with Kirkwood in regard to the earlier donations which the Society had made to the latter's office. Kirkwood's attitude towards the community remained one of friendship and support throughout the war and until the end of his life. In 1871 Kirkwood, then practicing law in Iowa City, represented the Society in a blackmail case, and there is a tradition that he often visited friends in Homestead. Upon Kirkwood's death in 1893, his widow, Jane, as a

Following this successful meeting with the governor, the Inspirationists anxiously waited to see what effect their petition would have. On August 24, during his annual visit to Ebenezer, Metz wrote the elders in Amana that he had learned that the next draft lottery would be delayed twenty days.³⁸ He also offered a clear statement of his, and presumably the elders', resolve to resist the draft no matter what the cost. "We ... maintain the position of not bearing arms," Metz wrote, "even if we have to suffer as a result of this."³⁹

On August 23, 1862, the Inspirationists' fears concerning the draft were realized when Jacob Murbach, a member of the society, received notice to report to Marengo, the county seat, in order to satisfy his military obligation. This perplexed the elders, who had believed the draft date was to be September 3. An emergency meeting of the *Bruderrath* (Great Council of Elders) was called by Barbara Landmann in the absence of Metz, at which the elders decided to send a committee to meet with Kirkwood and to see if there was anything he could do to ease the situation.

The committee found Kirkwood at his home and pled its case, stating that they had "no place else to go for more help."⁴⁰ Kirkwood recommended that the Inspirationists write a joint petition with the Quakers to submit to the legislature. He informed his visitors that the Quakers had been allowed to pay a commutation fee of between fifty and one hundred dollars for exemption from the state draft in the War of 1812.⁴¹ Kirkwood went so far as to suggest alterations the Inspirationists should make in the petition in order to improve upon the previous one to strengthen their case. The governor noted that the draft quota for the area encompassed by the Amana Society's land holdings had been set at one hundred and thirty men, including the workers the Society employed to assist in farm work and other manual labor.

On August 31, Elder Carl Winzenried wrote from Amana that a

token of friendship, presented the president of the society with a walking stick which had been her husband's.

38. On the trip east, Metz and his companions found themselves on a train "full of soldiers," certainly an ironic situation for a group of pacifists —Christian Metz, *Tagebuch*, 734.

39. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 33.

40. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 35.

41. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 35. Wright notes that the Iowa Quakers had indeed petitioned the Governor and the General Assembly at the same time as the Inspirationists. Other Iowa sects who had petitioned for recognition as conscientious objectors were the Mennonites and the German Baptist Brethren (Dunkers). See Edward Needles Wright, *Conscientious Objectors in the Civil War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931), 51.

group of approximately one hundred and thirty Amana men had been examined by the draft board in Marengo, and that, as of the previous night, thirty-two failed their physical examinations. In this way at least a portion of Inspirationist men would be excluded from service, even without action by the legislature. Meanwhile, the elders awaited news of their petition in Des Moines. In this period of anxiety and worry, the Inspirationists observed a day of fasting and prayer for the aid of God in their present plight.⁴² The elders also took the practical initiative of sending Wilhelm Moershel, who was the Homestead postmaster and fluent in English, to Des Moines in order to monitor the progress of their petition. The elders were heartened, as were doubtless many pacifists in Iowa, by the governor's message to the legislature of September 3 in which he noted the presence of "some religious bodies" in the state who in conscience could not bear arms, and urged the legislature to recognize their right not to do so.

Their members are generally among our most quiet, orderly & industrious and peaceful citizens, and their sympathies are wholly in sympathy with the government in this struggle now going on for its preservation, yet they cannot consciously bear arms in its support. It appears to me it would be unjust and wholly useless to force such men into the army as soldiers, and yet it would not be just to the Government or to other citizens that they would be wholly relieved from the burdens that others have to bear.⁴³

Kirkwood's solution to this dilemma was to suggest that the legislature exempt those who could not conscientiously serve in the military through the payment of a fixed amount. Kirkwood's resolution was in keeping with the Iowa Constitution of 1857 that provided that no one "conscientiously scrupulous of bearing arms" would be required to do so, but would, rather, be exempted through a payment to the state.⁴⁴ This clause of the constitution was not at all unusual, and in fact could be found in those of several states at this time. The governor's words, however, did not find general acceptance within the legislature, as demonstrated by the protracted debate over the issue

42. During this period, Winzenried writes, the elders were visited by a group of "three Mennonites or Quakers" who lived along the English River in a group of about 400 people. They came to ask the assistance of the Amana elders in translating a document regarding their own refusal to bear arms. They had come to Amana, Winzenried writes, "because they did not trust the local lawyers to do it properly"—Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 42. Winzenried notes that the elders complied with their request and gave them assistance. Evidently the Inspirationists had come to be regarded by at least one other sect as leaders in the move to protect pacifistic principles in Iowa.

43. Benjamin Franklin Shambaugh, *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa, Vol. 11* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1903), 316-17.

44. Article VI of the 1857 Iowa Constitution, *Iowa Official Register, Vol. 64*, 297.

which Moershel observed and reported back to the elders. An early bill for exemption was defeated in the Senate, but another bill, which provided for the exemption of conscientious objectors following the payment of \$300 or the hiring of a substitute, subsequently passed.⁴⁵

The Inspirationists still in Ebenezer found their attempts to receive exemption from the draft were smoothed through the activities of their attorney, George Babcock. Babcock, whom the Society retained to offer legal assistance in the Ebenezer land sale process, became essentially a one-man crusader in Albany on behalf of the Inspirationists. In late August, 1862, Babcock had "a long talk" with Governor Edwin Morgan of New York, who was disposed to assist the Inspirationists. He instructed Babcock to examine the state code to see if he could find "something to help their cause."⁴⁶

Babcock subsequently wrote to ask the elders to send him information concerning their faith and history for use in his arguments. Metz wrote a brief document, dated September 4, in which he restated the tenets. This was translated and sent to Babcock. In the coming months Babcock and his connections in Albany would virtually assure exemption from the draft for the Inspirationists still living in Ebenezer.

Babcock wrote a letter to outgoing New York state governor, Edwin D. Morgan, on September 13, in which he stated the Inspirationists' case with great sympathy and clarity. Babcock assured Morgan that the Inspirationists were sincere in their convictions, and not avoiding the draft for other than religious purposes. Babcock went on to argue, with multiple citations of New York law, that the Inspirationists were fully entitled to enjoy certain religious rights among which was the right not to serve in the military. Babcock urged the Governor to make a decision regarding the manner in which the Inspirationists could remain noncombatants. He noted that prompt action by the governor would "remove a heavy load of doubt and anxiety from the minds of a large number of estimable citizens who would gladly make any reasonable sacrifice, by way of commutation, for the claims of a government which they love."⁴⁷

Babcock's allusion to the payment of a commutation fee appeared

45. Wright, *Conscientious Objectors*, 51. The original bill apparently would have provided for unconditional exemption without the payment of a fee at all. Iowa had filled its quotas for the raising of soldiers by the middle of September, so the draft, already delayed by two weeks, proved unnecessary and was not held. John Ely Briggs "Enlistments During the Civil War," 1 (1917), 384.

46. The exact date of Babcock's visit is unknown, but it is first mentioned in a letter written by Christian Metz, dated September 3, 1862 and quoted in Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 40.

47. George Babcock to Edwin D. Morgan, governor of the State of New York, Albany September 15, 1862; unpublished manuscript in a private collection.

at the time to be the only way in which the Inspirationists could be exempt from service. The practice of paying a special tax to avoid military service, although a viable solution, carried unsavory connotations for the Inspirationists, who felt that even this action would in some way support the war. Metz condoned the practice in a letter written in early September from Ebenezer in which he spoke of a dream he had had the previous night. In the dream, Metz found a large sack containing nuggets of gold placed before him. The seal on the sack was opened, and the contents were divided into two parts. Upon awakening from his dream, Metz interpreted the divided gold to mean that the Inspirationists would have to make payments to the government and that the payments would have to be made in both Iowa and New York.⁴⁸ Concerned that the New York community might suddenly require a large sum of money to pay commutation fees, Babcock established a plan whereby the Inspirationists could dispose of five thousand acres of their remaining holdings.⁴⁹

In early November Babcock presented to a draft review commission signed affidavits from the young men in Ebenezer subject to the draft; this essentially affirmed that it was their belief that it was wrong to bear arms against their fellow man. Babcock also submitted a letter which made note of several clauses in the present constitution of New York as well as its two predecessors which had all contained provisions for the exclusion of those scrupulous against the bearing of arms to claim exemption from military service. The commission, once made aware of this, indicated that the petition the community had earlier sent to Albany would be acted upon favorably. Babcock's actions thus quickly and efficiently removed the threat of a draft from the Ebenezer community.

During the period of relative security that came about through the approval of the Ebenezer petition, Christian Metz again delivered a testimony which was translated and sent to the government in Washington. This testimony, the sixth to be sent to Washington, again urged the leaders of the government to humble themselves and to pray to God for guidance. It also acknowledged the fact that the previous testimonies had received scant attention from the official circles to which they were directed. "The testimony was laid aside, regarded as a fable," while the officials "followed their own [i.e. not the testimonies'] counsel."⁵⁰ The readers were implored not to "lay this testimony aside like the one before it" but to acknowledge and seek repentance and

48. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 45.

49. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 48.

50. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 51.

redemption from what it termed "an unholy conflict." In a rather stirring passage the testimony promised a bright future if only the leaders of the nation would seek reconciliation: "I will create anew, says the All wise God, I shall be and give unto you a new doctrine. If only you have faith, you can obtain God's peace and again find true brotherly love within your hearts to all you now consider to be your enemies."⁵¹

Metz' testimony was the culmination of the directives sent to the federal government. In it are expressed the central themes that characterized all the Inspirationists' arguments against the war: it was "unholy/" it was merely a war of needless vengeance, and it could and ought to be brought to a conclusion through the extension of the hand of peace. The testimony was sent once more to Washington and a special copy was sent by Babcock to Governor Horatio Seymour together with a letter of conveyance. The horror of war became Metz' main concern during the early part of 1863, now that the draft situation was for the most part resolved.

The testimonies that Metz delivered during those early months reflect his general horror of the conflict then raging in the east, which affected not only his waking hours but his dreams as well. In one dream Metz saw two large "blood-skins," both of which were "overfull" and he heard a voice saying that when these skins were full the "highest officials will hear a powerful voice which no human strength can overcome."⁵² In his sleep the next night he was haunted by visions of the invasion of the north then in progress by Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Metz' anxieties also found expression at this time, as previously, in some of the many poems which Metz wrote.

Although the Inspirationists in Iowa were now assured by legislative action that, by payment of a commutation fee, they could avoid military service, the threat of draft still lingered. In August, 1863, two men were drafted in Ebenezer, but one failed the physical exam and the other was exempted by virtue of his religious belief without paying a fee.⁵³ On December 6, Metz wrote the elders in Ebenezer that a quota of sixteen men had been established by the Iowa military authorities to fulfill the draft obligation of the Society. Although an emissary was sent to appeal this decision to the governor and provost marshal, he was told that the order came from Washington and that they were powerless. The due date for this payment was January 5, 1864, and it was promptly paid by the community. By the war's end, only

51. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 52.

52. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 55.

53. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 59.

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sixty-seven Iowa men had paid the commutation fee, which meant that Amana men paid fully a fourth of all commutations in Iowa.⁵⁴

At the time (December 1863), rumors apparently reached the Inspirationists that a congressional act would soon prevent any citizen from paying the commutation fee of \$300. In their anxiety, the elders drafted and sent a petition to the United States Senate asking that the exemption be continued.⁵⁵ The petition was presented by Senator James Grimes on January 5, 1864, the same date the commutation payments were due for the sixteen drafted members at Amana.⁵⁶ Grimes moved that the petition be referred to the committee on military affairs, but this is the final mention made of it in the official record.

On June 22, 1864, George Weber wrote from Ebenezer that two Inspirationists from Ebenezer had been drafted, and both had been found physically acceptable. The commutation fee was paid for both individuals, bringing the total amount of commutation fees paid by the Inspirationists to \$5,500, a fairly substantial sum for the day. Perhaps the true magnitude of the commutation fee paid by the Amana Society can best be seen by noting that, in 1855, the Society had made its initial purchase of 3,300 acres of Iowa land for \$4,125.24 The payment of these fees, which indirectly paid for substitutes for the men of the Society, was, at best, a difficult decision for the leadership of the Society to make. Recognizing the inconsistency in paying others to perform the very military service which they condemned, Metz and the other leaders concluded that there simply "was no other way" to escape military service, and accepted this practice.⁵⁸

In July, 1864, the Inspirationists in Amana once again were alarmed to learn that the Iowa militia wanted to drill soldiers, creating the possibility of a further draft of Inspirationist men. Although the Inspirationists sent an emissary to inform Adjutant General Nathaniel Baker of their feelings with regard to bearing arms, Baker flatly replied that no citizens would be exempted from Iowa State militia service, and

54. Jacob Armstrong Swisher, *Iowa in Times of War* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1943), 91; Briggs, "Enlistment," 373.

55. Wright, *Conscientious Objectors*, 76, asserts that the Amana Society was the first to petition Congress while it was debating the current proposal for exemptions for conscientious objectors.

56. *Congressional Globe*, 38th Congress, 44 (January 5, 1864), 95.

57. Andelson, "Communalism and Change in the Amana Society, 1855-1932," (unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, 1974), 66.

58. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 60. It should be noted that many Quakers, faced with the same choice, opted not to pay the fees at all, and many were imprisoned—Wright, *Conscientious Objectors*, 209.

handed the representative the papers which all eligible citizens were to fill out. After the elders had examined these papers, they determined not to fill them out "even if it means punishment or blame or imprisonment for our men."⁵⁹

Apparently the Inspirationists' stance against service in the militia did arouse the anger of at least one resident of their county, William Springer, who complained to General Baker. In a letter, written in July, 1864, Springer complained that the Inspirationists were asking too much. He charged that they asked for "special exclusive protection and favor from the government and vote en masse against it."⁶⁰ Baker wrote on the back of Springer's letter that "[n]o one will be exempted unless the laws exempt and if they don't do like other citizens I will try the effect of the law."⁶¹ The war ended before either Baker or the Inspirationists found their resolves tested.⁶² The threat of conscription into the state militia was the last to face the Inspirationists during the war.⁶³

From late August, 1864, until the end of the war, they were able to rest assured that their rights as pacifists had been secured. As Grant's campaigns in Virginia and Sherman's in the South progressed, the Inspirationists continued to view the war with abject horror and sorrow. In late 1864 the elders in Amana met and discussed the dearth of interest shown in the testimonies and letters they had sent the government. Scheuner records that "it was decided by all, that it was useless to continue to send ... this advice."⁶⁴ The elders made one final attempt, however, to spread the Inspirationist message concerning the war.

59. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 64.

60. Quoted in Hubert H. Wubben, *Civil War Iowa and the Copperhead Movement*, 162. Springer was a member of a prominent Iowa County family. Sixty years later, during World War I, letters very similar to Springer's were written by residents of Iowa County to protest the pacifistic stance of the Amana Society during that war. Thus, Springer's letter might be viewed as the first in a long line of anti-Amana pacifism emanating from their neighbors.

61. Wubben, *Civil War Iowa*, 162.

62. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 64. The militia was raised in order to counter the growing manpower shortage in the military. By this time Kirkwood had been replaced in office, and consequently the Inspirationists could no longer depend on him for assistance. Had any Inspirationists been drafted after this date, they would have been forced to serve, or to furnish a substitute —Briggs, "Enlistment," 391.

63. Iowa would eventually contribute between 72,000 and 76,000 soldiers to the Union cause, which represent almost half of the male population then eligible for military service. These soldiers were placed in a total of 46 infantry regiments, 40 companies of light artillery, and 9 Calvary regiments. An estimated 13,001 Iowa soldiers lost their lives either from wounds received in battle, imprisonment or disease—Mildred Throne, "The Iowa Regiments," *Palimpsest* (Sept., 1959), 369-70).

64. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 66.

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In late 1864, four of the testimonies that had previously been sent to the government were copied and sent to various, unspecified, newspapers in the hope that they might still "accomplish some benefit."⁶⁵ The Inspirationists were disheartened in even this feeble attempt to be heard when an unspecified paper published a letter which ridiculed the testimonies.⁶⁶ On this discouraging note, the Inspirationist response to the Civil War was at an end. Soon the armies of the North would triumph over the Confederacy, and the Union was preserved just as Metz had hoped. Now that the long bloodbath was at an end, the new beginning of recognition and peace which the Inspirationists, and others like them, had so long advocated came to be.

In four short years this tiny community, whose population was only 1,240 in 1865, had tried to influence the outcome of the bloodiest war in American history.⁶⁷ They had found their own beliefs called into question, and for one of the few times in their history in the United States felt their religious freedom threatened. After the war they would essentially retreat from the national scene. The Society never again sought to influence national policy making on a scale similar in scope to their attempts during the Civil War. The rejection of the testimonies, both by the leaders to whom they were sent and by the public at large, convinced the Elders of the futility of pressing their beliefs and doctrines on an unsympathetic public.

In a larger sense, the experience of the Inspirationists in the Civil War is not unusual. Literally dozens of religious sects offered similar resistance to the war, and some, like the Quakers, gained the ear of the president himself. Other groups were more idealistic, and suffered more. But few so small managed to accomplish so much. In the history of American pacifism a significant part must be dedicated to the various petitions and other documents sent by the Amana community. The experience of the Inspirationists in the war also reveals a great deal about the character and the nature of the group. It demonstrates the total commitment to ideals which the group manifested, as well as the efficient way in which the leaders of the sect sought to utilize outside assistance and resources in order to protect their religious beliefs. The relationship the Society leaders established with those outside the Society was also particularly significant and surprising. Throughout the remaining years of its communal era, the Amana Society would continue to seek the best legal and political figures to represent their interests.

65. Scheuner, "Great Rebellion," 66.

66. Unfortunately, Scheuner's account of this ridicule is unspecific and unidentified. It can be inferred that the letter appeared during either November or December of 1864.

67. Scheuner, *Inspirations Historie, 1817-1867*, 866.