

The European Origins of the True Inspired of Amana

WALTER GROSSMANN

IN THE STATE OF IOWA there are still extant seven Amana villages that trace their origins back to the German religious sect, the True Inspired (*die Wahren Inspirierten*). Originally held together by a communal structure, they are still united through their church society. The early principles laid down for the communal life and practice of worship of this eighteenth-century sect were maintained by the Amana colonies well into the twentieth century. Indeed, the very choice of the name *Amana*, from the mountain Amana in the Song of Solomon (4:8), underlines the determination of these settlers to remain faithful to their religious tradition.

Between 1843 and 1845 more than 800 members of the sect migrated from German states and from Switzerland. The migration to America and the establishment of an ideal community reflected a trend that touched a great diversity of groups: the founders of New Harmony, Indiana, and of Zoar, Ohio; the Icarians of Texas; and the followers of Conrad Beissel at Ephrata in Pennsylvania—to name a few. When they decided to leave their initial colony in Ebenezer, New York, near Buffalo, in 1855, they laid out a new village on the 18,000 acres of frontier land they had carefully chosen on the Iowa River. The search of the True Inspired for promising farmland and their settlement in Iowa, which had gained statehood in 1846, hardly a decade before their arrival, cannot of course be separated from the much larger westward movement.

The economic and social fate of this American community deserves and receives continuous study.¹ But understanding of the

Professor Walter Grossmann, former Director of Libraries, University of Massachusetts/Boston, is a member of that University's Department of History.

1. Most recently, by Diane L. Barthel, *Amann: From Pietist Sect to American Community* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1984).

American community also calls for knowledge of its European background. In order to illuminate this larger religious scene, I should like to examine the origins of the True Inspired, particularly the years of their founding, 1714-1719. In this short period, often referred to as the "*Inspirationsperiodicus*," a religious community found its system strong enough to withstand both inner struggles and attacks from the outside. Just as the immigration and homesteading of the True Inspired in America have to be put in an historical context, so too must their origin in Germany be seen as part of an early eighteenth-century religious phenomenon.

The Wetterau, a relatively small area in Germany, was seething with a rich and varied religious life during most of the seventeenth century. The district is roughly circumscribed by the rivers Main and Sieg, Rhein and Fulda, and through its lands flow the Lahn, Eder, and Wetter. The three major principalities in the area were Sayn-Wittgenstein, with the towns of Berleburg and Schwarzenau; Isenburg, with Budingen and Birstein; and Wied, with the town of Neuwied.² They profited from their proximity to the imperial city, Frankfurt, to the universities of Marburg and Giessen, and to the theological school at Herborn.

The rulers of Wittgenstein, Budingen, and Neuwied, for reasons of their own, tolerated, fostered, and even participated in the religious life of groups that separated themselves from orthodox Protestantism. This period of toleration, starting in the 1680's, can best be described as a "great awakening," and it shares many of its characteristics with its American counterpart, which began in the late 1730's. At the fountainhead of this great awakening, we find the Pietism propagated by Philipp Jacob Spener in his *Pia Desideria* of 1675. Certainly one

could go further and trace a whole line of ancestors among Mystics, Spiritualists, and Quietists; for our immediate purpose, however, the Pietism of Spener is of the most significance.³

In Germany, physically as well as emotionally exhausted after the Thirty Years' War, the voice of Spener had a special appeal. An intractable and somewhat discredited Protestant orthodoxy, both Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinist), dominated the scene. Seventeenth-century Protestant scholasticism, rigid and uncompromising, was taught at the universities and from the pulpit. Spener's appeal to the believer's

2. Essays on the history of the three areas are to be found in *Wittgenstein*, 2 vols. (Laasphe, 1965); *Isenburg-Ysenburg*, 963-1963, ed. Irene Ffirstin von Isenburg (Hanau, 1963); *Kreis Budingen* (Budingen, 1956).

3. Johannes Wallmann, *Philipp Jakob Spener und die Anfänge des Pietismus* (Tubingen, 1970).

heart and to the emotions, his emphasis on individual and communal piety, on conduct and charity, came at the right moment and found fertile ground. His message touched all segments of the population, particularly craftsmen and members of small Baroque courts who were overtaxed and surfeited with worldly demands.

The Pietistic movement can be compared to the excitement of the Protestant Reformation. As the Reformation pierced through a unified religious system, it too, unintentionally, broke up the Protestant establishments. In this process the "*collegium pietatis*" or "*Ecclesiola in Ecclesia*," the prayer and worship groups that Spener introduced to supplement the regular church services, played a major role. Their meetings, where laypersons often played equal roles with the pastor, tended to displace the regular church services.⁴ Like the splinter groups (a radical left), that had developed during the Reformation, a "Radical Pietism" took shape, a "Separatist movement" away from mainstream Pietism. While the churches tried to accommodate a moderate Pietism (Württemberg *General Reskript* of 1706 and 1711),⁵ the conflict sharpened as the Separatists began to deny the authority of the churches. The radicals felt that the "free miraculous work of the Holy Spirit could not be subjected to the rule or teaching of the official power of an ordained church."⁶ Major figures among these early radicals, who at one time or another lived in the Wetterau, were Heinrich Horche (1652-1729), Hochmann von Hochenau (1670-1721), Johann Heinrich Reitz (1655-1720), author of *Historie der Wiedergeborenen*, and Johann Friedrich Haug (1680-1753), editor of the Berleburger Bible.

These Separatists derived ideas and inspiration not only from Pietistic writings, but even more from the works of Jakob Bohme and his English disciples, the Behmenists John Pordage (1607-1681) and Jane Lead (1624-1704).⁷ It was their "philadelphic community," the London model of communal life and worship, that the Separatists tried to emulate in the Wittgenstein principality. Behmenist circles and later German Separatists used the topology of Revelation freely to describe and identify their earthly home with the Philadelphia of the vision of John (Revelation 3:7-13). The importance of the writings by Lead and other

4. Ibid., pp. 253-282.

5. Alfred Brecht, "Das Pietisten-Reskript," *Das Württembergische Pietisten-Reskript vom Jahre 1743* (Stuttgart, 1978), p. 24.

6. Emanuel Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie*, 4th ed., 5 vols. (Gutersloh, 1968), 2: 256.

7. Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Uppsala, 1948).

members of the Philadelphian Society is suggested by a Wurttemberg edict of 1703 that forbade the distribution and reading of their works.⁸

Among the Wurttemberg Pietists who felt that they could not conform to the restrictions imposed by the *Reskripts* were Eberhard Ludwig Gruber (1655-1728) and his younger friend Johann Friedrich Rock (1678-1749). Gruber, theologian and minister, who held the position of head tutor (*Repetent*) at the *Tuhipgenstift*, and Rock, son of a minister, who chose to become a saddler, were to become the founders of the group later called the *Wahren Inspirierten*.⁹ In 1706 they, like other Separatists, fled Wurttemberg and took refuge in the land of the Ysenburg counts who were renowned for their willingness to allow religious refugees to settle in their territories. The Ysenburgs' practice of toleration sprang from religious sympathies kindled by the teachings of Spener and from a desire to remedy the damage caused by the depopulation of the Thirty Years' War. Their policies were formalized in a patent issued by Count Ernst Casimir Ysenburg-Budingen on March 29, 1712, inviting new settlers and promising them freedom to pursue their religion according to their own conscience.¹⁰ Gruber started a modest farm there in the village of Himberg; Rock pursued his trade as saddler. The restrictions on religion had driven them out of Wurttemberg, and their search for more satisfactory forms of worship was still not over. On the contrary, in the new environment their expectations were heightened.

The Separatist groups that exiles had started in other parts of the Wetterau failed to attract Gruber and Rock. Some of them rejected marriage and extolled either celibacy or sexual freedom. Rock, however, tended to withdraw to a more isolated mystical position; and Gruber, a highly trained theologian, was extremely suspicious of ecstatic behavior and of assertions by religious groups that their way

8. Maximilian Goebel, *Geschichte des christlichen Lebens in der rheinisch-westphalischen evangelischen Kirche*, 3 vols. in 4 (Coblenz, 1849-1860), 3: 84.

9. The most important accounts of the early history of the *Wahren Inspirierten* are in Goebel's *Geschichte* and in his articles, "Geschichte der wahren Inspirations-Gemeinden," *Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie* [herein after abbreviated as ZHT] 24 (1854): 267-322, 377-438; 25 (1855): 94-160, 327-425; 27 (1857): 131-151; Gottlieb Scheuner, *Inspirations-Historie, Erster Theil* (Amana, Iowa, 1884); Karl Scheig, "Die Wetterauer Inspirantenbewegung," *Beiträge zur Evangelischen Theologie* 6 (1941): 73-106; Hans Schneider, "Der radikale Pietismus in der neueren Forschung," *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 8 (1982): 15-42; 9 (1983): 117-151; and Matthias Benad, "Ekstatische Religiosität und gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit," *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 8 (1982): 119-161.

10. Dagmar Reimers, "Sektenwesen und Herrnhuterbewegung in der Grafschaft Ysenburg," in *Kreis B'udingen*, p. 256; Heinhardt Steiger, "Die Gewährung der Gewissensfreiheit durch Ernst Casimir von Ysenburg Büdingen im Jahre 1712," in *Festschrift für Walter Mallmann* (Baden-Baden, 1978), pp. 293-318.

of worship was *the* right one. In his "Discussions and conversations concerning true and false separation prompted by today's Separatism between an inquiring and a decided person," published in 1717, he wrote:

The true Separatists are not starting a new sect. To do so would mean to rebuild what has just been broken down; instead they turn toward their inner temple [*Heiligtum*], their heart, and seek to serve God there in Christ through His grace in spirit and truth. They wait with faithful hope for His blessed revelation and appearance inside and outside. Beyond that, they pursue a quiet and exemplary life and show their love for their fellow creatures. Little can be said of their religious services. . . . They hold their worship at all times and hours of the day when God prompts them to do so, with prayers, singing, reading, and meditation on divine writings for the elevation of their fellow beings.¹¹

For Gruber and Rock, the faithful Separatists, hopeful waiting was rewarding; blessed revelation came to them from an unexpected source—a kind of contagious chain reaction that yields a sort of genealogy of Inspiration. We can trace the beginnings of this chain back to events in France, when the French Protestants, the Huguenots, maintained their powerful and courageous resistance after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

After 1678, the year of Louis XIV's conversion to a vehement Catholicism, the pace of attacks against Huguenots quickened, culminating in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. In 1681 the *dragonnades* had already begun: royal troops were quartered in Huguenot homes and committed acts of violence; Protestant schools were boarded up and churches pulled down. By the year 1685 many Huguenots had fled; others, often the wealthy, chose to convert. Despite surveillance and the expulsion of their priests, the Huguenots tried to preserve their religious tradition. Accustomed to family worship, they perpetuated in secret the familiar forms of services. In Languedoc and Dauphine lay preachers (*predicants*) emerged to meet the needs of 150,000 Huguenots. They convened the faithful in illicit assemblies held at night in wilderness places where the singing of psalms might not carry to royal troops on the prowl. From here the word *desert* is derived, as a metaphor both for the spiritual desolation of Huguenots in southeastern France and for the geography of their assemblies.¹²

A situation of excruciating anxiety prompted hopes of relief and a willingness to seek signs wherever they could be found. In the words of Hillel Schwartz, "the faithful by their very suffering were participants in the necessary fulfillment of scripture prophecy. When the

11. Goebel, *Geschichte*, 3: 131-132.

12. Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets* (Berkeley, 1980), p. 14

first prophets appeared among them in 1688 the people of the Desert exulted, for then truly these were the last days, and persecutions could not last much longer."¹³

The first recorded prophecy emanated from a sixteen-year-old shepherdess, Isabeau Vincent, of the village of Saou near Crest in the Dauphine. Her father, a convert to Catholicism, had left the Protestant Church under economic pressure several years before the Revocation, and she was brought up by a Huguenot uncle. On the nights of February 2 and 3, 1688, she fell into a deep sleep, from which all attempts failed to awaken her. In this state she "spoke and uttered many Excellent and Divine Matters,"¹⁴ and continued to do so for many weeks, first speaking in her own local dialect and later, in the presence of visitors from other parts of France, in Parisian French, which she had never learned. Her messages were in the form of psalm-singing, prayers, addresses, and censure of "converters," among them her own father. "Among the many Menaces, which she makes against the wicked, she mixes Promises to the Faithful and to such as shall Repent."¹⁵ She spoke other words clearly and accompanied them with gestures. Physicians examined her while she talked, to attest to the genuineness of the inspirational message, and her words were written down. She herself claimed, "It is not I that speak, but the Spirit that is within me"; and, referring to the prophecy of Joel, "It shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy."¹⁶

Within six months younger and older prophets appeared, fulfilling the word in the Scriptures. By the autumn of 1701 there were literally hundreds of prophets, many of them of the same generation as the children who had preached in 1688. The Inspired (*les inspires*) also became more aggressive. Isabeau, terrifying the witnesses who testified against her as a "*fanatique*," prayed in court for the conversion of her judges. A group of women and children who had rescued an *inspire* from the clutches of three priests were led by him to the Catholic village church, where they destroyed the altar and smashed the crucifix. Early in 1702 an itinerant band of *inspires* and their companions had gathered in the mountains of the Cevennes, fugitives from the deadly justice of priests and soldiers.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

14. Pierre Jurieu, *The Reflections . . . upon the strange and miraculous exstasies of Isabel Vincent* (London, 1689), p. 3.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

16. Joel 2:28. See Schwartz, *French Prophets*, p. 18.

And thus it was that here, in the center of the Protestant resistance, there originated the well-known revolt of the Camisards, under the command of a twenty-one-year-old prophet, Colonel Jean Cavalier. Among the thousand or more who entered the guerrilla ranks were men and women who would figure prominently among the later exiles in London and missionaries on the Continent: Cavalier himself, Elie Marion, Niclas Fatio, Durand Fage, and Jean and Henriette Allut. The war lasted two years and ended for the most part in the fall of 1704, although sporadic actions occurred until 1710. Yet, even in exile these "French Prophets," an essentially pietistic, emotional offshoot of the Huguenots, did not stop their predictions. On the contrary, they continued to prophesy in England and, with missionary zeal, undertook to visit Protestant religious centers on the Continent, in Holland and Germany.

This campaign brought them to Halle, where the Pietist August Hermann Francke had developed a large complex of *Waisenh'duser*—orphanages, churches, schools, a hospital, homes for the aged, a printing house—all aimed at realizing the ideas and ideals of Pietism. Jean Allut, Elie Marion, and their scribes were at Halle from May 17 to June 22, 1713, the guests of Allut's uncle Marchand, a French teacher at Glaucha, part of Francke's parish. During their stay Jean Allut had inspiration almost daily. With many variations from gentle movements to violent convulsions, from soft vocal remarks to wild roars, preaching in a state of inspiration can be generally described as follows: The prophet or prophetess beat his head with his hands for some time, then fell onto his back; stomach and throat swelled up, and he remained speechless for some minutes, after which he burst out with utterances. Part of their religious exercises consisted also of readings **from the Bible and from** *Cri d'alarme en avertissement aux nations*, a **collection** of prophecies and testimonies of the Cevennes *inspires*, and the singing of hymns in French and German. Upon leaving Glaucha the prophets urged their hosts and friends to continue their prayer meetings in the expectation that tools of inspiration would emerge among them.

Indeed, "inspiration" again proved contagious, and the daughter of one of the employees at the *Waisenhaus* at Halle, Maria Elisabeth Mathes, began to express her visions. Also, the brothers Pott—Johann Tobias, a medical student, Johann Heinrich, a student of jurisprudence, and August Friedrich, a theological candidate—usually described as studying at Halle (which is certain only in the case of Johann Heinrich), came under the spell of inspiration.¹⁷ On January 29, 1714,

17. Goebel, in ZHT, 24 (1845): 305; *Der Briefwechsel C.H.v.Cansteins mit August Herman Francke* (Berlin, 1972), p. 641.

at the bidding of Maria Elisabeth Mathes, a love feast (*agape*) was held, attended by thirty-one persons, among them Reformed and Lutherans. It was modeled on the scriptural record of the Last Supper, with mutual washing of feet and the distribution of bread and wine by Johann Tobias Pott, the medical student.¹⁸ The celebration in this manner was intended to express the spirit of religious reawakening and the communal binding of the participants to one another. It had been enacted by the French prophets, by Jean Labadie and his followers at Herford, by the Baptist dunkers at Schwarzenau, and it was to become central to the religious life of the True Inspired, and later to Zinzendorf and his Brethren.

Although the French *inspires* had stirred up a flurry of excitement in Halle, they confined their subsequent activities to homes. They still wished, however, to be noticed by August Hermann Francke; nor could he ignore them. It was particularly the claims of Maria Elisabeth Mathes and the love feast that prompted Francke to express his disapproval from the pulpit and to warn against such aberrations. Nevertheless, as he wrote to the Prussian minister Count Alexander, he did not consider the French prophets to be fraudulent: "I am persuaded that they do not act out of malice, and it is my experience that such affairs subside best if not handled with violence."¹⁹

Maria Elisabeth Mathes and the brothers Pott traveled from Halle to Berlin, where they were ridiculed, and then to the Wetterau. Many of the Separatists there were wholly ready to receive these messengers, the *Werkzeuge* (tools) as they were called. The appearance of the "tools" is described as sensational—one heard these "voices of God, trumpet and thunder, roar like lions and speak in different languages."²⁰ For their first rallying point in the Wetterau they chose Hanau in South Hesse, renowned for the long-standing tradition of religious leniency of the ruling family, the counts of Hanau-Münzenberg.²¹ The arrival of the brothers Pott attracted Separatists from various quarters. Among them were the fervent and serious seekers from the Ronneburg, Eva Katharina Wagner and Gottfried Neumann (1687-1782), to whom August Friedrich Pott had addressed an invitation; but it was allegedly on his own impulse, like the holy kings from the Orient, that he had directed himself to Hanau. They were joined by Neumann's unmarried sister-in-law, Johanna Margaretha Melchior, who as a thirteen-year-old had experienced an awakening and had

18. Gustav Kramer, *August Hermann Francke*, 2 vols. (Halle, 1882), 2: 166-167.

19. *Ibid.*, 2: 164.

20. Goebel, *Geschichte*, 3: 136.

21. Scheig, in *Beiträge zur Evangelischen Theologie*, 6 (1941): 84.

undergone stormy years that had drawn her away from ascetic religious commitments to a worldly life. All three were deeply moved by the Pott brothers' messages (*Aussprachen*). Johanna Margaretha Melchoir was first to express repentance, to become a tool of inspiration (October 14, 1714) and to join the Potts. Neumann and Wagner soon followed.²²

Eberhard Ludwig Gruber's first reaction to the appearance of the *Inspirierien* was not only mistrust but horror, which he made public in a pamphlet, *Prüfung des Geistes*. On November 15, 1714, at the bidding of God, one of the Pott brothers and Johanna Margaretha Melchior, already in a state of inspiration, appeared at his door.²³ Gruber took them in and called in his friend Rock. Gruber experienced a serious and intense prayerful struggle, kneeling on the floor for two hours, while the others continued their stormy movements and messages. He confronted his own most important objections and they dissolved. Meanwhile, in their presence, with overpowering clairvoyance, Johanna Margaretha Melchoir disclosed to Gruber his state of mind ("*seinen ganzen inneren Zustand*"), without naming him, and brought forth prophecies concerning his future that frightened him because of their glory and his awareness of his own unworthiness. Gruber fell into a state of excitement and exhaustion that slowly subsided. Rock's reaction was different:

When I entered the room of my beloved brother Gruber, Johanna Melchior was already in motion and spoke ... but I did not pay as much attention to it as to my heart. Meanwhile my somber mood changed to a brighter one and I could watch the motions Pott made and listen to his utterances without fear. My heart remained in constant peace through all that happened; this was the first sign that it is a good and not an evil spirit. After a few days they returned and also came to our house. A large room was full of many people, most of them newcomers [*Fremdlinge dieses Landes*], whose hearts were so challenged that they shed many a tear, and readily and eagerly confessed the sins that they had long excused and denied. At that I became so moved that I could not restrain myself, but had to confess freely what weighed me down and especially the bands that held me from the outside. After a short time a message was expressed that promised the loosing of the bands.²⁴

In the winter of 1714 in the Wetterau alone, eight persons were awakened to true inspiration, and they in turn vigorously recruited new tools. Before Gruber and Rock joined the Potts the leading Separatists, Andreas Gross and Jakob Elsasser at Frankfurt, had been won

22. Goebel, *Geschichte*, 3: 136.

23. Ibid., p. 137.

24. Johann Friedrich Rock, "Erzählung wie er zu dem besondern Werck der Inspiration gekommen im Jahr 1714," *Dritte Sammlung oder Auszug aus denen Jähr-Büchern der Wahren Inspirations-Gemeinschaften* (1777), p. 131.

for the cause. One might date a more formal organization of the future communities of the True Inspired from the founding of a "brotherly prayer community" at Himbach in Biidingen on November 16, 1714. Gruber described in *Nothiges und nützliches Gespr'dch von der wahren und falschen Inspiration* (1716) the model that then emerged and would guide all future worship meetings of the Inspired:

Upon the bidding of the Spirit of God and his designation of overseers in a mutual agreement they shall gather often, daily when possible; then they shall sing an appropriate hymn and, after another silence, unite kneeling in prayer offered by anyone, regardless of status, who feels moved and graced by the Lord's Spirit. After silence a chapter from the Holy Scriptures is to be read, accompanied by more expressions of feelings than by elaborate exegesis. Then a psalm will be read, often evoking brief encouraging memories, and finally a hymn will be sung. Should True Inspired be present and the Spirit move them to utterances, the order of the meeting will be halted until they have concluded. If, however, false Inspired try to step forward with their movements and messages they will be confronted and immediately resisted in order to avoid disturbance in the meeting and interference in the effort for necessary improvement. In short, they may seek as much as time allows to come closer to the Grace of God through the apostolic order described in Corinthians I, 14:14-15. (For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the Spirit and I will sing with the understanding also.)²⁵

In these prayer meetings the collection of hymns by Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen, popular among the awakened, were used until 1718, when the Inspired produced their own *Davidisches Psalter Spiel DerKinder Zions Von Allen und Neuen Auserlesenen Geists-Gesangen*.²⁶

Maximilian Goebel observed that the structure of these prayer meetings did not basically differ from regular church services except for the omission of the sacraments.²⁷ Although this comment was intended to reconcile mid-nineteenth-century church members to eighteenth-century dissenters and their later followers, it does not give adequate recognition to the new and radical elements in communal worship and individual testimonies. Leadership roles were entrusted to individuals, yet the spirit of inspiration wherever proven true, regardless of person, status, or gender, was allowed and encouraged to be

25. [Eberhard Ludwig Gruber], *Nothiges und nützliches Gespräch, von der wahren und falschen Inspiration* (1859 reprint of 1716 ed.), pp. 69-70.

26. The title page of this hymnbook is reproduced by Bertha M. H. Shambaug, *Amann: The Community of True Inspiration* (Iowa City, 1908), p. 304.

27. Goebel, *Geschichte*, 3: 396.

expressed. Within the context of traditional church service the meetings of the Inspired made far-reaching innovations beyond the *collegia pietatis*. The lay preacher traditions of the Inspired, in contrast to the Pietistic worship group under the leadership of an ordained minister, might well explain their more democratic character. The overseer (*Aufseher*) of the Inspired owed his role not to any theological training, but solely to the fact that followers acknowledged him as being placed in the position by the "Spirit of the Lord."²⁸ The readiness to accept authority in whatever form must be put in the historical matrix of eighteenth-century society.

The society had a paternal or authoritarian side to it. This is best illustrated by the conflict that arose between Gruber and his son Johann Adam, both equally committed to the cause of true inspiration. While the family was still in Württemberg, Johann Adam (1694-1763) had been apprenticed to an apothecary in Stuttgart; but the father, fearing for his son's spiritual welfare, had removed him. Under Gruber's steady and strict supervision Johann learned the trade of a cloth weaver. The alert and lively youth, thirsting for adventure and travel, ran away after a domestic scene at Easter 1714. After fruitless attempts to persuade him to return in November of that year, Johann turned up at the house of Rock, where an emotional reconciliation and a violent struggle of repentance took place in a prayer meeting that brought him into the new flock of Inspired. Two years of active ministry among them followed, but in 1718 Johann lost the gift of Inspiration and new tensions between him and his father arose over his decision to marry. In 1726 he emigrated with his family to Germantown, Pennsylvania, following a trend that had started among German Anabaptists and other Separatists in the first decade of the century. Johann came back to Schwarzenau the following year to seek reconciliation with his father. Eberhard Ludwig, who saw his own impending death, tried to persuade his son to stay; Johann returned to America but remained in close contact with the Inspired at home until his own death in 1763 in Germantown, Pennsylvania.²⁹

On November 16, 1714, the first love feast for the founding of a brotherly community of Inspired was held at Schwarzenau in Sayn-Wittgenstein under the leadership of Gruber; attending also were seventeen persons from the Ronneburg in Ysenburg. As we have seen, a love feast according to the tradition of the French prophets had been celebrated in 1713. Between 1714 and 1716 five love feasts were celebrated: the first and last at Schwarzenau, the second and fourth

28. Gruber, *Gespr'dch*, p. 69.

29. Goebel, in ZHT, 24 (1854): 385-386; 25 (1855): 119-121.

at the Ronneburg, and the third at Biidingen. Communal prayer meetings and love feasts became magnetic points of attraction among the Separatists, "*die Stillen im Lande*."³⁰ It became necessary to distinguish between the truly inspired and the faking or self-deceiving aspirant. The core group, convinced that the elder Gruber had the capacity, entrusted him with the responsibility for identifying true inspiration—an assignment that he carried out until his death in 1728. Gruber asked his visitors Potts and Johanna Melchior, "Are they moved by the Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that filled the followers of Jesus at Pentecost?" which became the decisive question to be put to any person who claimed to be inspired. According to Gruber's characterization of the followers of the new movement: "These who are called Inspired today are persons driven by a spirit to talk and express themselves in an otherwise unusual manner often accompanied or preceded by strange bodily movements." For the true Inspired it is the good and divine spirit. For the false, the evil and self-induced spirit."³¹

In 1715 records of messages, of experience-filled (*erfahrungsvolle*) testimonies were published, to be made available for thorough and impartial examination.³² In his *Gespr'dch*, Gruber expressed the guiding ideas and practices of the True Inspired and carefully argued the qualifications for true inspiration. Thus, within two years of his own conversion he wrote what was to become the fundamental textbook of the True Inspired, later to be reprinted in the New World and again translated into English as recently as 1980. With the definitions of legitimacy among members, the basis for communal organization was established. Informal prayer meetings were set up in ten communities: the first, declared as such in May 1716, at Schwarzenau, soon followed by Homrighausen, also in Wittgenstein, and others at the Ronneburg, Himbach, Biidingen, and Birstein in the Ysenburg principality. The number of members of these early communities was small: fifty-eight young and old in Schwarzenau in 1726, and four families in Himbach in 1727. In 1739 Count Alexander of Neuwied gave permission to five families of *Inspirierten* to settle, and Neuwied became a major center because of the continuing policy of toleration.

Major characteristics of organizational structure soon emerged, and Adam Gruber articulated them in a remarkable message to the newly gathered Biidingen community on July 6, 1716. With its clearly

30. Erich Beyreuther, "Stillen im Lande," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 6 vols. (Tubingen, 1957-1962), 6: 380-381.

31. Gruber, *Gesprach*, p. 5.

32. Johann Heinrich Reitz, *Historie der Wiedergebohrnen*, ed. Hans-Jurgen Schrader, 4 vols. (Tubingen, 1982; reprint of 1698-1745 ed.), 4: 148-149, n.49.

defined twenty-four points, this statement became the church and community order and continued to be officially recognized as such, even by the Amana communities of Iowa. The very fact that a church order had been expressed as an inspirational message endowed it with a prophetic rhetorical quality. The prescript deals with what is expected of individual members in view of the particular character of the community. Great emphasis is put on the awareness of its individuality; being Children of Light, like the Israelites of the Old Testament, its members have to separate themselves from the "ungodly, the liars and their works, the scoffers and blasphemers, who are nothing but darkness" (Nos. 2,3,20).³³ Theirs is to be the pursuit of a life glorifying God, with full trust in Him, and following the dictates of conscience, even if it brings loss and suffering (Nos. 4,8).

The structure of the community begins with the naming of a specific overseer endowed with a spirit of discernment. The expectation that this leadership will be accepted is inherent in the prophetic promise: "Behold, My children, I have chosen you before many, many, many, and have promised to be unto you a fiery entrenchment against the defiance of your internal and external enemies."³⁴ Not only is the gift of discernment bestowed on one individual, but others too are distinguished by special gifts of wisdom and talent for prayers. Such distinction may easily give rise to envy and a desire to strive for unattainable goals that lead in turn to frustration and discontent. The potential threats to the harmony and growth of the community that such conflicting emotions can generate are clearly identified and countered with earnest words in this brief document. With equal astuteness, Nos. 13 to 16 discuss family discipline, on which the health and welfare of the group depends. The authoritarian and male-dominating character, mirroring a God-King image, prevails. The emphasis is on the exemplary conduct of the head of house, which qualified him to guide his helpmates to lead a pious and decent life. The wisdom, courage, intelligence, and care bestowed on the head of the family will be used by him in educating the children. He is asked to show patience, never to lose hope but to "wrestle for them with prayer, struggle, and toil, which are the pangs of spiritual birth."³⁵

The twenty-four points did not, as church orders usually did, deal with major articles of faith concerning baptism, holy communion, marriage, and attitudes toward civil government. These issues were first addressed in a document submitted in 1839 by Christian Metz to

33. Shambaugh, *Amana*, p. 268.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

the ministry of the granddukedom of Hesse.³⁶ It is impossible to determine when such essential policies as refusal to take oaths and to give military service originated. The True Inspired shared these practices with Quakers and Mennonites, all three deriving justification from the Scriptures. In the "Resolution," a letter of November 2, 1739, Count Alexander of Neuwied gave permission for five families of the religious community of *Inspirierten* in Zweibriicken, who had been under pressure from the orthodox Lutheran clergy there, to settle in his principality. The "Resolution" specifically provided that the *Inspirierten* could express assent by the "Word of Eternal Truth" and with a handshake. Their refusal to bear arms was also recognized, and they were asked to supply substitutes for the civic militia. Clearly refusal of oaths and of military service were at that time considered integral parts of the group beliefs.³⁷

The Inspiration movement had begun with visitations and travels, and soon the missionary impulse sent the "tools" out on the road. The great leaders of this first German Awakening—Count Nikolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf and, before him, August Hermann Francke, who is said to have talked of an *ecclesia ambulatoria*—set out to preach, to encourage, and to gather an ecumenically committed Christianity. The Inspired tools who were itinerant preachers had different goals. Rather than establish widespread communities such as Zinzendorf envisioned, they felt that their mission was to awaken a world lost in a "slumber of sin" [Gruber].

In February 1716 Rock set out on his first trip, in his home state of Wurttemberg. At Ulm, center of Separatism since the Reformation, where Schwenckfeld had spent the last years of his life, Rock found a stern orthodox church that had quenched the spirit of the Separatists. Before leaving, he and his companion nailed to the door of the city hall a prophetic message admonishing the town fathers and warning them of the coming judgment. Rock's visit received no attention, which compares poorly with the triumphant welcome accorded the world-renowned Francke a year later in Ulm, but even he was not spared a scathing attack from the Miinster (Westphalia) Cathedral pulpit by the local Lutheran Professor Funk.³⁸

The model for visitation and prophecy was then taking shape. An example is the inspirational message Rock gave at the marketplace of

36. Goebel, in ZHT, 27 (1857): 445.

37. W. Grossmann, "Edelmann in Neuwied," in *Glaube, Geist, Geschichte: Festschrift für Ernst Benz* (Leiden, 1967), pp. 34-38.

38. Erich Beyreuther, *August Hermann Francke, 1663-1727* (Marburg a.d. Lahn, 1961), pp. 223-226.

Schwabisch-Hall on May 18, 1716: "Listen, you children of *menlMenschenkinder*! Listen, old and young, rich and poor, judges and city councilors! Listen, you preacher of the Word of God! Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, the God of Heaven and Earth: why have you for so long brought sorrow to the Almighty and insulted Him with your sins? When will you change and repent? The time has come; it is high time. You have but a short while to live; then God Almighty will call you before the tribunal and mete out the judgment you deserve."³⁹

The True Inspired of the Wetterau followed the practice begun by the *inspires* of having one or two among them assigned as scribes to record the messages.⁴⁰ An area of strong missionary activity for the Inspired was Switzerland. There one of the earliest adherents, the weaver Ursula Meyer from Thurn, traveled and propagandized for the cause.⁴¹ In January 1717, it was in Zurich, one of the last stops of a highly productive journey through Thuringia and south to Alsatia and Switzerland, that the tools, among them Adam Gruber, were jailed for four days after delivering a prophetic warning to the authorities.⁴² One of Rock's last travels also took him to Switzerland, to the remote Hislital, to convey warnings to the wandering brother Christen Hubert

In the twenty-eight-year period, 1714-1742, Rock made ninety-four journeys from his domicile on the Ronneburg: to Schwarzenau (forty-three), to Wiirttemberg (twenty-seven), to Herrnhut in Saxony (one), to Switzerland (nine), and to the Palatinate (seven)—in the company of other elders and members who recorded his messages for the "yearbooks." On one bizarre trip in the winter of 1716, Eberhard Gruber, to whom such an undertaking was ordained, took the tools to Prague to visit the Jewish schools and temples. While attending a service he became moved, and the Jews, fearing that he had suddenly fallen ill, let him out of the synagogue. He then prophesied outside, and the tools explained Gruber's emotions and compared them to those of the Old Testament prophets. Of the Prague Jews Gruber wrote: "They were modest, attentive, and loving. In our hearts the Lord has given us great love to offer to them."⁴⁴ Though the intensity

39. H. Clauss, "Die Beziehungen Johann Friedrich Rocks zu den Separatisten in Schwaben und Francken," *Beitr'a'ge zur bayerischen Kirchengeschichte*, 18 (Erlangen, 1911), pt. 2, p. 55.

40. Schwartz, *French Prophets*, pp. 72-73.

41. Cf. Paul Wernle, *Der schweizerische Protestantismus im XVIII jahrhundert*, I (Tubingen, 1923), pp. 178-201.

42. Goebel, in *ZHT*, 24 (1854): 414.

43. Wernle, *Der schweizerische Protestantismus*, p. 302.

44. Scheuner, *Inspirations-Historic*, pp. 36-37.

and fervor of activity of the tools in the *Inspirationsperiodicus* (1714-1719) can hardly be matched, to contemporaries the deceleration seemed less evident. The tools continued their missionary travels, but most lost their gift of "Inspiration." Rock, however, retained it to the end of his life, and to him passed the leadership role among the True Inspired after the death of his lifelong friend Gruber in 1728. The years following the *Inspirationsperiodicus* can best be characterized as a period of consolidation.

The aim of this paper has been to discuss the roots and the early history of the organization of the True Inspired. That period ended with the death of Rock, one of the last of the original founders. The generational change that subsequently affected the Inspired is not, however, peculiar to this group. A whole generation of German princes had set the tone, initiating policies of toleration that allowed a varied and enthusiastic religious life to flourish at their courts. They in turn gave way, at this mid-eighteenth-century watershed, to a new generation of rulers and administrators who found the tax-exempt Separatists a burden. Population replenishment, which had made a place like the Ronneburg desirable, was no longer a pressing need in their principalities. And their hearts and minds were no longer inspired by the message of early Pietism. Many princes reverted to orthodoxy; others, who turned away from religion altogether, became indifferent if not inimical. Against such an altered German social and political scene the history of the True Inspired in the years from 1750 until the exodus to America deserves separate study.

The tradition of recording messages, keeping diaries, and documenting events has created a unique body of written information. These records are supplemented by the writings, treatises, sermons, and hymns by members of the True Inspired. In 1736 the first yearbook *Diario der wahren Inspirations-Gemeinen* appeared, which included earlier documents, messages, and excerpts from diaries. By 1789 the first series—forty-two volumes—had been printed; it was followed by a second series in fifty-eight volumes, from 1823 to 1883. The usual title page of the first series read: "J.J.J./ Aufrichtige und wahrhafftige/EXTRACTA/Aus dem allgemeinen Diario/Der wahren/INSPIRATIONS-ZGemeinen./" The "J.J.J." which also sometimes preceded the title of other writings by the Inspired, stood for Jehovah, Jesus, Immanuel. Often the writers tried to disguise their names with fictitious signatures like "von Einem Licht-Genossen," "ELG" easily giving away Gruber's identity, or Johann Friedrich Rock's favorite use "In Fortwahrendem Reisen," appropriate for this ambulatory tool.⁴⁵

45. F. Simon, "Die Inspirierten im Isenburgischen," *Archiv Hessische Geschichte* 9 (1861): 102-4. Complete sets of the yearbooks are extremely rare, but the series was microfilmed

The yearbooks bear witness to the continuity of religious practices and organizational structure. Printing and reprinting the earliest Inspirationists' testimonies and diaries have played a major part in preserving and keeping alive the tradition. In the course of their 270-year history the True Inspired experienced many changes, even periods of hazardous survival. They need not fear Thomas Mann's warning that a group, a nation without a historical memory, does not deserve to live. The best justification for this attempt to identify and describe the roots of the Society of True Inspired is the community in Amana that still exists and prospers today.

in 1984 and is available from the American Theological Library Association Preservation Board at the Princeton Theological Seminary Library.